



# The role of *MARY*

by Bro FRANCESCO DILEO OFMCap

**M**ay is the month dedicated to Our Lady. This is an ancient tradition that was formalised by a Jesuit priest, Fr. Annibale Dionisi in 1725, with his book "The Month of May, the month of Mary," in which he invited all her true faithful to homage her with flowers of virtues. The book was published under the pseudonym of Mariano Partenio.

This year too, we are called in this month to consider with increased fervour the Mother of Jesus' role, that she had and continues to have, in the history of salvation and that commenced with an event that we commemorated in the last Sunday of May, that is the mystery of Pentecost, and which we continually recall every Wednesday and Sunday in the recitation of the Rosary.

Mary of Nazareth was not alone but gathered together with all the apostles when: "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared on them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2, 1-4).

According to Saint John Paul II: "It was appropriate that the first outpouring of the Spirit upon her, which had happened in view of divine motherhood should be repeated and reinforced. Indeed, at the foot of the Cross Mary was entrusted with a new motherhood, which concerned Jesus' dis-

ciples. It was precisely this mission that demanded a renewed gift of the Spirit (...) for the sake of the Church, whose image, model and mother Mary is called to be" (General Audience, 28 May 1997, 3).

Padre Pio experienced this too, in a very concrete way, called, as he was, to an elevated and profound spiritual life by the Lord and he revealed something of this in confidence to Fr. Pellegrino Funicelli, a fellow friar. He told him of the Holy Virgin's presence and inspiration in the confessional: "Our Lady, in my ministry of the priesthood, has always been my example and point of reference. I believe there is no other way. I cannot go against my mother. I am a docile instrument in Our Lady's hands. My whole life's desire has been to cleanse and heal souls and to adorn them with grace, absolving their sins and sometimes denying them absolution. This is how I followed the most Holy Virgin's heavenly inspirations and that I desired for my spiritual children."

The holy friar wished to teach his spiritual children too, about Mary of Nazareth's role in the mystery of redemption and the Church's salvific action, and also the ordinary assistance that the Heavenly Mother gives to all those who invoke her with faith. An example of this is found in a letter that Padre Pio wrote on 16 September 1916, to a spiritual daughter in which he encouraged her and recommended to invoke "the most holy Virgin's

intercession," so that she help her "to meditate well and keep all distractions and temptations far from (her)" (Letters III).

Maria Gargani, the recipient, treasured this and went on in life in pursuit of her religious vocation and founded the Institute of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart, taking the name of Mother Mary Crucified of Divine Love. And she pursued this path of Christian perfection so fervently as to become the first of all Padre Pio's spiritual children to be proclaimed Blessed. This profound bond between them inspired her Sisters to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of their foundress on 21 May in our shrine of San Giovanni Rotonondo, and with a triduum in preparation.

All believers, like Maria Gargani, may find Our Lady's loving assistance if they entrust themselves to her.

We too, in these present times of such uncertainty should raise our eyes to her and invoke the Holy Virgin's maternal protection. She is always ready to embrace her children and to lead them to her Son in whom they may find peace, love and true happiness. May Our Lord the ruler of all life and time, with the intercession of His Most Holy Mother and our Saint Padre Pio listen to our prayers that we raise in this special month dedicated to Mary and lead us to a new Spring. 

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