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Third letter from John S. Stokes, Jr., to Jane A. McLaughlin

John S. Stokes

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Ms Jane A. McLaughlin, Parish Historian
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Dear Ms McLaughlin,

This will be the third "installment" relative to our interest in St. Joseph's Garden of Our Lady, in which I will hope to do justice to the several motivations we envisage for in time restoring the Garden to a generous variety of historically documented Flowers of Our Lady, together with some sort of identifying markers, planting plan and plant list which will once again make it clear to the visitor that this is a Garden rich in meditative and devotional religious symbolism, and not just a pretty Garden dedicated to Mary (commendable as this is in itself).

First I would like to address several matters brought up in my conversation with you and Miss Fyne after the 9:30 Mass yesterday.

Yes, I would be privileged and delighted to meet with a group of St. Joseph's parishioners, in late Summer or early Fall, to share my interest in the Flowers of Our Lady and Mary Gardens with them, showing color slide photos etc., and speaking of my enduring hope of seeing the Bell Tower Mary Garden restored according to Mrs. Lillie's original concept. It occurs to me that some weekend afternoon or weekday evening might be best, because I've found it ends up taking two or three hours once you get into it - with the slides and then questions, and informal discussion. My suggestion is that the focus be on a smaller group of persons more actively concerned with the parish, who could definitely come, with any others being welcome, rather than using just a general announcement and waiting to see who shows up. With this said, however, I will leave it completely up to your judgement.

In response to Miss Fyne's question about the historical origin of the Mary-names and other religious names of plants in Christian popular tradition, I am happy to be able to clarify this with several exhibits (1) and some comments. First I attach a copy of the yellow leaflet we prepared for an exhibit Mary Garden we were invited to show at the Philadelphia 1968 Flower Show, by Mrs. Ernesta Drinker Ballard, President of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. This leaflet dealt with this matter for the general public, including people from the horticultural and academic communities... referring, for example, to Bauhin's "Plants Which Have Various Holy Names", published in Switzerland in 1591 (Linnaeus' scientific botanical classifications
were not published until 1753). We also comment on this matter of names in "Mary's Gardens Research - a Progress Report", enclosed with my July 15th letter, and "Mariana I", enclosed with my July 22nd letter. What we have to realize is that prior to the introduction of printing, things like the popular names of plants were highly local and diverse and were part of the oral traditions of the countryside. Certain popular names came to be selected as the "common" names in the written tradition, while vast numbers of other names for the same plants continued in the oral traditions... to be written down only much later by botanists and folklorists.

Massive service to us all has been rendered by the German scholar, Heinrich Marzell, in his giant work, "Wörterbuch Der Deutschen Pflanzennamen", published in installments from 1927 to 1979, which gives hundreds of names for individual plant species, with precise documentation... including over 1,000 Mary-names, or I should say "Mary-namin~s", since the same name may be applied to 20 different plants, or 20 names applied to the same plant, in different localities, etc. Towards the culmination of his distinguished career, he wrote a little book, "Himmelsbrot Und Teufelsleiter", as a sort of distillation of what he had learned, the Introduction of which begins (my translation):

"In its language each people gives to the names of plants of daily familiarity - trees, shrubs and flowers - a remarkable ingredient. What is referred to here is not so much the more or less artificially constructed botanical plant names, as the sense of purpose brought by popular knowledge... and also not the very old namings of trees frequently incorporated in classical landscapes, or of important humanly useful plants (cereals, etc.), in which the word roots of philology were derived from different indo-germanic or indo-european languages.

Here, rather, is a vocabulary of plant names which will not be recorded in the usual dictionaries - leaving aside special compilations of dialect vocabularies of a specific region - of names which often flash as quickly as the conception of a moment or an "invention" of a particular race, and are confined to only a small district."

With more specific reference to the "Flowers of Our Lady, I would like to quote from another German author, Johanna Nathusius, "Die Blumenwelt nach ihrer deutschen Namen, Sinn und Deutung", Leipzig, 1869 (my translation):

Chapter VIII - MARY-FLOWERS

"Mary-flowers bloom in the greatest abundance throughout the German countryside; and as varied as they are in form and color, in character and attributes, so diverse is the origin and association of their names.

To begin with - purity, whiteness, delicacy and fragrance belong to the Mother of God, whose praises they proclaim, according to the words of the old song:

Grass, flowers and clover join in her praises...
Laughing roses and playing blossoms...
Blooming hedges...
Valleys of roses and fields of violets...
Flowers shining through the clover...
Noble plant of fruitful purity.

