John Paul II's proclamation of the Marian Year was not unlike John XXIII's convocation of Vatican Council II: in both cases, the initiative came from the pope, and the announcements caught mankind by surprise. In Redemptoris Mater (March 25, 1987), John Paul II explained the purposes of the Marian Year: to prepare the Church and the world for the celebration of the bimillennium of the birth of Jesus, to live consciously and intensely the journey of faith in which Mary precedes the Church, to assimilate Vatican II's teaching on Mary's mission in the life of the Church, and to recall Mary's maternal intercession for all people.

After the publication of the encyclical, reflections began appearing on the meaning and the dimensions of the Marian Year. Particularly noteworthy among them are the letters of Cardinal Dadaglio and the Central Committee for the Marian Year. This issue of The Marian Library Newsletter contains excerpts from these and other statements on the Marian Year. Although the Marian Year closes on August 15, 1988, the Advent leading to the two-thousandth anniversary of Christ's birth is in the opening phase. May the reflections of the Marian Year assist the followers of Christ and enrich the Church during this Advent recalling the decisive event of Christian history.
The New Alliance is situated within the prophetic tradition: Christian worship cannot be divorced from social commitment (Rm. 12). The early Church maintained a continuity between the liturgy and fraternal charity, between the Lord's supper and attention to those in need (Acts 2,42; 4,32-35; I Cor. 11,17). Actions which violated the bonds of communion were condemned because the unity of the Body of Christ was violated (John Chrysostom, Hom. 50,3-4).

Making a separation between liturgical worship and charitable works is an ever present danger. Vatican Council II warned of isolating segments of the Christian life, of separating liturgy and mission. The liturgy is the “culmination and font” of the whole life of the Church, including its service to humanity. The commitment of charity must preceede, be part of, and flow from every liturgical celebration.

As part of authentic worship, devotion to Mary influences life, conduct, and action. Marian devotion which is separated from charity and good works lacks authenticity and credibility. Mary’s visit to Elizabeth offers a model of harmonizing worship of the living God with attention to those in need.

**Option for the Poor:**
**A Permanent Program within the Church**

In many places, programs are already operative which demonstrate the extension of worship into service. Appropriate projects during the Marian Year would be structures to assist those in need—either those chronically poor or those who have suffered misfortune. Such structures would include dispensaries in villages and slums; learning centers; places of refuge for immigrants, prisoners, unwed mothers; therapeutic programs for drug addicts; and houses for those struggling with alcoholism. Making some housing available to the needy would be a way of marking the United Nations’ Year of the Homeless.

Charity which must begin with specific projects also has larger dimensions. Through international organizations, a church or diocese can sponsor a project in the Third World or become a “twin” for a parish in a poor country. A religious congregation can adopt a newly founded religious institute in the Third World.

The Marian Year is a providential moment for advancing reconciliation and peace. Many situations within families, communities, and nations require that Christians step forth as peacemakers. Justice and respect for human rights are the indispensable foundations for reconciliation and true development.

The person of Mary—the mother of all people—is the inspiration for promoting unity and peace. The mother of Jesus invites us to consider in a new light the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In her visit to Elizabeth, at Cana, beneath the cross, and in the cenacle, Mary is not distant to those in need, but with open heart she gives the love of preference with which God has loved her. Her actions to those in need offer us the example of a person doing all that Christ requests (John 2,5).

(Adapted from the Central Committee for the Marian Year’s *Proclaiming Mary’s Magnificat in Solidarity With and Service To the Poor*, November 26, 1987).

![Theotokos: "The throne of God carrying the Lord and giving him to humanity" (Redemptoris Mater, 33). Greece, late fifteenth century.](image)
The Marian Year and the Liturgy

The Marian Year is an opportunity to study the meaning of the liturgical year, which is the celebration of "the whole mystery of Christ, from the Incarnation and Nativity to the Ascension, to Pentecost and the awaiting in hope of the return of the Savior" (Sac. Concilium, 102). Every liturgical year is a "year of mercy," for, through the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit and through the reliving and celebration of the sacred mysteries, "God is perfectly glorified, and men and women are made holy" (Sac. Concilium, 7).

