

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

October 7, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Good Shepherdess (Divina Pastora)

From time to time, the Church dedicates certain periods of time to a particular saint, dogma, or object of faith, with the hopes that by doing so the Church will inspire us to explore this area of our faith more closely. Therefore, I think that it is very beneficial for those who seize these invitations. It also says something to me that the Catholic Church dedicates two months (May and October) to the Blessed Virgin Mary. As I strive to learn more about the Blessed Virgin Mary each October, I turn to a book written by Ann Ball titled: *The Other Faces of Mary: Stories, Devotions, and Pictures of the Holy Virgin Around the World*. I never fail to grow in my appreciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and thus of Jesus her Son when I reflect on these images.

Good Shepherdess (Divina Pastora)

A small parish church in Siparia, Trinidad there is a dark-skinned image of the Blessed Virgin Mary that gives me hope for according to Ann Ball the image of Blessed Virgin Mary known as the Good Shepherdess has become an interreligious focal point. The Catholics, Muslims and Hindus of the area honor the Blessed Virgin Mary under this title. The Hindus of the area in a special way on Holy Thursday honor Mary with a procession that thousands of Hindus take part in. This two and half feet tall statue made of African Cedar being such a source of unity for the people of the area, I believe is a miracle in itself.

In 1703, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Isidore of Seville. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared dressed in the clothes of a shepherd. She informed St. Isidore that her mission in life was to shepherd people toward her son the Good Shepherd.

On Holy Thursday, Hindus of the area gather around the shrine and have a celebration in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary which includes almsgiving, bazaar, ritual dance, and the presentation of children. The evening ends with Catholic volunteers providing dinner for everyone. Anne Ball makes the following statement about "The history of the devotion to the Good Shepherdess demonstrates that mission and evangelization must reject aggressiveness and the belittling of other religions. Here, Christians follow the directives of the Second Vatican Council in respecting others and appreciating their freedom to follow the religion of their choice. To use her image as a tool for conversion would defy what she represents to those of different faiths who come to her. Instead, La Divina Divina Pastora provides reassurance and hope for the oppressed and leads them to god in her own way and in his own time.



PRAYER TO THE DIVINE SHEPHERDESS

O Divine Shepherdess of souls, Mother of the Blessed You who have always cared for us, you who are our salvation, That you have taken care of us with motherly protection, That you have given us strength and value in sorrows, grief and discouragement, That with love and understanding you give us hope in our affliction That you are with us always, grant us your help, shelter and attention. Divine Shepherdess, Mother of the Good Shepherd, Who never forsakes her children, Intercede for us before Jesus Christ your Son, The Good Shepherd, So that he will grant the favors we now ask with faith and humility of heart. (add your prayer request) Mary, Divine Shepherdess, May your Mother's hands guide and direct our steps In the difficult road of life. Lead us with your immense tenderness and mercy, Make us faithful to the following of your Son, faithful disciples like you O Divine Shepherdess. Give us strength in our weariness and misery, and help in our problems and needs, Free us from evil and the enemy that we may encounter, Free us from anything that might cause us to fall. Divine Shepherdess, Holy Mother of the Good Shepherd, That with your help we can live with faith, hope and love, That the virtue of charity burns in our hearts For all of God's children, and all of God's creatures.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

October 14, 2018

**Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Iveron Mother of God of Montreal**

The next image that Ann Ball presents to us in her book titled: *The Other Faces of Mary: Stories, Devotions, and Pictures of the Holy Virgin Around the World* is called Iveron Mother of God Of Montreal.

Iveron Mother of God Of Montreal.

1982 a young Chilean convert to Orthodoxy living in Canada. Jose Munoz Cortes went on pilgrimage to Mount Athos in Greece and purchased a modern copy of a famous icon called the “Iveron icon of the Mother of God.” Upon returning to Canada the icon began to “exude” myrrh which continued to flow for fifteen years until someone killed Jose and stole the icon. No one knows where the icon is today. For fifteen years though Jose traveled the world with the Icon showing it to anyone who wanted to see it. It was said that the Icon itself was a conduit for many miracles.

I think it is important to realize that God is the source of all miracles but God has chosen to use things and people as conduits of His grace. Praying with an Icon is something special. The following from an article in US Catholic Magazine..



A GUIDE TO PRAYING WITH AN ICON By Jim Forest **ARTICLE YOUR FAITH**

“In the beginning was the Word,” wrote St John. “He is the image [*ikon* in Greek] of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,” wrote St. Paul. We meet him still in both word and image.

Both have figured in the worshiping life of followers of Christ from the church’s beginning, as visitors to the catacombs in Rome are reminded. The bones are mainly gone, but icons remain on the walls and ceilings of those underground places where Christians prayed and celebrated the Eucharist.

