

# The Prayer of Mary and the Saints Who Met Her

Sr Catherine Aubin, OP

*Preface by Pope Francis*

NOTES ON PRAYER

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## Introduction

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*Behold your son...*

Rome, April 2003. A young woman called Alexandra, Catholic but non-practising, was wandering near the church of Tre Fontane. She felt anxious and stressed; her second husband's ex-wife was after her, wanting to harm her. On top of that, her second husband's young son was in difficulties. It was in this troubled state that she came to a little grotto, well away from the normal tourist routes, where Mary had appeared around 1947 to an anticlerical Communist called Bruno Cornacchiola. The place looked ill-cared-for and neglected, with candles that had burnt themselves out, and withered flowers lying around on the floor. In this shrine Alexandra stopped in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary. They looked at each other in silence. Suddenly, she saw that Mary's arm was moving, pointing somewhere. She rubbed her eyes to make sure she wasn't dreaming. No, Mary was pointing at something. She looked to see what it was, and saw a picture of Mary holding the Child Jesus, aged 3 or 4, by the hand. Alexandra instantly understood the message:

Mary was asking her to look after Johanne, her second husband's son, who was also 4 years old. From the depths of her being Alexandra shouted, "NO! That's beyond my strength! The answer is No!" She left the shrine in a state of revolt and rage. Several weeks and several journeys later, Alexandra realised that she had, almost without conscious intention, made a home for the little boy with her own son. All her resistance had melted away, and from then on she did not have just one son but two. Twenty years on, Johanne is still a difficult character. He has settled on another continent, not far from Alexandra. And every time he meets serious problems, he calls his "mother", Alexandra, saying, "You're a mother to me, a real mother, you're my mother." Alexandra recognises that each time she goes to the support of her second "son", she feels the presence of Mary saying to her yet again, "Look after this child as if he were your own," and she experiences in that instant all of Mary's strength and gentleness. When we cannot manage on our own, someone else often comes to seek us out. In Alexandra's vulnerability it was Mary who came to give her courage and confidence. Johanne has become her son for all eternity.

It was in that place, now known as the "Shrine of Our Lady of Revelation", that Mary appeared to Bruno Cornacchiola several times asking him to build a church there. What she said to him was, "People will come to pray here who are lost, parched with thirst. Here they will find love, understanding, and consolation: the true

meaning of life. Here in this place, in the grotto where I have appeared several times, there will be a door called the ‘Door of Peace’. Everyone must enter by this door.”

With Alexandra, we have chosen to enter by this “door” to write about praying with Mary.

When Mary appears, anywhere in the whole world, the places where she appears have points in common with the biblical places where she stayed and lived. In the first chapter we will review these places, asking ourselves what they reveal to us about Mary’s identity, and what the inner spaces are that Mary asks us to dwell in today. In the second chapter, we will listen to the very few actual words of Mary given to us in the Gospels, and will look at her gestures, her attitudes, and her eyes, trying to understand their meaning. In other words, to discover where and how she is teaching us to react to people and events. And finally in the third chapter, we will ask two holy women about the unique relationship they each had with Mary. The whole piece will be interspersed with phrases from the traditional Orthodox prayer known as the Akathist Hymn. This will lead us towards a new, deep revelation of Mary’s closeness to each of us. Here is an extract from it:

*Rejoice, place of God’s goodwill towards sinners!*

*Rejoice, our assurance in God’s presence!*

*Rejoice, you who lead us, in silence, to trust!*