The liturgical year is the context for the celebration of the Marian Year. Every Marian Year observance should be in harmony with the theme and character of the liturgical season. The seasons and feasts of the calendar should be respected; in many cases, upon investigation, a Marian dimension will emerge which can be harmoniously inserted into the celebration.

Mary in the Liturgical Year

Through her association with Christ, Mary is present in the celebration of the paschal mystery; the entire liturgical year has a Marian dimension.

In Advent, she is the one in whom Israel's hope for a savior is centered, the one through whom "the time of waiting is fulfilled and a new stage inaugurated."

During the Christmas season, she is present in the narratives of Christ's infancy. The Solemnity of the Mother of God, January 1, commemorating Mary's maternity—divine and virginal—is the oldest Marian feast of the Church of Rome.

In the Lenten period, Mary is Christ's first disciple following him in her pilgrimage of faith.

During the Easter season, she is the person of joy and hope, present at the birth of the Church.

In Ordinary Time, in addition to the various feasts of Mary and the weekly memorial on Saturday, there is the Solemnity of the Assumption which crowns and terminates Mary's pilgrimage of faith.

Marian Devotion and Liturgy

Marian devotion is part of Christian liturgy. The two nourish and develop each other. The characteristics of Marian devotion indicate its liturgical character. Marian devotion is part of the one worship in which the Church prays and thanks God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Marian devotion reveals and celebrates the bonds which unite Mary to the persons of the Trinity, to the Church, to the communion of saints. Sustained by Scripture and tradition, Marian devotion includes the sentiments which are part of prayer—veneration, praise, love, invocation, supplication—and it welcomes the beauty of artistic, musical, and literary expression. Lastly, Marian devotion requires that prayer be consistent with daily conduct.

The liturgy provides the norm for Marian devotion. Similar to the liturgy, Marian devotion has trinitarian, christological, and ecclesial dimensions. Nourished from the same sources as the liturgy, Marian devotion enkindles the desire for ecumenism, evangelization, and witness to Gospel values.

Mary, Model of Worship

Mary demonstrates the attitudes for celebrating the divine mysteries. In every liturgical celebration, the Church imitates Mary by hearing and welcoming the Word, by praising and thanking God, by presenting Christ to the world, by praying and interceding for all people, by giving and nourishing life, by offering Christ to the Father, by awaiting the coming of the Savior.

Together with Mary, the Church welcomes God's presence in word and sacrament, looks for the signs of his reign, awaits his coming in glory, and is actively concerned for the well-being of all people.

The image of Mary presented in liturgy invites imitation. Mary is model for all virtues and for cooperation in God's work. The image of Mary presented in the liturgy "enkindles a desire for conformity with Mary as a way of imitating Christ and gives a model of careful and loving attention to God's word. With Mary, the Christian worshipper prays and thanks God with joy, serves God faithfully through service to humanity, while persevering in prayer and confidence" (Collectio missarum de b. Maria Virgine, 14).

(Adapted from the Congregation for Divine Worship's Orientations and Proposals for the Celebration of the Marian Year, April 3, 1987)
Marian Shrines in the Life of the Church

At a shrine, God's pilgrim people gather in the Lord's presence. Similar to a church, a shrine is a type of icon of God's dwelling with his people, with the Church, with the individual believer.

A Marian shrine is a place for an encounter with God. There, as in the mystery of the Incarnation, Mary is present. She is the dwelling place of God, the throne of Wisdom, the living temple of the Holy Spirit, the one who encountered the Lord in a unique way.

Marian shrines usually have their origins in some extraordinary person or event that makes a particular place a center of devotion and pilgrimage. The history of the event and the remembrance of Mary's intercession at this place make a shrine a privileged way of encountering Mary's presence.

Shrine: Place of Worship

The liturgy, which is the principal goal of pilgrimage to a Marian shrine, should be exemplary for the quality of the participation, the fidelity to the rite, the richness of the content, and the beauty of the ceremonies. Pilgrims to Marian shrines should participate in a full program of liturgical celebrations and devotions.