In the eighth century, when the emperor of Constantinople outlawed icons and initiated a 55-year wave of destruction of sacred images in the East, many iconographers fled to Italy for safety and continued their work under the pope’s protection.

Fashion can destroy even more thoroughly than imperial edicts. Through never banned in the West, icons gradually fell out of favor during the Renaissance. Increasingly religious paintings moved toward natural lighting, the illusion of three dimensions, and the ever more vivid portrayal of emotion—all qualities carefully avoided in iconography, which aims for silence and stillness. Icons are not emotionally manipulative. They are less a display of individual talent than the creation of a zone of prayer using artistic minimalism.

Early in the 20th century a slow recovery of appreciation of icons began. Today icons can be found not only in Orthodox and Catholic churches but also in Protestant churches and homes. It is a form of ecumenism without words or arguments.

Icons may be beautiful, but they do not exist just to add a little color or a special atmosphere to the rooms they happen to be in. They’re there to help us pray. An icon that isn’t being used in prayer is like a musical instrument not being played or a cookbook that never gives birth to a meal.

But just how can you use them in prayer? First of all, identify a place in your home—such as a corner of a room or a fireplace mantel—that provides a place where you can stand for short times slightly apart from the busyness of daily life. This will be your “icon corner.”

At the beginning you probably won’t have any hand-painted icons, but in religious bookstores or online you can easily find good, inexpensive printed icons mounted on wood.

You might start with an icon of the face of Christ. These are usually called *Pantocrator* icons, from the Greek word for “Lord of Creation.” They show not only his face but the book containing the gospels resting against his heart. If the book is open, it will often show one of the “I am” texts—such as “I am the truth, the way, and the life.” Such icons remind us that God became incarnate, revealing himself not only to our ancestors but to us, and that each person—no matter how well he or she has managed to hide it—is made in God’s image. Finally such icons remind us that one day we will be present for the Last Judgment and will hear Christ say, “What you have done to the least person, you did to me.”

You may also want an icon of Mary holding Christ in her arms. In many of these their faces are touching. These “tenderness icons” vividly remind us that love is at the core of life, and that to follow Christ and to revere his mother inevitable draws us toward the source of love and mercy. Mary’s body language always draws us toward her son, as if she were saying, “Do whatever he tells us.”

Arrange your icon corner so that a candle or vigil lamp can be lit during the periods when you’re praying. Icons are best suited to places that aren’t brightly lit and seem to flourish in candlelight. So there you are in your icon corner. But how are you praying? You may be praying in silence, simply remembering the crucial fact that God is at the center of everything, that it is impossible not to be in God’s presence even if we’re totally oblivious to this reality.

You may be able to talk to God as comfortably as if you were talking to your very best friend. God made us to communicate and much of that communication is in words. Something terrible may have happened and you may just want to stand there and cry—or complain to God.

If you are at all like me, someone who usually feels embarrassed with attempts at devising my own words of prayer, you may want to use some of the prayers that have arisen during the centuries Jews and Christians have been around: the psalms or canticles in the Old and New Testaments (such as the one by the three young men in the furnace in Daniel, or Mary’s Magnificat). In any religious bookstore you will find collections of prayers organized into periods of the day. Little by little you can learn many prayers by heart.

Your icons don’t have to be suitable for a fine art book. It’s the faith of the praying person that matters most—a lesson I learned from Dorothy Day.

In her early 60s at the time, she was having increasing trouble climbing the five flights to her apartment in Manhattan’s Little Italy. We found another not far away and only one flight up, but in appalling condition. A friend and I went down to clean and paint it. We dragged box after box of debris down to the street, including what seemed to us an awful painting of the Holy Family rendered in bright colors against a gray background on a piece of plywood. We shook our heads, deposited it in the trash along the curb, and went back to our labor. Not long after that, Dorothy arrived, the painting in hand, “Look what I found! The Holy Family! It’s a providential sign, a blessing.” She put it on the mantel of the apartment’s bricked-up fireplace. Looking at it again, this time I saw it was a work of love.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
October 21, 2018
Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Koratty of Muthy

The next image that Ann Ball presents to us in her book titled: *The Other Faces of Mary: Stories, Devotions, and Pictures of the Holy Virgin Around the World* is called Koratty of Muthy.

Koratty of Muthy

This image of Mary titled “Koratty of Muthy” is one of the oldest devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary in all of India. She comes to us from the Syro-Malabar Catholic Rite. These are Catholics who are living in India who can trace their spiritual roots all the way back to St. Thomas the Apostle.

According to ancient tradition there was a battle between two royal families and one member of one of the royal families was killed. The pall bearers of this royal family member carried the casket quite a distance and then all of a sudden the casket would not budge. It was there that they decided to build a Church.

After reading three different accounts about the Koratty Muthy, I could not find anything that explained how this became a very big pilgrim site but it I did not. I did find three interesting legends that I speak deeper spiritual truths about devotion to Mary.

