

The Virgin Mary: Star of the Sea

The North Star has many names; the ancient Romans called it Polaris because of its alignment with the North Pole; other names include Lodestar, Polestar, Alpha Ursae Minoris, Alruccabah, Navigatoria, and HR424. During the Middle Ages, however, the North Star went by the name, *Stella Maris*. *Stella Maris* is Latin for "star of the sea." While this star is a trustworthy guide for sailors, the name *Stella Maris* was actually in reference to the Virgin Mary. Beginning in the fourth century and through the Middle Ages, Western Christians understood the name Mary as meaning "Star of the sea." This article considers the historical basis and spiritual significance of this name, as applied to the Virgin Mary.

What's in a Name?

For the ancient Hebrews, naming a child was serious business. A child's name distinguished his or her character and destiny. Something pretty sounding was secondary; a person's name represents their soul, according to the Hebrew mind. Often biblical names are prophetic. The name Elijah, for instance, means, "The Lord (YHWH) is my God." This accurately fits the fiery prophet who defended proper worship of God rather than Baal. Likewise, the name Yeshua (Jesus) means, "God saves." This well accords with the patriarch Joshua (Jesus), who led the Israelites across the Jordan, as well as Jesus, whom Christians honor as the Savior. Christians have long-honored Jesus' mother, Mary, as a very special person. What does her name signify? While there is wide ambiguity about the correct translation, the most popular understanding of the name Mary among Catholics is *Star of the sea*.

A Look at Etymology

Because ancient texts of the Egyptian and Judeo-Aramaic languages omit vowels, scholars often argue over possible meanings of words. Context and etymology are essential factors to unlocking the correct meaning. Nonetheless, ambiguity often persists, such as the meaning of the name Mary. The word *maris* in Latin means sea and is quite similar to Maria. However, the name Mary is clearly not Latin in origin but finds its roots in the Egyptian name, Miriam. Here is where the etymology becomes complicated because there are over 100 possibilities of what the name Miriam means in Egyptian. Possible meanings range from "bitterness," "beautiful," and "love."

Consequently, it is helpful to look at the Hebrew version of Miriam, which is Maryam. Wide variations also exist in the meaning of the name Maryam, such as "rebellion," and "sea of bitterness." Keeping in mind that a name represents the soul in Hebrew, such translations are unacceptable for a young girl. The second part of this name, *yam*, does, in fact, mean "sea"; however, the first part, *mar*, has several possible meanings. *Mar* literally means bitter, which is why some believe that Maryam means "bitter sea." Nonetheless, in Hebrew, the adjective follows the substantive, which means "bitter sea" would appear as *Yam mar*.

Eusebius of Caesarea, who composed a dictionary of proper names in the Bible, translated Maryam as "drop of the sea." When St. Jerome (4th century AD) translated this dictionary into Latin, he rendered "drop of the sea" as *stilla maris*. Some believe that a scribal error caused *stilla* to become *stella*. However, Jerome elsewhere made a case for "Star of the sea," by suggesting that *mar* was a contraction of *ma'or* (מאור) which means luminary or star.

Spiritual Significance

As citizens of the 21st century, navigating our way with GPS, we little realize how vital the North Star was to travelers in previous times. This trustworthy star guided sailors across the sea and travelers across the desert. Because it remains apparently fixed in the same location throughout the night, it served as a sure reference point in the heavens. Unlike shooting stars that dazzle the eyes for a moment and fade away, the North Star remains steady. In her role as a caring Mother, Mary likewise is comparable to this constancy.



Purity, radiance, and beauty- such qualities of a star are also applicable to the Virgin; however, the North Star fits her in particular because of its role as a guide to travelers. As our life on earth is similar to a tempestuous sea journey, so Mary remains firm in the heavens, guiding souls to the eternal shores. Byzantine Christians call her *Hodegitria* or "She who knows the way." According to their understanding as well as Catholics, she knows the way to Jesus and to heaven.

As the Romans thought of Polaris as occupying the north pole of the heavens, so Christians think of Mary as occupying the center of Heaven, as the greatest of the saints. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star." (1 Cor 15:41). Though there are brighter stars than Polaris, its location is the reason for its importance. For Christians, Mary's importance is primarily because of her proximity to God, as Jesus' mother. Contrary to a common belief, Catholics and Orthodox Christians do not worship Mary; rather, they venerate her as the Mother of Jesus and the greatest of saints.

Modern Devotion

While biblical scholars wrangle over the precise meaning of Mary's name and astronomers debate over what the North Star should be called, devotion to the Star of the Sea remains firm. Many churches, schools, colleges, shrines, and lighthouses, particularly along coastal areas, use the name, *Stella Maris*, *Our Lady*, *Star of the Sea*, or *Mary, Star of the Sea*. The feast day of Our Lady, Star of the Sea is September 27. The Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) especially celebrates this day, with a Mass at Westminster Cathedral, London. The AOS, alternatively known as *Stella Maris*, is a worldwide Catholic organization that provides chaplaincies and practical support to seafarers. May Our Lady, Star of the Sea, lead all souls across the uncertain waves of this life to the port of heaven.

How Will the Church Respond to Today's Apocalyptic Times?

by Alice Camille
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I'm bone tired of it, as you are. This persistent season of betrayal and reproach under which our church currently labors. Relentless revelations of clergy preying on children and bishops moving abusers around is a gnawing ache in the soul of every Catholic—as it should be.

