

and across the world who come to seek the Blessed Mother's intercession for them and their families in times of need and who come to express gratitude for prayers answered and graces received. The presence of many people praying at the Grotto and of so many candles lit, representing prayers offered, are signs now of faith in her and love for her.

Many years after I left Sister Regina Maria for second grade, I still want to love the Blessed Mother like my beloved teacher, like Mrs. Sepe, like the pilgrims in Mexico City and at the Grotto. I somehow always feel like I fall short in this, but how could I not want to love her? When I think of how much Jesus suffered for us in his passion and death on the cross, I can't help but think how much more Mary suffered. I've seen countless times how mothers suffer far more the sufferings of their children than their children do. Mary is truly, as Blessed Basil Moreau, C.S.C., named her the patroness of the Congregation of Holy Cross, "Our Lady of Sorrows." How could I not want to love her when I know that Jesus gave her to us and us to her right before he died on Calvary? "Woman behold your son ... behold your mother." (John 19:26) What a great gift Jesus gave us as he was about to die - the Blessed Mother as our own Mother!

So how are we to love the Blessed

Mother? In many ways that's a question that each of us has to answer for ourselves. The month of May beckons each of us to honor Mary, for it is her month. This year 2017, the one hundredth anniversary of the apparition of the Blessed Mother to the three children in Fatima, Portugal, invites us to pray the Rosary for the conversion of sinners, for souls in purgatory and for peace in our world, meditating on her life and Jesus'. Perhaps the best way for us to love her is to live what she told the servants at the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12) when the wine had run out, "Do whatever he tells you." Do whatever Jesus tells us, what the Word of God and the Church tells us. Clearly history shows that the Blessed Mother above all else wants to lead us to Jesus and thus to the Kingdom of Heaven. By yielding and opening our hearts to Jesus, we're loving the Blessed Mother.

May we honor and truly love the Blessed Mother - our Mother - this May and always with our lilacs and our lives!

Fr. John Herman, CSC, earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Detroit in 1988. He professed final vows and was ordained a deacon in 1994, and a priest in 1995. He was assigned to serve at St. John Vianney Parish from 1995-98, at Notre Dame in campus ministry and the rector of O'Neill Hall from 1998-2002, as the pastor of St. John Vianney Parish from 2002-11, as the pastor of Nuestra Madre Santisima de la Luz in Guadalupe, Nuevo Leon, Mexico from 2011-16. Since the summer of 2016 he has been serving as the rector of Moreau Seminary. He is also a suffering Detroit Tigers fan!



A publication of the Congregation of Holy Cross,
United States Province of Priests and Brothers
Office of Development
P.O. Box 765, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-0765
www.holycrossusa.org
development@holycrossusa.org

MAY 2017

MONTHLY REFLECTION
SERIES

How Are We to Love
the Blessed Mother?

Fr. John Herman, C.S.C.

CONGREGATION OF
HOLY CROSS
EDUCATION • PARISH • MISSION

I was walking recently in front of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the campus of the University of Notre Dame. My nose told me before my eyes did that there were lilacs in the vicinity. I turned and saw a lilac bush in full bloom. Immediately, these lilacs took me back more than forty-years to Mrs. Sepe's lilacs.

Mary Sepe was a very dear elderly woman who lived with her husband next door to my family. Throughout my childhood, she was ringing our doorbell and coming to visit us almost daily to share the latest news from the neighborhood or a picture and a story of her family from the Depression era in Pennsylvania. Mrs. Sepe was dependable. She could be counted upon for certain things, for example, keeping an eye on our house when we were away, bringing her famous Italian "pizzelle" cookies to our First Communion parties or other big family celebrations, reminding us constantly of the importance of completing our education, etc. When the month of May rolled around, she could always be counted upon, as well, to give my sister, my brothers and me the most beautiful bouquet of purple flowers from the lilac bush in her yard to take to the Blessed Mother for our "May crowning" each year at St. Joseph Catholic School in my hometown of Trenton, Michigan. A simple gift from her yard and her heart

for the Blessed Mother whom she loved.