The first legend entails a rich landowner stealing bananas from poorer landowners and being stricken with a mysterious illness until he confessed his sins and



made an offering to the image Koratty of Muthy as restitution for the evil he had been doing. This shows us, like many Marian apparitions that the Blessed Virgin Mary has a soft spot of the poor.

The second legend deals with a train that broke down outside the shrine and after the people prayed at the shrine it the train started again without any problems. This reminds us that if we do things God's way all things will work in our favor.

The third was that there was supposed to be an Airforce base built on the Church land. The contractor promised quick progress but became afraid when he saw a woman who appeared to be the Koratty of Muthy standing in the middle of the supposed base. This reminds us that our Blessed Mother is the Queen of Peace.

PRAYER TO KORATTY MUTHY (HAIL MARY OR AVE MARIA)

Virgin full of goodness, Mother of Mercy, KORATTYMUTHY I entrust to you my body and soul, my thoughts, my actions, my life and my death. O my mother Korattymuthy, deliver me from all the snares of the devil. Obtain for me the grace of loving my Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, with a true and perfect love, and after him. O Mary, Korattymuthy, to love you with all my heart and above all things. O my Korattymuthy, mother of God, help me in obtaining all the favors I now need and seek especially (please mention your personal prayers) Amen.
Hail Mary! Koratty Muthy, pray for us (10 times)

THE PRAYER FOLLOWING MARY'S EXAMPLE

All-powerful and ever-living God, in the plan of your wisdom, she who bore the Christ in her womb was raised body and soul in glory to be with Him in heaven. May we follow her example in reflecting Your holiness and join her hymn of endless life and praise. Amen.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

October 28, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Our Lady of Siluva

The next image that Ann Ball presents to us in her book titled: *The Other Faces of Mary: Stories, Devotions, and Pictures of the Holy Virgin Around the World* is called Or Lady of Siluva.

Our Lady of Siluva

In 1608, Our Blessed Mother appeared to some children near the small town of Siluva in Lithuania. Most of the people in the town were poor farmers. The children described Mary appearing to them as a woman with long hair standing on a large rock holding a child in her arms. The children spoke about how they were amazed at the amount of tears that flowed from the woman's eyes. The speechless children ran to the nearest Church which happened to be Calvinists. The Calvinist preachers told the people that the children had seen the devil but as he spoke the woman appeared again. The preacher finally gathered enough courage to ask the lady why she was crying. Her response was "Formerly in this place, my Son was honored and adored, but now all that the people do is seed and cultivate the land."

Fast forward many years, and a new law is passed that allowed the Catholic Church to reclaim property that had been unjustly taken from them by the government and various protestant Churches but only if they could find the appropriate paperwork. In search of such paperwork for a nearby Church a blind man led them to the rock where the blessed Virgin Mary appeared and he regain their sights and miraculously the needed paperwork was discovered.



Pope Pius VI gave official Church approval to the apparition but unfortunately the communist in 1975 suppressed the devotion to the best of their ability. Devotion to our Lady under the title of Our Lady of Siluva continued to grow. There is currently an image of Our Lady of Siluva at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C.

While looking for a prayer to go with our Lady of Siluva, I came across a few websites that referred to this image of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the "Patroness of Those Who Pray for Lapse Catholics." Proving once again that our Mother is constantly at work supporting those who desire to bring people back to her Son.

I am going to end today's reflection with the following quote from St. Josemaria Escriva: "All the sins of your life seem to be rising up against you. Don't give up hope! On the contrary, call your holy mother Mary, with the faith and abandonment of a child. She will bring peace to your soul."

A PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF SILUVA

O Most Holy Virgin Mary, Thou who didst appear to the shepherds in the fields at Siluva, Thou whose tears did bathe the rock where once an altar stood, Thou who didst with plaintive voice say: "You plow and seed here where formerly my Son was honored," grant that we, moved by Thy tears, may, once as our Forefathers did, revive the spirit of adoration of Thy Son in our fallow hearts, strengthen the tottering structure of the shrine which is the family, and seek forgiveness for our negligence and sins.

O Mother of God, we desire to raise up the glory of Your revelation from forgotten ruins, that we may all the more honor Thee, the Patroness of Lithuania, and with Thy help obtain for us the spirit of a living Faith. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

RETURN OF LAPSED CATHOLICS TO THE SACRAMENTS

Almighty Father, . You desire not the death of the sinner, but that he may be converted and live. Pour out upon us Your mercy and hear the prayers of Your servants. Soften the hearts of Your children who have strayed from the true path which You established for their salvation. They are now forgetful of their duties as Catholics, and pursue the pleasures of the world. Grant that they may quickly return to the practice of every Christian virtue, so that their lives may shine with the integrity of faith, the fervor of piety, and the ardor of charity. Restore them all to Your sacraments and the life of Your grace, through the merits of the most precious blood of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