That we created this monstrous disgrace is without question, collaborating in silent support of the institutional unaccountability that permitted predators to strike and children to suffer, bishops to keep secrets and laity to imagine the church operating on benign autopilot while we dutifully kept our attention on the marketplace. Our present communal suffering is nothing compared to the horror thousands of children underwent for a generation and the adults they became still endure.

Pope Francis asks us urgently to pray and do penance. This we must do as we seek healing for victims, forgiveness for perpetrators and abettors, and a way forward for the whole community of faith, which we love and in which our confidence has been so profoundly shaken. Prayer and penance is a beginning, just as zero tolerance and safety protocols were necessary first measures institutionally. But if all we do is pray and adopt protocols, we build a weak fence around the beast that caused such excruciating harm.



Things must change. The church must change. That's a more difficult proposition to face than embracing a few new regulations in our parishes or requiring all church personnel to have background checks. The majority of folks being fingerprinted right now to keep our kids safe are not the problem. The problem is how our structures operate: how power is utilized, where information goes, and who gets to say.

In all of this we sense the shattering of millennia of conventions surrounding the religious enterprise. From the earliest shaman who painted on the walls of a cave to invoke unseen powers to the modern rabbi,

priest, or imam interceding for the community, the divine mystery has been mediated with a generous cover of mystique concealing its chief operators. The current unmasking of so many leaders—in my home diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania alone, the number comes to 71 priests, of whom eight I knew personally—makes us groan with all creation for the end of this shame and disillusionment.

If this present generation of the church harbors apocalyptic overtones, it's not the first.

Not to diminish the outrage many of us feel at this time, but a half-century ago a lot of people felt the same way about the Second Vatican Council. The bedrock of Catholic tradition was being jack-hammered away by theological thugs in the minds of many churchgoers (and some of their pastors) who didn't appreciate the most immediate and obvious effect of the Council: the passing of the universal Latin Mass. Religious leaders had seemingly betrayed their people, stripped them of the beauty and authenticity of the Tridentine church to which they'd entrusted their relationship with God, no less.

Mystique was under assault as many parishes put their censors in storage, hauled away statues, and banished beloved traditional devotions. Meanwhile, nuns were wearing perfume, Father showed up at parish picnics in a T-shirt, and bar band guitars invaded choir lofts. Suddenly we were "hearing" Mass in English or Spanish or French, vulgar languages that poorly encapsulated our holiest intentions. The angels themselves must have covered their ears while the faithful fled in droves.

These are very different circumstances, of course, but the effect is similar: trust is shaken, outrage is fierce, leadership is suspect, and the faithful feel compelled to exit what is no longer the church to which they'd committed their hearts.

But this is part of a society-wide sense of disillusionment in this generation. In recent decades we've learned not to trust our banks or the economy, which could unravel in sudden recession and take our nest eggs along with them. Meanwhile our food industry pumps us full of harmful additives at the least and salmonella at the extreme. Our local water supply may be poisoning us. Our medical establishment prescribes opioids that enrich Big Pharma and enslave our loved ones. The weather is no longer a benign passing phenomenon. Government leaders, we fear, have abandoned any pretense of concern with the common good in favor of their own best interests.

Some of us are feeling not a little apocalyptic about our chances of surviving this century. Which makes it important to recognize that the original inventors of apocalyptic scenarios weren't just spinning destruction sequences. They were more greatly invested in the restoration to follow. If heaven and earth as we know it are in the throes of passing away, we might turn our attention more profitably to what may take their place.

First-century John of Patmos wouldn't have

given a fig for his generation's chances. His Book of Revelation assures us that the society he inhabited stank so bad, the only salvation one might hope for is that the entire empire be dissolved. But surely John's critique was aimed at the sick society of affluent and worldly Rome and not at the church.

Chapter 1 of Revelation offers a quick review of what John thought of his present-day community of faith. In many respects he saw it as part of the problem and not the solution.

John addresses his writing to the "seven churches"—a number representing the fullness of an idea, the whole church. Two of the seven communities, Smyrna and Philadelphia, get a pass in his estimation. Ephesus properly hated all the right evils but had lost its capacity to love anything. Pergamum and Thyatira too easily trotted after errant teachers. Sardis was declared effectively dead as a community. Affluent Laodicea had become lukewarm in its faith. Christians there preferred to perch at the edge of religious practice, cheerfully convinced it would be enough. To John, Laodicea's offense was the greatest of all. God might endure those who embraced or rejected the gospel honestly but not those who went through the motions of religion while their actions made their faith a mockery.

We can debate which of these early errors of the church are the greatest problem in our time. But the solution remains the same for us as for John. The beast must be eradicated, not simply confined. The battle must be engaged, not avoided till the next period of crisis erupts. The church must change: not once, not seven times, but perpetually until all that is worldly about it—about us—is burned away.

If our religious institutions presently bear the tendency toward the same protection of privilege as our secular institutions, it's no accident. The church that once confused the mystique of its leaders with the *mysterium tremendum* must pass away. But let's not be unmoored by the idea that there's an end-of-the-road for iterations of church. Scripture tells us all things pass away but faith, hope, and love. What doesn't promote these theological virtues, which have God as their focal point, can be cheerfully consigned to history.