Gottfried non Strassburg, "Son in Praise of Mary"

Additionally, healing plants were especially loved and esteemed were honored with the name of Mary, in whose lap the true healing of the world lay. Accordingly, in Tyrol, ... days between the 'Lady-Days' (The Assumption of Mary and the Nativity of Mary) were valued as the best time to gather roots and useful plants, and because of this the first of these feast-days was called 'Root-Blessing'..."
Further, according to the long-established folk outlook, the flower kingdom was given over to the household articles and the apparel of the Mother of the Child Jesus. In order that in the loving eyes of children looking backwards in time to where Jesus was born in the flesh nothing associated with the Mother of the Heavenly Child, no matter how insignificant, would fail to excel all others on earth — would appear too insignificant for the Mother of the Heavenly Child not to have the best before all others — it was seen as fitting that she be thus served by the direct creations of God.

"Legendary stories often provide the explanation for these and other names. And if legends, and also the outlook generated by a childlike sense, which we no longer find much room for — or which, rather are like flower petals blown away from the stems — . . . if the sweet fruit of evangelical truth begins to ripen on these stems, then the blown away petals still have at least as much right as each bloom and each children's name to bring us joy."

(I quote a couple of examples from Germany because of the fortuitous historical circumstance of extensive, thorough scholarship plus a continuity of Catholic tradition without the destruction and "rewrites" of the English Reformation/Dissolution and the French Revolution. I have spent hours and hours in the stacks of Widener Library at Harvard ferreting out and xeroxing hundreds of references like this from Germany, France, Spain etc., as well as England and Latin America.)

Thirdly, with respect to your consideration of the possibility that members of other Christian communions in Woods Hole — such as those at the Episcopal Church who established the herb garden there — might be willing to enter into a joint venture in which they would bring their horticultural knowledge and skills to the St. Joseph's Garden of Our Lady, strikes me as having real potential, provided of course it would be worked out to the satisfaction of Father Dalzell and all concerned. As a minimum, they might be able to form a committee of horticultural consultants for Rev. Wilbur J. Kinwell, local administrator of the Lillie trust fund for the Tower and Garden maintenance and planting, who could assist him and Mr. Stephen McInnis, the landscape gardener working with Mr. Kinwell, in restoring some of the richness and variety to the Garden which Mrs. Ginger and Mr. Cahoon started in 1961 . . . but which has now, and as far back as 1973 or earlier (I didn't visit the Garden between 1965 and 1973), been reduced to heliotrope, delphinium, petunias, a'eratum, alyssum, marigolds, day lilies and geraniums presently blooming in the Garden itself.

The "cornerstone" of any program which is developed should be, I propose, the specific resolve and objective of restoration and religious plant identification in accordance with Mrs. Lillie's original concept, . . . rather than someone else's idea of what would be the most attractive, or horticulturally interesting garden. As I have shown in my letter of July 22nd and its exhibits, it is now readily feasible to have a garden which is attractive, horticulturally interesting and composed of plant species with historically authenticated Mary-names.

In this connection I attach (2) copies of the article, "Mary Gardens", which Daniel J. Foley, Editor of HORTICULTURE, wrote for the 1952 issue of THE HERBARIUM, publication of the Herb Society of America; the description and plant list which Bonnie Roberson developed for the exhibit Mary Garden she presented, with my assistance, at the 1962 annual meeting of the Herb Society of America at Washington, D.C.; a copy of the descriptive leaflet for the new National Herb Garden at the U. S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. (which I visited and photographed extensively in May), which illustrates how brochures and plant markers can be used for teaching purposes where this is understood to be the purpose; and a copy of the leaflet, "Plants of the Virgin Mary" and "Plants of the Cloister Gardens" describing the Mary-flowers at Lincoln Cathedral (Anglican) in England, used for the instruction of people visiting this garden.
Through the years there has been a long history of cooperation between the Catholic partners of Mary's Gardens and Episcopalians. For example Bonnie Roberson assisted in the plant selection and design for a garden at the Episcopal Cathedral at Boise, Idaho.