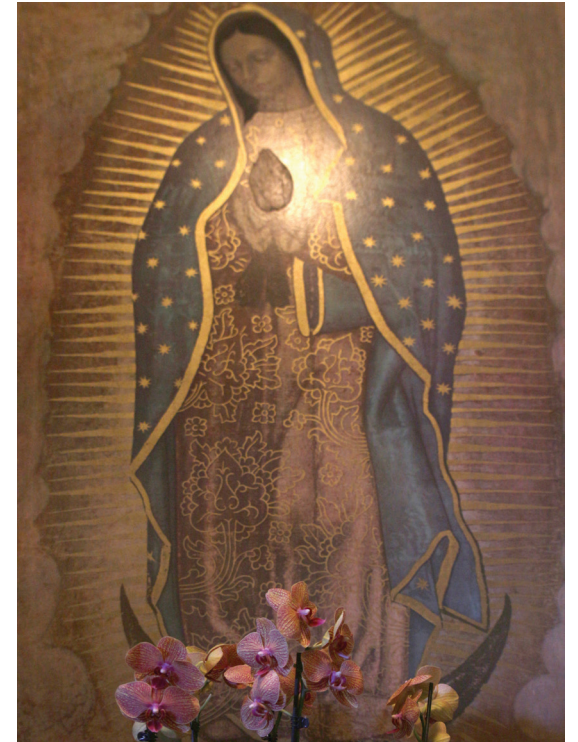
The annual May Crowning was for us a culmination of our continual honoring of the Blessed Mother. From my first days in first grade, Sister Regina Marie taught my classmates and me to love Jesus and Mary, the Blessed Mother. It was especially important for us to honor Mary during the month of May because May was her month. Sister Regina Marie clearly loved Jesus and Mary and looked forward to this May crowning, and, following her good example, we did too. Unfortunately, I was not given the honor of crowning Mary!

**“ Blessed be
the great
Mother of
God, Mary
most holy. ”**

After all of these years, it has stayed with me that May is the Blessed Mother's month. My relationship with the Blessed Mother has evolved since my days with Sister Regina Maria. As sons and

daughters can drift away from their own mothers emotionally, I too drifted away from the Blessed Mother, despite always wanting to love her like my first grade teacher did.

I was blessed to come to a new and deeper appreciation of Mary when I served as a transitional deacon at St. John Vianney Parish in Goodyear, Arizona. I was left speechless by the love that I saw for the Blessed Mother in the parishioners from Mexico at our celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe. A church packed to overflowing with people on a dark, cold, December Arizona morning - at 5:00 a.m. - to sing songs of praise and thanks to Our Lady of Guadalupe? This kid from the suburbs of Detroit couldn't imagine such a thing! It was clear for these parishioners that Our Lady of Guadalupe was as real for them then as she was when she appeared to St. Juan Diego in 1531 in what is now present day Mexico City. Maybe even as real as their own mothers. I was also blessed to be able to witness the faith and devotion of the countless pilgrims who traveled from far and wide to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, not just to see her image but, truly, to visit her there. Pilgrims coming to offer their gratitude to her for prayers answered and graces received and coming to seek her intercession for needs in their families and their lives. I wanted what those



pilgrims had, many of them so poor materially, a love for the Blessed Mother both deep and real.

I am blessed now to be serving at Moreau Seminary where I'm able to encounter the Blessed Mother in a different way. A short walk from our seminary, the Blessed Mother is surely present as well at the Grotto, the most beautiful place on the Notre Dame campus. The Grotto is a replica of the grotto at Lourdes, France where the Blessed Mother appeared to Saint Bernadette in 1858. It is a place of prayer and of great peace. There, too, I see pilgrims from across the campus