The church changes. We gave up hushed worship in catacombs for official respectability in basilicas. We exchanged a politically grasping, territorially driven papal court for the neat contours of Vatican City. We stopped condemning non-Catholics to hell in order to work with all people of good will. This present-day apocalypse is alarming; we do well to take it seriously. While we may be weary of scandal and wish to return to a lost innocence, we should kiss that fantasy goodbye. Then we can roll up our sleeves, clear the wreckage, and trust in God to make all things new.

The Virgin Mary: Ark of the Covenant

"Amazing Parallels between Mary and the Ark of the Covenant"

by Dave Armstrong

www.ncregister.com

The Church fathers loved to delve into Holy Scripture and find deep meanings and parallels; or types and shadows. One of the titles they gave to the Blessed Virgin Mary was *New Eve* or *Second Eve*: because the first Eve said "no" to God and brought about original sin and the fall of mankind.

Mary the "second" Eve (being immaculate and without sin from the time of her conception and thus analogous to Eve as regards sinlessness), said "yes" to God at the Annunciation and in so doing, played a key role in bringing about our redemption, as the Mother of God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another fascinating analogy along these lines is the notion of Mary as the ark of the new covenant. The original ark was a marvelous gold-lined wooden box that was the holiest item in Judaism. It contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments, and God made His presence especially manifest over the ark, above what was called the "mercy seat" (Ex 25:22): between two carved golden cherubim (angels). This was an early parallel to the eucharistic Real Presence.

The Church Fathers drew from the following biblical passages in developing this belief:

Luke 1:35 (RSV) And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."

The Greek word for *overshadow* is *episkiasei*, which describes a bright, glorious cloud. It is used with reference to the cloud of transfiguration of Jesus (Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:34) and also has a connection to the *shekinah* glory of God (Ex 24:15-16; 40:34-38; 1 Ki 8:10).

Mary is, therefore, in effect, the new temple and holy of holies, where God was present in a special fashion. Scripture draws many parallels between Mary, the "ark of the new covenant" and the ark of the (old) covenant:

Exodus 40:34-35 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the



tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

The Greek Septuagint translation uses the same word, *episkiasei*, in this passage.

1 Kings 8:6-11 Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles. And the poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place before the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside; and they are there to this day. There was nothing in the ark except the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

More direct parallels occur as well:

2 Samuel 6:9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"

Luke 1:43 And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

2 Samuel 6:15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the horn.

Luke 1:42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

2 Samuel 6:14, 16 And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. . . . King David

leaping and dancing before the LORD . . . (cf. 1 Chr 15:29)

Luke 1:44 For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy.

2 Samuel 6:10-11 So David was not willing to take the ark of the LORD into the city of David; but David took it aside to the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite. And the ark of the LORD remained in the house of O'bed-e'dom the Gittite three months . . .

Luke 1:39, 56 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, . . . And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.

The temple and tabernacle were holy, and this was especially the case with the holy of holies, where the ark was kept. The presence of God always imparted holiness (Dt 7:6; 26:19; Jer 2:3). The furnishings of the tabernacle could not be touched by anyone, save a few priests, on pain of death (Num 1:51-53; 2:17; 4:15).

The high priest entered the holy of holies only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Num 29:8). A rope was tied to his leg in case he perished from improper behavior (Lev 16:2, 13), so that he could be safely pulled out. Uzziah merely reached out (quite innocently!) to steady the ark of the covenant when it was toppling over, and was struck dead (2 Sam 6:2-7). Others died when they simply looked inside of it (1 Sam 6:19; cf. Ex 33:20).

Jews, Catholics, And Our Bonds of Unity

by William Doino Jr.
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The entry of Christ into history is the greatest blessing the world has ever known, but the beauty of that event is never matched by the practice of Christians. Perhaps nowhere is this more painfully apparent than in Christian conduct toward Jews. The Passion narratives were long abused as part of a polemic against "the Jews," who were blamed, collectively and of course wrongly, for the death of Christ. The "deicide" myth, as it became known, led to the equally destructive idea that Jews would be forced to wander the earth forever, because they had not accepted Christ.

Simple Christian decency, and better Biblical theology, should have prevented such toxic ideas from ever taking hold, but tragically they spread, and the anti-Jewish polemic took on a life of its own.

The Christian conscience, however, was never wholly absent during these times. When St. Ignatius of Loyola was accused of being Jewish, because of his faithful religious observances, he turned the accusation around, saying he would be privileged to share in Judaism's heritage: "What? To be related to Christ Our Lord and to Our Lady the glorious Virgin Mary!" It was the perfect Christian reply.

The Council of Trent not only rejected the deicide myth but stressed that we are *all* responsible for the death of Christ, and Christians even more so, since they profess him Lord and Savior, yet violate his teachings at will.

"If this understanding of the crucifixion had been widely preached and taught," writes Phyllis Goldstein, an expert on anti-Semitism, "history" particularly the history of anti-Semitism" might have taken a different course."

A number of Catholic leaders did try to protect the Jewish people "and sometimes succeeded" but their voices were often overwhelmed. Pogroms, enforced ghettos, and insane charges about "ritual murder" continued. In 1858, Edgardo Mortara, a young Jewish boy who had been secretly baptized by his Catholic maid, was taken away by the papal authorities, and raised a Christian, with his parents permitted mere visitation rights.