From time to time intensely dedicated collaborators have joined with us in the Mary Garden Movement; and in this period one of the most dedicated is Miss Janet Diehl of Milwaukee, an Anglican/Episcopalian, who is an ardent member of the Anglican international Society of Mary which is intent on restoring Marian devotion and shrines in England and to this end publishes a magazine, AVE, and who is now giving numerous slides lectures in the Milwaukee area (with slides copied from a set supplied by us), and writing articles on the Flowers of Our Lady and Mary Gardens for her local Episcopal diocesan paper and for the English AVE. I don't know if there are any Society of Mary members at the Episcopal Church in Woods Hole, but I wanted you to know about this Marian movement within the Episcopal Church. I attach (3) a copy of an article by Rev. Theron R. Hughes, S.O.M., "The Society of Mary", from the October, 1980, issue of the Roman Catholic publication, IMMACULATA, to give you the background on this.

I am still in the process of attempting to obtain back issues of AVE, but from various articles Miss Diehl has sent us, I have been able to get a much better understanding of the place of the shrine, and particularly of the Marian shrine, in Roman Catholicism and hopefully, in restoration, in Anglican Catholicism. In this connection, I enclose xeroxes of two articles from AVE (Miss Diehl didn't give us the dates) relative to British shrine restoration, and particularly call your attention to the one on "Our Lady of the Park". I noted with interest that this was built probably around 1250, and that "From the outset it was intended that the pilgrim shrine should be separate from the parochial jurisdiction of Liskeard and it had its own specific endowment of 'a garden, an orchard and half an acre of land'."

What has become clearer to me is that in medieval Catholicism the Cathedral, the Shrine, the Monastery and the University, as a group, played a much more definite part in augmenting the local life of the Parish Church than they do today. Thus, the people, some 90% of whom were illiterate, before the days of printing and universal education, went on pilgrimages to the Cathedral for instruction by all the sculpture and stained glass windows; to the Shrine to present their special needs for Mary's intercession; and to the Monastery for education and to see the fruits of the religious life of vows, rule and Hours in addition to the Mass . . . in addition to, as today, the University for higher education.

In this, the shrine played a very special role, and filled a very special need, in bringing into sharper focus Mary’s divine prerogatives as Mother, Intercessor, Mediatrix, Model, Mould and Way of all Christians . . . as distinct from the Parish Church where Marian devotion is just one part of the total religious life of the Sacraments, Mass, Festivals, Pastoral Counseling, etc. After pilgrimages to Marian shrines the faithful returned to their parish homes and life with heightened Marian devotion and hope, just as today people come home with their faith intensified by a retreat, or, secularly, people are inspired at a professional or trade convention or an academic seminar. And it was for this reason that the administration of the shrine was separate from that of the parish in which it resided.

I propose that this review of the role of the medieval Marian Shrine provides a helpful perspective from which to consider and approach the St. Joseph's Angelus Tower and Garden of Our Lady; and from this viewpoint it is interesting that the Woods Hole Shrine does indeed have its own separate endowment, like the medieval shrines. Thus, this Woods Hole Shrine had, explicitly and implicitly, a very special purpose, as distinct from the general religious purpose of the Parish, or any parish, as a summons, and a focus for prayers to permeate the work of biological scientists in Woods Hole, and elsewhere, with a religious sense and purpose.
From what I learned of Mrs. Lillie through others, and especially from my 1955 meeting with her (which inspired my 1955 article, "Cape Cod Shine - Mary Garden"), I came to understand that in her mind this was not just an attractive bell tower for a church without a steeple and a pretty garden around a statue of Our Lady, but a potentially very powerful religious symbol and summons. Prophetically, as I suggested in my letter of July 15th, she anticipated that the release of biological power was to be just as great as the release of nuclear power, and would require religious matrixing if it were to be used constructively for Salvation, the Peaceable Kingdom on earth, and the Renewal of the Face of the Earth. Thus, in her wisdom and understanding she selected the ringing of the Angelus as a thrice-daily reminder of the central historical fact of the Incarnation for all within earshot; the inscription on the smaller bell, "I will teach you of life and of life eternal" as a call to the spiritual life of soul, grace, spirit and kingdom as well as a fullness of earthly, material, life; the religious plant symbolism and names as a vision of the renewal and transfiguration of all nature; and the statue of Mary to remind us of her cohesive angelic mantle for the atom, molecule and cell, as well as for the psyche and all society, and of her motherly nurturing as we work for Salvation, Kingdom and Renewal. Thus in our faith and hope we know must come, if Creation is to serve its purpose of fully showing forth and sharing God's goodness, but which we also recognize, from reading and viewing the daily news, require for their coming her intercessory augmentation of our seemingly inadequate natural human potential for harnessing the new forces which have been and are being released by science and technology.