Christian tradition brings Marian devotion and the Eucharist together; this connection is based on "the reality itself of the incarnation of the Word of God and the unique role exercised by Mary in the economy of salvation, by Mary who conceived the Lord and gave Him as gift to all people." Every Eucharist is celebrated within the communion of the saints, in which Mary occupies the principal role.

Eucharistic celebrations at Marian shrines should reveal the fullness of the paschal mystery, communion with the universal Church, and the presence of Mary in word and symbol.

Shrine: Focus of Culture

In addition to being a place of worship, a Marian shrine is a center to foster cultural development. The history, tradition, and art of a shrine contribute to the via pulchritudinis and to the contemplation of God's beauty revealed in Mary. Pilgrims should be provided with materials on the historical, artistic, and pastoral significance of the shrine.

Marian shrines are natural centers for explaining the conciliar teaching on Mary and for demonstrating the Marian dimension of the life of faith.

Shrine: Center for Promoting the Sense of Vocation

Every vocation is a conscious and free response of a person to a gift of God. A Marian shrine is a sign of this mysterious relationship between God's call and the person's response. A shrine is a place for announcing and celebrating the mystery of vocation within the Church. Mary's reception of the angel's message and her response of "Fiat" are the model for every vocation.

Mary is the woman called to collaborate in God's work. She is the virgin totally consecrated to the Lord. She is the wife and mother in a family in which God's promises to his people were fulfilled. Marian shrines are special places for discerning the meaning of vocation, the feminine, consecrated life, the family.

Shrine: Hearth of Charity

Works of charity which give expression to the Lord's concern for the poor, as recalled in Mary's Magnificat, should be part of a Marian shrine. The mother of Jesus was always attentive to those in need (John 2,2-10).

In all parts of the world, Marian shrines have established and maintained hospitals, schools for the poor, homes for the retired. The sick should be welcomed at a Marian shrine, and special services and assistance provided for them. Shrines should contribute to seeking solutions to problems of contemporary society and to alleviating suffering caused by chemical dependency, AIDS, homelessness, old age.

Pentecost: "I also recall the Icon of the Virgin of the Cenacle, praying with the Apostles as they awaited the Holy Spirit: could she not become the sign of hope for all those who, in fraternal dialogue, wish to deepen their obedience of faith?" (Redemptoris Mater, 33) Russia, seventeenth century.
**Deesis:** “Mary praying in an attitude of intercession and a sign of the divine presence on the journey of the faithful until the day of the Lord” (*Redemptoris Mater*, 33). Constantinople, late eleventh century.

**Message of the International Theological Commission**

The Marian Year offers the International Theological Commission an opportunity to reflect on the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the mystery of Christ and of the Church.

To Mary we owe the birth of Christ the Savior. Mary herself is a work of divine grace, never wishing to be understood other than as the humble servant who welcomed the Word of God. She knows that her person and her calling come from God. Both her human cooperation and her ability to acquiesce to the divine plan with all her being—feminine, maternal, virginal, and sinless—are from God.

Mary’s “yes” was the purest act of faith ever made, and this unconditional faith was necessary for the Word to become flesh. Mary gave proof of her faith, not only in the encounter with the Holy Spirit at the Annunciation, but also throughout her life.

In the Apocalypse, there is an image of a woman between heaven and earth. This woman, giving birth to a child, comprises within herself the faith of Israel and the desire of humanity awaiting deliverance. She is the mother of the members of Jesus’ mystical body, particularly the poor and those persecuted because of the Gospel. She is mother of the Church and symbol of the Church’s deepest nature (*Lumen Gentium*, 56).

In her Magnificat, this Daughter of Sion, filled with grace, rejoices in God the Savior. All generations rejoice with and because of her. Her joy in God continued throughout her life; in the Assumption, Christ’s glory reflects on his mother.

In the fullness of her faith, she experienced the complete development of her person—maternal and virginal. She is the most human of women and, at the same time, the person most loved by God.

May she intercede for us, poor sinners, now and at the hour of our death, so that we may share the joy of the resurrection.