A few decades later, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in France, was falsely accused of leaking state secrets, and had to wait twelve years before his name finally was cleared. Only a minority of Catholics had the courage to defend him, though Charles Peguy, the most noble among them, did say his country was in a state of "mortal sin" as long as Captain Dreyfus remained framed.

The emergence of a racist (as distinct from religious) anti-Semitism, created an environment more dangerous for Jews than

ever before and led, ultimately, to the Holocaust. The Shoah was a pagan "and certainly diabolical" event, but it cannot be denied that many Christians were blind to that fact, and contributed to its creation with their own "teachings of contempt" toward Jews.



Madonna of the Slaughtered Jews by Dan Paulos

It's very difficult to write fairly and accurately about Jewish-Catholic relations, with all their complexities and sensitivities. But two historians who have are Cecil Roth and Sir Martin Gilbert. Both recount, with unflinching honesty, the deprivations of and crimes committed against the Jewish people "often at Christian hands" but they do so without ever losing sight of what Roth calls "the best teachings of Christianity." This is particularly true of Catholic rescue during the Holocaust.

"Frequently, the lead was taken by priests and nuns," writes Roth, in his classic *History of the Jews*, "following the example set by the Vatican itself." Sir Martin, a renowned authority on the war years, wrote an entire book honoring such rescuers, *The Righteous*.

The heroic deeds of righteous Christians, however, cannot blot out the sins of those who permitted it. As the late Cardinal Bernardin said, in a speech at Hebrew University, Catholics "must not minimize the extent of Christian collaboration with Hitler and his associates" even as we recognize the "Christians" who did so were totally unworthy of the name. "It remains a profound moral challenge," said the Cardinal, one "we must continue to confront for our own integrity as a religious community."

Step by gradual step, the postwar Catholic Church began laying the groundwork for a new relationship with the Jewish people. Freed from needless restrictions by Pius XII's ground-breaking encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), Biblical scholars began exploring the New Testament anew, disproving anti-Jewish

interpretations of it, and linking Christianity ever more profoundly with Judaism. Pius himself, building upon the good will he had established during the War, had a series of meetings with Jewish leaders, which marked a new chapter in the Holy See's relationship with Jews, tentative but productive.

His successor, John XXIII removed insensitivities toward Jews in the Catholic liturgy, and famously embraced his Jewish brethren with the words, "I am Joseph, your brother." Blessed John also convened the Second Vatican Council, which, under Pope Paul VI, promulgated the historic *Nostra Aetate* declaration (1965), which underscored Christianity's vital bond with Judaism. The year before that, in his encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, Paul praised Jews for their faith and taught they are "worthy of our respect and love."

The last two pontificates, of Blessed John Paul and Benedict, have taken the Jewish-Catholic dialogue to new levels of depth and reciprocity. From their respective visits to Auschwitz, to John Paul's ground-breaking visit to Rome's synagogue, to Benedict's acclaimed exegesis of Jews and Christians in the New Testament, their good will and appreciation is recognizable to all. One of their most valuable marks has been to highlight the importance of the state of Israel. For decades, the Catholic Church had a very uneven attitude toward Israel, with some Catholics expressing sympathy and support for it, while others harbored hostility. John Paul and Benedict have made clear that, while people of good will disagree on how best to handle the conflicts in the Middle East, indifference to the security of Israel and the fate of the Jewish people "as well as the Palestinians" is inadmissible. "Spiritually, we are all Semites," as Pius XI taught.

In one of his last messages to the Jewish community, a year before he died, Blessed John Paul II said: "During the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church clearly and definitely reaffirmed her rejection of all expressions of anti-Semitism." However, the sincere "condemnation of those hostilities directed against the Jewish people . . . do not suffice; we must also develop friendship, esteem and brotherly relations with them."

The bond between Jews and Catholics has now become so strong that, whenever tensions do arise" as they inevitably will, even in the best relationships" we can speak to one another frankly, heart to heart, and work out our differences together.

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Our Lady's Providential Bridge to Islam

by Matthew E. Bunson
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From the time of the apparitions of the Blessed Mother at Fatima, Portugal, many have wondered about the possible significance of Our Lady choosing a location with such an apparent connection to Islam.

As a matter of historical importance, Fatima, the favorite daughter of Muhammad, was a woman considered of the highest dignity in Islam, save for only one person: the Virgin Mary. Indeed, after Fatima's death at around the age of 26, her father wrote to his dead daughter: "Thou shalt be the most blessed of women in Paradise after Mary."

Is there a relationship between the appearance of Our Lady and the Muslim world? Surely, it was not a random choice by the Blessed Mother, and so how should we approach the possible message it sends to the world at this historical moment?

It is a surprise to many that Islam traditionally has thought so highly of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is called by Muslims Miriam or Maryam in Arabic, and also Umm Isa, or "Mary, the mother of Jesus," or simply, *Sayyida*, the Lady.

Mary is the only woman named in the Quran, and she is revered as a righteous woman in her own right and as the most pious, chaste and virtuous woman in history. The Quran affirms the virgin birth, but it also makes clear in its belief that her son was not divine. The 19th *sura* (chapter) of the Quran is both named after her and provides what it says are many details about her life, although scholars have long noted that much in the 19th *sura* bears a striking resemblance to the Gospel of Luke. She is also one of only eight people in the Muslim holy book to have a *sura* named after them.