Thus, the Angelus Tower and Mary Garden, properly understood, are a beautiful symbol of vision and hope and prayer for the entire community, visitors and the world... a true Shrine of Our Lady.

I have elaborated on this at some length, Ms McLaughlin, because I wanted to clearly distinguish between the more general character of the Mary Garden idea and movement we have been promoting on the basis of our inspiration by the St. Joseph's Garden of Our Lady and the research and love behind it, and the more particular character of the Angelus Tower and Garden of Our Lady as a whole, as directed towards the inspiration and sanctification of the work of the biological sciences in Woods Hole and elsewhere... mindful of Woods Hole as a summer "Mecca" for biologists from everywhere. As I see it, it is the more particular character of the Tower and Garden which are pertinent to the Centennial celebration and book... although the occasioning of the inspiration and founding of the Mary Garden Movement is a significant historical development stemming from them, as well as a burgeoning of research and devotion which are now feeding back to intensify the actualization of the potential power of the Shrine, which, I submit, has been a sort of "sleeping giant" or "acre of diamonds" in your "backyard".

And this religious inspiration of the Tower and Garden is something which emerges from the overall beauty, peace and, if you will, holiness, of the shrine, as well as from its Catholic, or even Christian, particulars. Just this past Spring, Father Facey S.J. of the Xavier Oratory Chapel here in Back Bay, Boston, which I attend, told me that he was assigned to assist Father Stapleton at St. Joseph's in the summer of 1952 (although I did not meet him at the time of my visit), and that the following incident occurred: A woman came to the door of the rectory and said that she and her recently deceased husband were of the Jewish faith, but that her husband so loved to sit and read in the Garden that she wished to request permission to scatter his ashes in it, if they wouldn't mind.

Having made this distinction, then, I would like to go a little more deeply into the religious motivation for planting and tending a Mary Garden as such, as well as for its part in the overall shrine concept... which has been the more general focus of our writing and lecturing.
As our starting point we take the teaching of St. Paul, in Romans 8, 19 - 22:
"The whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God, Creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but by him who once subjected it; yet not without hope, because the world itself will be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. Yes, we know that all creation groans and is in agony even until now."

Even though the teaching was there that nature was to be freed or liberated and was to share in the glorious freedom of the sons of God, the first 1,000 years or so of the Church might be summed up with the sweeping generalization that the human attachment to nature was so all-pervasive from classical times that moral, ascetical and mystical life during this period was predominantly mortificational and purgative. Thus we read in Jean Leclercq, O.S.B.'s study of monastic culture, "The Love of Learning and the Desire for God" that:

"What we mean by ('feeling for Nature') is, largely, lacking in medieval men. Apart from exceptions, they do not look at Nature itself to admire it as it is; they see it through literary reminiscences coming from the Bible, the Fathers or classical authors . . .

"Nature 'in the raw', unembellished by work or art, inspires the learned man with a sort of horror: the abysses and peaks which we like to gaze at, are to him an occasion of fear. A wild spot, not hallowed by prayer and asceticism and which is not the scene of any spiritual life is, as it were, in the state of original sin . . ."

It was only after that 1,000 years or so that an awareness of grace was seemingly generated through meritorious acts and works, and circulating from the heavenly reservoirs, to enable more than just a few exceptionally mortified and purified people to become sufficiently liberated from the allurements of nature, and buoyed up by grace through the sacraments, so as to see nature as a mirror of the divine, heavenly attributes and in fact a channel and vehicle of grace.

The prime exemplar and herald of the release of this flow of grace through souls and nature, such that nature in each particular creature could henceforth mirror the divine attributes and the events of sacred history, including the life of Christ and of the Holy Family, was, of course, St. Francis of Assisi. We know well the many stories of St. Francis and animals, but we are also told, in Fortunio's "Francis of Assisi":

"Flowers, too, he loved. Not only did he consider that there was spirit in sky and sea; even the tiniest flower and the slenderest blade of grass he thought to be imbued with it. He had ordered that some pieces of ground in the friars' gardens always be used for these bearers of color and perfume. Brother flower, he said, shows God's love for men and in them he gives us a supreme sign of his grace.

"Thomas, the biographer poet, writes: 'How great a gladness do you think . . . the flowers brought to his mind when he saw the shape of their beauty and perceived the odor of their sweetness.' He said that the flower that comes from the root of Jesse has by its fragrance raised thousands from the dead. He was fond of recalling the passage from the Song of Songs that speaks of a green valley flowering with white lilies and red roses. It made him think of the man called the rose on the plain and the lily on the mountain slopes."

