

in a

# Word™

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**MARY is  
The Most Powerful  
Woman in the World**

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD

# WOMAN OF THE YEAR EVERY YEAR

by

Father Jerome LeDoux, SVD

What woman is mentioned more often in the Koran than in the Bible? Until the last couple of days, I would not have even imagined the answer to that question.

And what woman is considered by at least one large, influential section of the secular media the most powerful woman in the world, even of all time? Until two days ago, I would not have guessed correctly the answer to that question either.

In Mexico, the answer to either question would be readily, fully embraced and completely appreciated, for in Mexico the Virgin Mother Mary is the beginning of everything good for us because she is the splendid Theotokos (Greek Θεοτόκος), the God-bearer, the Mother of God who brought us Jesus Christ our Savior.

The December 2015 cover of National Geographic magazine displays the beautiful, elegant face of a lady bearing the title **Mary** in huge print and the subtitle in much smaller but still strong print, **The Most Powerful Woman in the World**.



Any proponent/promoter of Mary, who wished to find the most efficient and farthest-reaching presentation and explanation of Mary the Θεοτόκος to the global masses of peoples, could not find a better one than National Geographic and – God knows – could not afford the price tag attached to it. And there's more! The National Geographic TV channel presented *The Cult of Mary* Sunday, December 13 and December 20, 2015.

Public demand most likely will cause it to be shown again.

And nowadays there is even more! What National Geographic has published in their magazine and through their TV channel documentary will now be bandied about nonstop to and fro around the world by cell phone, computer, facebook, twitter, papers and word of mouth about what the Θεοτόκος means for each of us.

By the way, there are three times as many titles of Mary found in various litanies. Mary's big data numbers cruncher, Michael O'Neill, has codified every known apparition of

Mary back to 40 A.D. Only 28 of the 2,000 apparitions reported in the last 450 years have been approved by local bishops; only 16 of those by the Vatican.

Asked what Mary means to him, Pope Francis said, «She is my Mamá!» Billions seek her as Mama, confidante and intercessor with Jesus. Doctors are left scratching their heads as countless unexplainable healings take place globally.

Mary is woven into our entire culture. The ancient Christians actually gave the name «Mary's gold» to marigolds. You would cause a rebellion if you tried to remove the Hail Mary from football. Our Lady of Guadalupe is one of the most reproduced images in the world. Multimillions annually flood Fatima, Lourdes, Kibeho (Rwanda), Knock, Medjugorje and other Marian shrines around the globe, creating billions of dollars, thousands of jobs. Awesome works of art, architecture, poetry, music, liturgy and over 100,000 books have been inspired by Mary.

Mexican friends have told me that Hispanics do not like the number 3. This is most obvious in the case of the Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They insert Mary, the Θεοτόκος, into the picture. With her there, they are comfortable, as witnessed by untold millions who flood Guadalupe and other Marian shrines.

Mary is the most powerful woman in the world, the Θεοτόκος, yet the humblest and therefore most powerful servant of God of all time. Is it any wonder that this humble Virgin is hailed by even the secular arm of literature, art, politics, the world of business and the military no less?

Lola Falana, of erstwhile Las Vegas fame, says, «When I pray the rosary, I talk to my Mama who then talks to my Heavenly Papa.» Keep fighting that MS, Lola!



# THANKSGIVING FOR REFUGEES

at

**St. Paul the Apostle In Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

Thanksgiving Day's Community Dinner at St. Paul the Apostle in Baton Rouge, Louisiana was a day that touched the heart and lives of over 350 guests from around the greater Eden Park community and beyond who came to share in our annual national feast of gratitude and thanksgiving. Not only were the hearts and lives of our guests touched, so were those of the parishioners and their friends who came to warmly welcome and truly serve our sisters and brothers in fellowship.

**To make this event special, St. Paul prophetically extended an invitation through the leadership of Catholic Charities in Baton Rouge to the refugees they serve. For most of the refugees who attended, it was their first Thanksgiving in the United States.**



*Father Rick Andrus, SVD serving meals at Thanksgiving dinner*

At a time when many of our nation's leaders and want-to-be-presidential leaders, are busy stirring up large segments of Americans with fear, hate, re-ignited racial prejudice, suspicion of people speaking "strange languages" and seemingly, certifying people from

not only the Middle East but from so many countries around the world as "possible terrorists" who are not to be trusted and certainly not to be welcomed, St. Paul the Apostle stood tall and spoke clearly a different message.

In Matthew 25:44, the question is posed: "But Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty? When did we welcome you when you were away from home and a foreigner in a strange land? When did we clothe you or visit you when you were ill or in prison?" The King will answer them, 'I assure you ... as often as you did it for one of MY least brothers and sisters, you did for me!

Jesus provides us a very clear message: he is to be found daily in the men, women and children around us, in the least likely: the churched and unchurched, the Christian the Muslim, the terrorized, the addict, the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely, the foreigner, the ill, infirmed and incarcerated.

Jesus is found in those most of the rest of the world ignores, despises, isolates, and threatens with violence, hate, retribution and deportation: As often as you do for the least of my brothers and sisters, you do for me!

The people of St. Paul responded in a prophetic way to the tremendous opportunity we had to put our faith into action. We opened wide the doors of St. Paul's Church Center and our hearts to welcome all of our brothers and sisters, regardless of who they are or where they come from because we KNOW WHOSE they are! As the sons and daughters of a loving God who is Father of us all, they are our brothers and sisters!

As a people with a long, and often painful history that includes dealing with the evil of prejudice and alienation socially, economically, academically, politically and even spiritually, we understand what hardships and difficulties so many are forced to endure right here in our community and surely the new refugees. Our endurance and slow but persistent determination to achieve victories continues to keep our hearts open and our senses keenly focused and actively responsive to whatever injustices and social evils others are often forced to face.

**With that in mind and our rich faith in the transforming power of love, we extended an open and welcoming invitation to people throughout the community, and especially to the new refugees who have made Baton Rouge their home, to join us for Thanksgiving Dinner.**

**Given the divisive and often hateful political rhetoric and atmosphere that the extremists' right are creating, it was important to be a prophetic community right now.**

Thanksgiving Day was prophetic indeed. St. Paul parishioners put our faith in action, remembering also the eternal words of Emma Lazarus that are engraved on our welcoming shores to all who seek a better life for it clearly state: "*Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*"

Indeed, we know and our faith has again given testimony: that when you did for the least of my sisters and brothers, you did for me!

*We thank Father Rick Andrus, SVD for contributing this article. He is Pastor of the socially active African American parish of St. Paul the Apostle in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.*

# in a word or two

Front cover photo is a carving of Mary from Bali, Indonesia. The carving was presented to Pope Benedict by the Divine Word Missionaries in 2012 in Nemi, Italy. Photos accompanying Father LeDoux's brilliant article on Mary are of a statue of the Vietnamese Our Lady of La Vang. The famous "Black Madonna" at end of article is that of our Lady of Czestochowa from Poland. Images of Mary are found throughout the world.

Mary is the most powerful woman in the world, and as Father LeDoux rightly states she is that way year after year!



***These photos are from the St. Paul Thanksgiving Dinner for Refugees***



**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**



Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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Correspondence to Media Production Center, 199 Seminary Drive, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520, Phone: 228-344-3166..

Electronic messages to our Internet address, [editor@inaword.com](mailto:editor@inaword.com).

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Christmas photos by John Pawlicki - Bay City, Michigan