The expression, "Jesus son of Mary" appears 13 times in the Quran, while "Jesus, the Messiah, son of Mary," is found three times. There are also 45 other times in the text that there is a reference to Mary's name.

There is a natural assumption that the village of Fatima was named directly after the daughter of Muhammad. In truth, its origins are a bit more complicated and romantic than that.

In the middle of the eighth century, Muslim armies from North Africa conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula and established what became known as the Moorish Kingdoms. Gradually, Christian states were formed to resist the Moors, leading to what became known as the *Reconquista*, the centuries-long campaign to end Islamic domination in the peninsula. The *Reconquista* extended to what became Portugal, as well.

According to the early 17th-century Portuguese chronicler and Cistercian Bernardo de Brito, during the fighting in 1158, a knight by the name of Gonçalo Hermigues and his fellow warriors captured a Muslim princess named Fatima, daughter of the last Muslim ruler in the region. She had been named in honor of the daughter of Muhammad. Fatima and Gonçalo fell in

love, and the two were married.

But first, Fatima was baptized into the Christian faith and changed her name to Oureana. As a wedding gift from her husband, she was given a nearby town that she called Ourem in recognition of her new name. She did not live long after the marriage, sadly, and to honor her memory further, her husband changed the name of another nearby village to Fatima.

It was in the very village named after a convert from Islam — a convert initially named after Muhammad's daughter — that the Blessed Mother chose to appear to the three shepherd children May 13, 1917. What does it mean? What is Our Lady trying to teach us? Is she telling us that, just as she shows us the way to her Son, the path ahead in evangelization and overcoming the savagery of jihadism might also pass through her loving heart? Venerable Fulton Sheen thought so.

In his 1952 book, *The World's First Love*, he devoted a chapter to Mary and the Muslims. He prophetically observed, "At the present time, the hatred of the Moslem countries against the West is becoming a hatred against Christianity itself. Although the statesmen have not yet taken it into account, there is still grave danger that the temporal power of Islam may return and, with it, the menace that it may shake off a West which has ceased to be Christian and affirm itself as a great anti-Christian world power."

Archbishop Sheen, however, did not despair. Instead, he looked to Fatima and to Mary. "Since nothing ever happens out of heaven except with a finesse of all details," he wrote, "I believe that the Blessed Virgin chose to be known as 'Our Lady of Fatima' as a pledge and a sign of hope to the Moslem people, and as an assurance that they, who show her so much respect, will one day accept her Divine Son, too."

He added:

"Missionaries in the future will, more and more, see that their apostolate among the Moslems will be successful in the measure that they preach Our Lady of Fatima. Mary is the advent of Christ, bringing Christ to the people before Christ himself is born. In any apologetic endeavor, it is always best to start with that which people already accept. Because the Moslems have a devotion to Mary, our missionaries should be satisfied merely to expand and to develop that devotion, with the full realization that Our Blessed Lady will carry the Moslems the rest of the way to her Divine Son. She is forever a 'traitor,' in the sense that she will not accept any devotion for herself, but will always bring anyone who is devoted to her to her Divine Son. As those who lose devotion to her lose belief in the divinity of Christ, so those who intensify devotion to her gradually acquire that belief. ... The Moslems should be prepared to acknowledge that, if Fatima must give way in honor to the Blessed Mother, it is because she is different from all the other mothers of the world and that without Christ she would be nothing."

We seek bridges to Islam. Mary is a way. Pope Francis said it very well at the Rosary and vigil for the centenary of Fatima on the evening of May 12.

"No other creature ever basked in the light of God's face as did Mary; she, in turn, gave a human face to the Son of the eternal Father," the Holy Father said.

Our task is to help others see her clearly, and in so doing see Christ for who he truly is.

10 Things to Know About Islam

by Christopher Heffron
<https://blog.franciscanmedia.org>

There is a line in the holy Quran that edifies just as it disarms us: "O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you." That verse speaks of what is lacking between Muslims and Christians: peaceful convergence and dialogue. It's as though God, the first champion of interreligious dialogue, is inspiring us to shelve our differences and speak with civil tongues.

But far too often we have chosen not to listen. It's fair to say that most Catholics, prior to 9/11, lacked awareness of Islam—shocking given the number of Muslims around the world. According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, the world's Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35 percent in the next 20 years, rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030. The events of 9/11 changed everything. After that day, our dearth of information merged with something far more sinister: suspicion. But before a better relationship between Muslims and Christians can begin, understanding and education are fundamental. Here are 10 things we all should know about Islam.

1) Allah.

Although, in Islamic traditions, there are 99 names attributed to him, Allah is the proper, all-comprehensive name. Muslims believe that Allah is shapeless and does not resemble his creations. "Nothing is like him in any way," the Quran states. Allah does not exist in one single place and is dimensionless, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

2) The Quran.

The Quran is the religious text of Islam. Muslims believe the text was verbally conveyed by God to the Prophet Mohammed through the Angel *Jibrī -I* (Gabriel) over the course of 23 years. The prophet dictated the text to his companions after each revelation. The Quran maintains that its contents are divinely inspired—Mohammed himself contributed nothing to the text. He was a holy conduit.