(Providentially, for this letter, I just ran across this passage today while browsing in a Cambridge bookstore this afternoon.)
July 28, 1981

I attach (6) a copy of my 1961 article, "Mary-Gardening with St. Francis," which I was asked to write for ASSIST magazine in Dublin, in which I endeavored to write of the Flowers of Our Lady and Mary-Gardening in the spirit of St. Francis. Happily, Ireland is one of the most dynamic areas of development of the Mary Garden Movement at the present time. Our major associate there, Brother Sedn MacNamara, former Chairman of the National Garden Association of Ireland and now Vice-President, and in charge of floral decorations for the visit of Pope John Paul II to Ireland in 1979, has done extensive research into the Mary-named flowers in Irish tradition, and is promoting and personally planting small Mary Gardens at outdoor wayside, Church and School shrines of Our Lady, as well as writing extensively for both Irish and English Catholic publications. (7) I am sending him one of Miss Pyne's Centennial tiles.

But it wasn't until 1964 that a Sister of the Religious of the Assumption in Philadelphia, who had a Mary-Garden at their Academy, brought to my attention Auguste Nicolas' "La Vierge Marie Dans Le Plan Divin", Paris, 1869 which set forth the theological basis of the relationship between Mary and the liberation of nature, as was appreciated once nature was seen as the vehicle for the flow of Spirit and Grace . . . according to the school of St. Anselm. This penetrated more deeply the intuitively sensed spirit of the Mary Garden, and for this reason, especially with the Woods Hole Garden of Our Lady in mind in juxtaposition to the Angelus Tower, I would like to quote extensively from this book (my translation):

Book III, Chapter IX, The Relationship of Mary to the Sensible World

"Let us follow him (St. Anselm in "The Excellences of the Glorious Virgin Mary") again in this beautiful study, from which the conclusions flow more fully to the glory of the Mother of the Savior.

"Man, his intelligence served by his senses, was created for the purpose of fixing his eye of contemplation on his Creator.

"But, since this creator is spiritual, and a being clothed with the corruptibility of flesh cannot attain the discovery of his greatness and the contemplation of his sublime dignity, other creatures have been placed in the presence of man, in which he sees reflected that sublime perfection of God which he cannot perceive directly with his intelligence.

"Now, following the fall of the first man, the human race being precipitated into the disorders of its heart and the abjection of its vices, not only the contemplation of the Creator, but also the proper consideration of the admirable ordering of the universe vanished far from him.

"Behold, then, how in this fall of man all the dignity of creatures was lost.

"Their dignity in fact perished when there no longer could be found anyone who used them with dignity: when man, by contemplating them, before his revivification to the knowledge of God, no longer used them as a means of rising to their common Creator.

"And they were not able to rediscover their dignity lost in the ruin of man, until the Lamb who was to take away the sins of the world had been brought forth, God and man, by the Blessed Mary. Man having been recalled by this Lamb to the knowledge of God, all other creatures were re-established with him in the truth of their condition, and in the honor of their first integrity.

* * * * 

"Since then, in effect, the conversion, so to speak, of nature has advanced hand in hand with that of mankind, or rather has proceeded ahead of it, as the star preceded the Mari.
"It is through images taken entirely from nature that the Wisdom which created it makes itself intelligible to men. The sky, the earth, the seas, their movements and their locations, the winds and waves, the flowers and the seasons of the fields, the birds, the fish, the animals, their movements and those of men: all visible nature serves as figure and symbol of Christ, the Word of God, who reintegrates it thereby into the destiny for which he created it, and himself takes possession of it, as though a usurped domain, by miracles which testify decisively that he alone is its master.

"The poetry, if I dare speak thus, of the Gospel has introduced into the material order the same revolution that the divine teaching it expresses has made in the moral order. It has restored sensible nature in the truth of its creation, just as its teaching has restored human nature similarly. . . .

"Creation is the sensible imprint of the invisible perfections of God, for the purpose of making them known to us. God has placed the seal of his perfections, so to speak, on each creature; of his immensity on the ocean, of his magnificence on the firmament, of his fecundity in the depths of the earth, of his beauty in the facets of nature, of his grace in flowers, of his providence and wisdom in the ways of animals; so that through the imprint we may know the seal.