**Shrine: Center of Ecumenism**

In Christian history, Mary’s role and Marian devotion have caused much controversy and have been cited as reasons for the division of the churches. Marian shrines should courageously assume a role of promoting ecumenical prayer, meeting, and discussion. They should be attentive to the ecumenical dialogue and aware of the complexity of the issues. Rightly understood, Christ’s mother, the mother of all people, the first disciple of Christ, is a motive for union of all Christians. Marian sanctuaries are places of prayer for the unity of all people. The Marian Year commemorates the twelfth centenary of the II Council of Nicaea, the millennium of Christianity in Kievan Russ, the sixth centenary of the conversion of Lithuania. In celebrating these events, Marian shrines promote the union of faith and prayer with the members of these churches.

(Adapted from the Central Committee for the Marian Year’s *The Ecclesial Role of Marian Shrines*, October 7, 1987)
The Marian Year and the Eastern Churches

The Marian Year provides an occasion to study the patrimony of the Christian East and the many ways the East has enriched the whole Church. *Redemptoris Mater* devotes much attention to the liturgy, Marian devotion, and iconography of the Eastern churches (RM 29, 31-34).

The Christian East presents Mary and all of revelation in a manner different from the West. In the Christian East, a truth is not simply stated, but given a descriptive expression which indicates its inner meaning. For this reason, the titles and the expressions by which the East refers to Mary merit attention. These titles frequently come from the creeds, councils, and the fathers. Eastern hymnody and iconography express the divine truth in an appealing and captivating way. In the Eastern mind, redemption is preferably expressed as the entire universe transfigured by grace caused by the condescension of a God who transformed history.

**Eastern Creed**

The East places the person and the mission of the Mother of God within the mystery and the history of salvation. The merits and privileges of the Blessed Virgin Mary are not enclosed in a place apart; rather Mary is seen in a perspective which is christological (Mary—the first of the saved), anthropological (Mary—the first of the new creation), ecclesial (Mary—the new Eve, mother of the living), and pneumatological (Mary—representative of the earth made fruitful by the Holy Spirit).

The trinitarian dimension of Eastern theology is present in its representation of Mary. To the Father, origin of life and source of grace, Mary is creature and spouse; to the Son, she is “the house of union of the two natures”; and, through her joyful acceptance of the “divine energy,” she is the dwelling place of the Spirit.

The Mother of God is celebrated within the full communion of the saints. She is the first of the saints in whom God has manifested his wonderful works. In the sanctuaries of Eastern churches, Mary is frequently portrayed as an enthroned and majestic figure, the place of the encounter between heaven and earth, and the one who occupies a singular position among all the friends of God—apostles, martyrs, patriarchs, prophets and believers of every generation.

In the East, humanity and all creation were transfigured by grace when Jesus Christ, within the body of Mary, assumed humanity, making it and all creation a sacrament of God’s love.

Eastern faith is a summary of the indissoluble unity of God’s grace and human love: in Christ, creation is renewed, and Mary is the beginning of the transformation to which the Church and all humanity is called. “Therefore, why should we not all together look to her as our common Mother, who prays for the unity of God’s family and who precedes us all at the head of the long line of witnesses for faith in the one Lord, the Son of God, who was conceived in her virginal womb by the power of the Holy Spirit” (RM, 30).

**Eastern Liturgy**

Liturgy occupies a place of importance in the East. As a human experience, it raises the believer to an intense and profound participation in mystery. Liturgy transfigures the ordinary by revealing its relation to the eternal. In the Eucharist, the vocation of the created world is made manifest. The human and divine interpenetrate, and the worship of the Church both participates in and anticipates the heavenly liturgy.

In liturgy, all is blended: doctrine becomes chant, image, incense, and color; symbols become catechesis. In liturgy, the Blessed Virgin’s importance is expressed in a way both theologically profound and lyrically sublime.

In the Eucharist, Mary is a member of the praying assembly, remembered in the Creed as the person through whom God became man. In Eucharistic Prayer, she is described as the heart of salvation and the gate of heaven.