3) The Five Pillars.

The five pillars are the obligatory acts of Islam as observed by Muslims:

Shahada: There is only one God and Mohammed is God's prophet.

Salat: Islamic prayer. Muslims pray five times a day: at dawn, at noon, in the afternoon, at sunset, and in the evening.

Sawm: Fasting.

Zakât: Almsgiving.

Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy city in Saudi Arabia.

4) Jesus and Mary in Islam.

Islam holds Jesus and Mary in very high regard. In the Quran, there are some 275 references to Jesus and his mother, who is mentioned more than any other woman in the holy book. In fact, of the book's 114 chapters, Mary has an entire chapter devoted to her. To Muslims, Jesus is a messenger of God to the

children of Israel. The Quran describes him as a human prophet, a worker of miracles (by God's decree), and a humble servant of the Father. The Quran asserts, however, that Jesus was sent by God, but is not God himself.

5) What's in a Mosque?

Visitors to mosques are asked to remove their shoes as a sign of respect. Prayer halls are without chairs; rather, there are rows of carpets for worship. Other features include a Minbar, a pulpit where the imam (prayer leader) delivers sermons. Mosques always have a Mihrab, a roofed niche along the qiblah (the wall that faces Mecca). The walls and pillars in mosques are often ornately decorated, and there are multiple copies of the Quran and other books devoted to Islam. Mosques have no statues or artwork showing people. They also feature a place for *zakât*, or charity, where visitors can donate money. Many mosques have a *madrasah* or adjoining school.

6) Jihad.

A controversial word, but its meaning is multilayered and often misunderstood. Jihad can mean fighting through arms against oppression within the strict rules of engagement that prohibits further oppression. Its deeper meaning is the internal struggle a Muslim endures when seeking purification and self-betterment. "Holy war," a term invented by non-Muslims, never once appears in the Quran. It is believed by many Muslims that Mohammed saw violent jihads as minor ones, while one's striving for self-improvement was a major jihad.

7) Women and the Veil.

Muslim women dress in accordance with the hijab (the code of dressing modestly), though the *hijab* differs in cultural practice by country. Veils typically cover the head, ears and throat. The *burqa*, which exists in a certain region of the world, including Hindu and Muslim cultures, covers a woman's entire head and body with only an opening in the fabric for the eyes.

Long regarded in the Muslim world as a symbol of modesty and piety, the *hijab* provides women freedom from the unwanted gaze of men. The custom has been, nevertheless, a hotbed of fierce opposition among non-Muslims. Detractors see the veil as a form of religious oppression. But the practice of veiling a woman has roots in Judeo-Christian traditions as well. In 1 Corinthians 11:4-6, Saint Paul wrote: "Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered brings shame upon his head. But any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled brings shame upon her head...For if a woman does not have her head veiled, she may as well have her hair cut off."

8) Mecca.

Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, is the holiest city in the Islamic religion. Its importance to Muslims is beyond measure. Mecca hosts some 13 million visitors annually, including the millions

who perform the *Hajj*. Muslims who are financially and physically able to make the pilgrimage to Mecca are required to do so once in their lifetime.

9) Major Sects.

The two main sects of Islam are Sunni and Shiite. Sunnis make up the vast majority. The two branches appeared after the death of the Prophet Mohammed. The divide between the two widened over the centuries. Sunnis believed the prophet's temporal successor should be elected from among appropriate candidates. Shiites contended that Muhammad's relative, *Al ibn Ab Talib* (599–661), should have succeeded him. Shiite Muslims, throughout history, have not recognized elected Muslim officials, choosing instead to follow a series of imams (worship leaders) whom they believe are chosen by Mohammed or directly by Allah.

10) Shariah Law.

Shariah Law is the entire body of Islamic law and is divided into five branches: *ibadah* (worship), *mu'amalat* (transactions and contracts), *adab* (morals and manners), *i'tiqadat* (beliefs) and *uqubat* (punishments). A common misconception is that the Quran and Shariah Law are one and the same. They are not. The Quran is the most important element of Shariah Law, but the law is composed of guidelines from other sources. For Muslims, Shariah Law governs only Muslims and contains guidance on purification, funeral prayers, taxes, trade, marriage, divorce, dietary guidelines, and justice, among other topics.

Who Was Mohammed?

Mohammed (ca. 570–632) is considered by Muslims to be the prophet and messenger of Allah. Mohammed was raised an orphan in Mecca. As a young man he was a caravan manager in his native city and felt that charity and kindness were lacking in his society. Though reports suggest he had a knack for business, his contemporaries noted that he was also righteous, trustworthy, and fair. At the age of 25, Mohammed married a widow named Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, who bore him six children—four daughters and two sons.

He was 40 when he received the first revelation from the angel *Jibrī -I* (Gabriel). Deeply shaken by the visitation, Mohammed went home and conveyed this event to Khadijah, who recognized him as a prophet. She is known as the first Muslim.

Over the next 23 years, the angel visited Mohammed conveying single verses or whole chapters. The text was recorded and memorized by many. Around 621, during the night journey called the *Isra* and *Mi'raj*, Islamic tradition holds that Mohammed was taken by *Jibrī -I* to meet with God. The prophet was then instructed that all Muslims should pray five times a day. Two months after performing the *Hajj*, Mohammed became ill. He died of fever in 632 at the age of 62.