"This great and beautiful truth is demonstrated almost mathematically in an incessant exercise of human thought, which we fail to appreciate fully because it is so familiar, and which proves that the relationship between the physical world and the moral world is absolutely one of a seal and its imprint: namely that every time we wish to express a truth of the physical order we have recourse to a truth taken from the moral order; and each time we wish to express a truth of the moral order, we have recourse to a truth taken from the physical order. The style of the moral sciences reverts to sensible metaphors, and that of the physical sciences to moral metaphors.

"The physical world is no other than an admirable symbol of the moral world, just as the moral world in its turn becomes the symbolism of the physical world. But the starting point of this reciprocal relationship, the prototype, we might say, the seal of this marvellous correspondence, is the moral world, the uncreated truth of God, his eternal Word, 'by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing that has been made was made'.

"This is why, when this same Word was born of Mary to put his seal on his work, when he remade the moral world, he remade in a way the physical world, he created a new heaven and a new earth to the sight of man, a new heaven and a new earth which have their hope, their moral reason, in Christianity, the only true philosophy of nature, and of the history of mankind.

"Thus, when we take images from nature to explain the truths of faith, to explain Jesus Christ, we do not make such a far-fetched and indiscreet borrowing as one might suspect. On the contrary, we make nature serve its principal purpose, which is to manifest the perfection of God, while at the same time serving the needs of man, perfections produced for our eyes in Jesus Christ as their origin, to whom therefore the copy should correspond.

"Furtber, we do not hesitate to say that the order of the natural sciences, including the processes of these sciences, profoundly reflects Jesus Christ and his mysteries. Indeed, it soars even higher than nature, pushes farther ahead in its secrets, and arrives, as though by the formulas of a transcendent and divine alphabet, at marvellous illuminations which associate it with the vision of angels, and anticipate some of the answers that are reserved for us by eterniTy . . ."
"We do not have to descend from these lofty considerations to apply them to the most Blessed Virgin. As the image most closely conformed to her divine Son, she is herself, through the grace of this correspondence, a moral type surpassing all creatures... The attributes of mercy, holiness, virginity, maternity, humility and all those which shine in this admirable type give her also a symbolical claim to nature which justifies and consecrates all the figures which the Church has applied to her: Star of the Morning whose return she announces, Star of the Sea whose tempests she disperses, Dawn which promises the sun, Moon whose modesty shines forth reflecting and replacing the sun, Root of Jesse from which the flower of Wisdom, Gentle Fleece on which the dew of heaven silently falls, Field of Wheat, Heavenly Garden, Flower of Flowers from whom all the flowers come each springtime to grace and perfume our altars, Mary thus receives from everything that is beneficent, fruitful, sweet and pure in the world a symbolical tribute of praise, as the most Blessed Lady and Queen of the nature which was restored by her divine Maternity."

But even so eloquent a justification as this (which is about the best I have found anywhere) of the use of nature to symbolize Mary does not, to me, account sufficiently for the preponderant application of flower symbols to Mary, as found in the research... since it could just as easily be maintained that nature was liberated by Christ's atoning and redeeming death on the Cross, as by Mary's fiat on which God hinged the Incarnation as the basis for this redeeming sacrifice, and that therefore flower symbols should be applied predominantly to Christ.

I have come to conclude that the historical and cultural reason for the preponderant application of flower symbols to Mary lies in a combination of the theological arguments for the doctrine and dogma of the Immaculate Conception, and of the ramifications of meditating on the mystery of Jesus as God-man, particularly in his virginal conception, birth and holy childhood.

First, once it was widely perceived, appreciated and venerated that the Mother of God must be sinless and immaculately pure, and this necessarily from the moment of her conception (anticipating her redemption), there was a need to find means of most adequately manifesting and symbolizing this... which were found in the Immaculate Conception figures and symbols drawn from Scripture and nature. Flowers, already clearly recognized as manifesting the attributes of the Creator and God-man, were selected for attribution to Mary to proclaim the mystery and wonder of the Immaculate Conception, which made possible, in our fallen world, the Incarnation of the God-man, in accordance with the Wisdom and Divine Plan of the Creator. This special application of flower symbols to Mary does not detract from or "compete" with the Creator or the Redeemer, but proclaims their creating and redeeming love.

The Immaculate Conception flower symbols—as symbols—were applied to Mary starting with the early Church Fathers long before any evidence of popular, rural Mary-Fower traditions... and they are included among the Mary-Flowers as roses and lilies, and lilies, the Rose of Sharon, the Lily-of-the-Valley etc; in white flowers; and in the resplendent and translucent purity of flowers generally, which permeates or is implicit in all the other Mary-Flower symbolisms, and in the flowers associated through bloom period and altar-flower use and strewings with the various feasts of Our Lady. Also, in flowers associated with Mary's physical attributes: Our Lady's Tresses, Eyes of Mary, Our Lady's Fingers, Our Lady's Tears, etc...