Our Lady of Walsingham

www.Wikipedia.org

According to the tradition, in a Marian apparition to Lady Richeldis, the Blessed Virgin Mary fetched Richeldis' soul from England to Nazareth during a religious ecstasy to show the house where the Holy Family once lived and in which the Annunciation of Archangel Gabriel occurred. Richeldis was given the task of building a replica house in her village, in England. The building came to be known as the "Holy House", and later became both a shrine and a focus of pilgrimage to Walsingham.

Holy House and pilgrimages

The historian J. C. Dickinson argues that the chapel was founded in the time of Edward the Confessor, about 1053, the earliest deeds naming Richeldis, the mother of Geoffrey of Favraches, as the founder. Dickinson claims that in 1169, Geoffrey granted "to God and St Mary and to Edwy his clerk the chapel of our Lady" which his mother had founded at Walsingham with the intention that Edwy should found a priory. These gifts were, shortly afterwards, confirmed to the Augustinian Canons of Walsingham by Robert de Brucurt and Roger, earl of Clare.^[2]

However, historian Bill Flint (2015) has refuted the foundation date established by Dickinson, arguing that the 1161 Norfolk Roll refers to the foundation of the priory only and not the shrine. Flint supports the earlier date of 1061 given in the Pynson Ballad and claims that in this year, Queen Edith the Fair, Lady of the Manor, was the likely Walsingham visionary.

By the time of its destruction in 1538 during the reign of Henry VIII, the shrine had become one of the greatest religious centres in England and Europe, together with Glastonbury and Canterbury. It had been a place of pilgrimage during medieval times, when due to wars and political upheaval, travel to Rome and Santiago de Compostela was tedious and difficult.

Nevertheless, royal patronage helped the shrine to grow both in wealth and popularity, receiving regal visits from the following kings and queen: King Henry III, King Edward I, King Edward II, King Henry IV, King Edward IV, King Henry VII, King Henry VIII, Queen Catherine of Aragon¹

Visiting in 1513, Desiderius Erasmus wrote the following:

"When you look in you would say it is the abode of saints, so brilliantly does it shine with gems, gold and silver ... Our Lady stands in the dark at the right side of the altar ... a little image, remarkable neither for its size, material or workmanship."

It was also a place of pilgrimage for Queen Catherine of Aragon who was a regular pilgrim. Likewise, Anne Boleyn also publicly announced an intention of making a pilgrimage but it never occurred.

Destruction

The suppression of the monasteries was part of the English Reformation. On the pretext of discovering any irregularities in their life, Thomas Cromwell organized a series of visitations, the results of which led to the suppression of smaller foundations (which did not include Walsingham) in 1536. Six years



earlier the prior, Richard Vowell, had signed their acceptance of the king's supremacy, but it did not save them. Cromwell's actions were politically motivated but the canons, were not noted for their piety or good order. The prior was evidently compliant but not all of the community felt likewise. In 1537, two lay choristers organized "the most serious plot hatched anywhere south of the Trent", intended to resist what they feared, rightly as it turned out, would happen to their foundation. Eleven men were executed as a result. The sub-prior, Nicholas Milcham, was charged with conspiring to rebel against the suppression of the lesser monasteries, and on flimsy evidence was convicted of high treason and hanged outside the priory walls.

The suppression of the Walsingham priory came late in 1538, under the supervision of Sir Roger Townshend, a local landowner. Walsingham was famous and its fall symbolic.

The image is said to have been burned with images from other shrines at some point, publicly, in London. Two chroniclers, Hall and Speed, suggest that the actual burning did not take place until September.

The buildings were looted and largely destroyed, but the memory of it was less easy to eradicate. Sir Roger wrote to Cromwell in 1564 that a woman of nearby Wells (now called Wells-Next-The-Sea) had declared that a miracle had been done by the statue after it had been carried away to London. He had the woman put in the stocks on market day to be abused by the village folk but concluded "I cannot perceyve but the seyid image is not yett out of the sum of ther heddes."

The site of the priory with the churchyard and gardens was granted by the Crown to Thomas Sydney. All that remained of it was the gatehouse, the chancel arch and a few outbuildings. The Elizabethan ballad, "A Lament for Walsingham", expresses something of what the Norfolk people felt at the loss of their shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.

Pontifical approbations

Pope Leo XIII issued a Papal decree from Rome blessing the Marian image for public veneration on 6 February 1897.

Pope Pius XII granted a canonical coronation to the Roman Catholic image via the Papal Nuncio, Bishop Gerald O'Hara, on 15 August 1954 with a gold crown funded by her female devotees, now venerated in the Slipper Chapel.

Pope John Paul II venerated the image for Pentecost at the Wembley Stadium on 29 May 1982 during an open-air Holy Mass.

Pope Francis raised her sanctuary to the status of a minor basilica on 27 December 2015 through an apostolic decree from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.^[9]

Modern revival

After nearly four hundred years the 20th century saw the restoration of pilgrimage to Walsingham as a regular feature of Christian life in the British Isles and beyond. There are both Catholic and Anglican shrines in Walsingham, as well as an Orthodox one.

Slipper Chapel

In 1340, the Slipper Chapel was built at Houghton St Giles, a mile outside Walsingham. This was the final "station" chapel on the way to Walsingham. It was here that pilgrims would remove their shoes to walk the final "Holy Mile" to the shrine barefoot.^[5] Hence the designation 'Slipper' Chapel.