Those Mary-flowers referring to the Nativity and holy childhood, on the other hand, I have concluded originated from popular meditations on flowers. For proper instruction and nurturing of the Holy Child, it would be necessary that Mary herself see and speak of nature in its primordial purity, manifesting the attributes of the hidden Creator, as proclaimed in the Psalms... and that all her prayers, thoughts and actions of family life, homemaking and teaching would be permeated by and would show forth a love and a purity and a beauty, conveyed and testified to best by flower symbols (and legends) of her apparel, household articles, and movements.
Happily, we have numerous examples from art which depict the attribution of flowers and other symbols to Mary, of which I attach three examples at hand (8): the North Rose Window of Chartres Cathedral, which depicts the Virgin and Child in Majesty in the center of a great rose of glass, as in the center of a garden; Mary as the Immaculate Conception, surrounded by her symbols, from a XVI Century French book of hours; and the Annunciation from a XVI Century Flemish book of hours, incorporating in addition to a vase of Madonna Lilies in the Annunciation scene itself a number of individual flowers symbolic of Mary's attributes especially associated with the Annunciation. From the incorporation of these flower symbols in the art of cathedrals and prayer books it is evident that they were used attributively in devotion and meditation, and that they can be appropriately used likewise in the Mary Garden, in the manner of St. Francis.

With this extended excursion into the religious sense and use of nature, as contributed to by St. Anselm and St. Francis, I can now further respond to Miss Pyne's question as to the origins of the Mary-names of flowers by saying that I have concluded these origins must be sought in the preaching and teaching of the Franciscan and other mendicant friars, as they spread the Franciscan view of nature throughout the countries. My basis for this is an almost complete lack of any contemporary documentation of the use of Marian flower names and symbolisms in the gardens of the Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries; plus the extensive number of symbolical flower names of Christian origin recorded by Latin American botanists... names which must have originated with the early missionaries, many of whom were Franciscan.

Another important dimension of the Christian, religious use of flowers and gardens is that of their sacramental blessings... for which there are numerous rites in the Roman Ritual. Thus, fields, gardens and first fruits are blessed, with sprinklings of holy water, and also seeds, that they receive special spiritual protection, and also may be channels and vehicles for the flow and circulation of grace and spirit, through tying them in with the Mass and Sacraments, in accordance, for example, with the Vatican II "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy" (par. 60 & 61):

"Holy Mother Church has...instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments: they signify effects, particularly of a spiritual kind, which are obtained through the Church's intercession. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effects of the sacraments, and various occasions of life are rendered holy.

"Thus, for well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event in their lives; they are given access to the stream of divine grace which flows from the paschal mystery of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, the fountain from which all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power. There is hardly any proper use of material things which cannot thus be directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God."

And this not only includes horticultural materials in the garden, but also picked flowers and herbs and vegetables and grains and fruits, some of which have traditionally been blessed on certain feasts - Palm Sunday (festival of the branches), Ascension Thursday, Corpus Christi, St. John's Eve, the Assumption and the Nativity of Mary - and then hung up or otherwise kept as blessed religious objects for the home, barn, workplace, sick room, etc.

We know of the blessing ceremony for the bells of St. Joseph's Angelus Tower, followed by the bishop's "short sermon linking science with religion" (further evidence of the purpose of the shrine) on July 31, 1930 from the "ALMOUTH ENTERPRISE article, but I know of no blessing ceremony for the Garden of Our Lady. This could certainly be part of the Centennial celebration, as well as through the growth cycles of each year.

*The Mary Garden at Melrose Abbey, Scotland, described in Rosetta Clarks, "Green Enchantment," is evidently a creation of her imagination... and
In discussing the various motivations for Mary-Gardening, I should also make some special mention of the use of the flower and garden figures and symbols as a support for and quickening to meditation, contemplation and mystical flights of the spirit and soul. The attached article (9), "Gardening With Mary" addresses itself to the elements of this, and with this I also attach a copy of some pages from Chapter II of St. Bonaventure's "The Soul's Journey Into God" - "On Contemplating God in his Vestiges in the Sense World" - which sets forth the mystical theology based on the Franciscan religious love and use of creatures.

The final section of attached material (10) consists of a number of articles we have written through the years from 1952 to 1964, and also the Narration Text for a slide lecture, in our endeavors to instruct and to inspire others regarding the tradition of the Flowers of Our Lady and Mary Gardens. Aside from the 1968 Philadelphia Flower Show leaflet, I have written nothing since 1964, due to my turning to other areas of religious endeavor, but since my effective retirement a year ago I have done extensive research and writing, much of which is touched on in this letter, which I hope, God willing, and with the help of your prayers, will bear fruit in further articles, and a book, etc.

As a final thought, I would like to return to the two paragraphs from Nicolas I underlined at the bottom of page 8, above, where he reiterates the ontological appropriateness of nature symbols for divine truths, and then goes on to affirm that some of the symbols developed through the natural sciences are even more sublime, and almost angelic.

Looking back from the present state of science and technology we can certainly say this was quite prophetic in 1869, and it certainly suggests an interesting collaboration between religion and science. Thus, I consider the laser, with its introduced light bouncing back and forth internally between two mirrored surfaces until, intensified, it beams out in emission, is a remarkable symbol of the Trinity with its spiration of the Holy Spirit in mirroring back and forth ad intra between the Father and the Son until it processes forth ad extra. Similarly, the double helix of the DNA molecule can be seen as a symbol of the mystical rising of our soul up the vortex of the spiritual corridor or column to heaven, accompanied by the guiding Spirit of God, as it frees itself from the rotational providence of the mundane sphere and rises increasingly with the upwards movement of the angelic ladder to heaven. (I will teach you of H-PQ and of life everlasting, it is seen that both nature, and the scientific discoveries of the structures of both those dimensions of nature too small for perception by our senses, and those too large, all are mirrors of spiritual truths, life and growth . . . then biological science, and all the sciences, can disclose to us ever new images of life everlasting, as well as of life.

Thus the poetic religious sense with which we learn to intuit and meditate upon the elements of Our Lady's life and mysteries in the Garden of Our Lady attunes us to perceive the religious truths imaged in the discoveries of science. And once the finer and greater structures and processes of science are perceived as containing religious symbolisms and mirrors awaiting our discovery and appreciation . . . then we can come in time, and with the blessing of them, to see them, along with flowers and the other creatures of sensorily perceived nature, as sacramental vehicles of grace and Spirit . . . until nature and science together renew the face of the earth in glorious transfiguration, as we move towards Salvation and the Peaceable Kingdom on earth. The Angelus Tower rings out the message that through the Garden of symbolical flowers of Our Lady we may be taught of life and of life everlasting.
With this "update", then, to put our previous writings in our present perspective, this three-part presentation of the vision of Mary's Gardens as it developed from, and now feeds back into, the St. Joseph's Angelus Tower and Garden of Our Lady is brought to some sort of rounding out.

There remains only to assemble for you an exhibit of the principal articles written "about" Mary's Gardens by others, together with a collection of "testimonials" we assembled for our first years or so . . . to give a sense of the concreteness of the Movement, as distinct from its idea and vision. We should be able to get this into your hands in several weeks, but I think that our three letters to date, including this one, provide most of the historical information we have relative to Woods Hole, and also the information necessary for any sort of restoration which might be undertaken for the Garden.

In thanks once again to you, Miss Pyne and Fr. Dalzell for your warm reception, and interest in our love of the Tower and Garden, I am,

Sincerely yours in Our Lady,

John S. Stokes Jr.

Copies: Father Dalzell
Miss Pyne
Mrs. Roberson

Enclosures:
1) 1968 Philadelphia Spring Flower Show leaflet
2) "Mary Gardens", THE HERBARIST -1952
   1962 Washington exhibit Herb Mary Garden leaflet
   National Herb Garden leaflet
   Lincoln Cathedral "Plants of the Virgin Mary" leaflets
3) "The Society of Mary"
4) AVE articles on British Mary-Shrine restorations
5) Article on Our Lady of Walsingham Shrine
6) "Mary-Gardening with St. Francis" - 1961
7) List of Irish Flowers of Our Lady
8) North Rose Window of Chartres Cathedral
   Immaculate Conception from French Book of Hours
   Annunciation from Flemish Book of Hours
   St. Bonaventure, "The Soul's Journey to God"
   "Our Lady of Creation from Notre Dame de Paris, London"
   "Gardening with Mary" - 1960
   "Flowers of Our Lady Holy Cards, St. Bonaventure, "The Soul's Journey to God"
9) "Flowers of Our Lady and Mary Gardens", Slide Narration Text - 1960