In 1896, Charlotte Pearson Boyd purchased the 14th-century Slipper Chapel, which had seen centuries of secular use, and set about its restoration.^[10] The statue of the Mother and Child was carved at Oberammergau and based on the design of the original statue - a design found on the medieval seal of Walsingham Priory.^[5]

In 1897, Pope Leo XIII re-established the restored 14th-century Slipper Chapel as a Catholic shrine, now the centre of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.^[11] The Holy House had been rebuilt at the Church of the Annunciation at King's Lynn (Walsingham was part of this Catholic parish in 1897).

Anglican shrine

The Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham was created in 1938. In 1921, Fr Hope Patten was appointed Vicar of Walsingham. He set up a statue of Our Lady of Walsingham, based on the image depicted on the seal of the medieval priory, in the Parish Church of St Mary. As the number of pilgrims to the site increased, a new chapel was dedicated in 1931 and the statue was moved to it. The chapel was extended in 1938 to form the current Anglican shrine.^[12]

Veneration

There is frequently an ecumenical dimension to pilgrimages to Walsingham, with many pilgrims arriving at the Slipper Chapel and then walking to the Holy House at the Anglican shrine. Student Cross is the longest continuous walking pilgrimage in Britain to Walsingham which takes place over Holy Week and Easter.

The Ecumenical Movement: A School for Virtue

by Fr. John Crossin ofss

www.usccb.org



"The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council." This first sentence of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism

(1964, #1) is still surprising to many Catholics.

How did the church come to embrace the ecumenical movement? Most authorities date the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement to the Edinburgh (Scotland) World Missionary Conference of 1910. The Conference was a gathering of Protestants and Anglicans. The Conference was concerned with collaboration in Christian Missions. Then as now divisions among Christians were hindering the acceptance of the gospel.

The sole Catholic participation was through a letter sent by Bishop Bonomelli of Cremona, Italy wishing the participants well. The letter was read aloud at the beginning of the Conference. Bishop Bonomelli mentioned at the time to some priests that he knew, including Angelo Roncalli, that an ecumenical council could come from the emergence of these church relationships.

The following fifty years witnessed occasional Catholic participation in ecumenical conversations. There was some softening of Catholic concerns about ecumenism over the decades. There was interest among some theologians such as the Dominican priest Yves Congar—who much later was named a Cardinal by Pope John Paul II—in ecumenical matters. Congar wrote his groundbreaking book on Christian disunity in 1937.

These decades saw the founding of the World Council of Churches after World War II and the increased activity of the National Council of Churches in the United States.

Early in his pontificate Pope John XXIII (Angelo Roncalli) called the Second Vatican Council. The Holy Spirit, who is the principle of Church unity, had been gently at work during Pope John's days as Papal Ambassador first in Bulgaria (an Eastern Orthodox country), then in Turkey (a Muslim country) and lastly in France (a secularizing country).

The *Decree on Ecumenism* set the stage for the last fifty years of Catholic dialogue and conversation with our Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican brothers and sisters. The *Decree* gives "Catholic Principles on Ecumenism."

Jesus prayed for unity, that his disciples be one, [Jn 17:21] at the Last Supper. It is the Holy Spirit who brings about "the wonderful communion of the faithful..." (#2) Ultimately Christian unity is God's will and God's work and not solely our own.

The *Decree* exhorts all Catholics to participate in the work on Christian unity (#4). This work, our conversation,

dialogue and service with others, calls for complete honesty. We must represent the position of others with truth and fairness.

We are called to a gentle mutual respect and trust in one another. For example, in the past we have sometimes engaged in comparing 'our best to their worst'. Honesty and mutual respect call us to search the past and the present together in order to come to the truth. Our conversation is based on the truth—as well as we can determine it.

This search leads us to acknowledge our own faults. 'Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth.' (#6)

Humility is a key virtue for ecumenists. We need to repent of our past faults in order to embrace the current guidance of the Holy Spirit. (#7)

The search leads us to value the virtues of our ecumenical colleagues. "...anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can contribute to our edification." (#4) I always remember that after Vatican II one of the senior priest-theologians of my religious order engaged in regular conversation with an Anglican colleague. He remarked one day at lunch that while they had theological differences, the Anglican priest was outstanding in living the Gospel.

In my experience, our conversation with our fellow Christians leads us to look deeper into the roots of our own faith. We clarify our deepest beliefs—and sometimes need to acknowledge our own misunderstandings of Catholic belief.

Ecumenical dialogue, rather than making us less Catholic, makes us more.

A deep search into our own faith can make us aware of commonalities that we share with our fellow Christians. It is the Holy Spirit who will help us work our way through the divergences which we also discover.

Ecumenical conversation leads us back to prayer. "This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name 'spiritual ecumenism.'" (#8)

I think that ecumenical relationships are a School of Virtue. To engage others we need humility, honesty, patience, and gentleness. Sometimes we see these in our ecumenical partners. I hope they see them in us. I believe that we need saints to lead us on the road to unity.

A final virtue for today is courage. Many Christians throughout the globe are dying for their faith. Cardinal Koch of the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* speaks of the Ecumenism of the Martyrs. We have no better leaders.