In liturgy, the churches of the East celebrate God’s marvelous deeds accomplished in Mary and the union of Mary with humanity. They admirably integrate Mary in the liturgy, the commemoration of saving history.

**Eastern Spirituality**

In the Mother of God, the Christian East sees a model for both the contemplative and active life.

There is a Marian dimension to many ascetical practices. Feasts of Mary are frequently preceded by days of penance and reconciliation. In private prayer Mary is frequently invoked as the “holy” and “compassionate” one. In many traditions, a long-standing practice is to call upon Jesus and Mary in short formulas, in rhythm with the heartbeat or with one’s breathing.
Through the "divine energies," the Eastern Christian contemplative attains communion with the Trinity. Awareness of God's pardon to the sinner fosters union with God and leads to the joyful proclamation of a God who is merciful. Mary's Magnificat teaches all generations the contemplation and praise of God's mercies. Mary presents a new way of viewing the "wonderful works of God" and a special motive for thanksgiving. For this reason, texts such as "Rejoice" and "Blessed are You, 0 Virgin Mary" are frequently repeated. Through the praise directed to Mary as Mother of God, the mystery of the Incarnation is made visible. Icons of Mary, found in homes and meeting places, contribute to an awareness of divine mysteries.

In the Christian East, monastic communities and all who have been influenced by the Gospel ideals look to Mary as a model for all which is part of the spiritual life—silence, poverty, humility, obedience, lectio divina, vigils, fastings and unceasing prayer.

(Adapted from the Congregation of Eastern Churches' Instruction for the Eastern Churches on the Marian Year, June 7, 1987)

From The Marian Library and IMRI . . .

Fr. Johann G. Roten, S.M., was named director of the International Marian Research Institute on January 15, 1988 by an appointment confirmed by Cardinal William Baum of the Congregation of Catholic Education. A native of Switzerland, Fr. Roten had been for the past thirteen years director of the Ecole Normale of the canton of Sion.

Fr. Theodore Koehler, S.M., director of The Marian Library since 1969, received an honorary doctorate from the University of Dayton in 1987 and in 1988 was appointed director emeritus of The Marian Library. His successor as director of The Marian Library is Fr. Thomas A. Thompson, S.M.

A project of The Marian Library has been to collect materials which record the ways in which the Marian Year is being observed throughout the world. A book containing the documents and writings from the Marian Year may be edited. Dioceses and religious organizations have been asked to send letters, addresses, music and art work to be entered into this depository of materials on the Marian Year.

International Marian Research Institute
WORKSHOPS

Mary in an Ecumenical Age June 14–16
The Jewish Tradition
Dr. Eric Friedland, Ph.D.
The Orthodox Tradition
Fr. Gregory Roth, Ph.M.
The Catholic Tradition
Fr. Frederick Jelly, O.P., S.T.D.
The Protestant Tradition
Dr. William P. Anderson, Th.D.

Kievian Christianity and Marian Devotion in the Eastern Churches June 17
Introduction to Kievian Spirituality
Rt. Rev. Serhij K-Pastukhiv
Influence of the Ukrainian Church on the Russian Church in the 17th and 18th Centuries
Professor George Kulchycky
The Mother of God in Byzantine Liturgy and Spirituality
Rev. Robert Barringer, C.S.B.
The Feast of the Annunciation in Eastern Spirituality
Rev. David Petras, S.T.D.

Marian Iconography in Ukraine: Mother of God as Mother of Ukraine
Gregory Luznycky, Ph.D.
Alexander Lushnysky, Ph.D.

Marian Vesper Service
Homilist: Most. Rev. Robert M. Moskal

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COURSES

Spirituality
Fr. Johann G. Roten, S.M.
Mary in Augustine
Fr. Luigi Gambero, S.M.
Research Methodology
Fr. Thomas A. Thompson, S.M.
Mary & New Testament
Fr. Bertrand A. Buby, S.M.

Marian Spirituality
Mrs. Ann Johnson, M.Ed.
Sources of Chaminade
Bro. Lawrence J. Cada, S.M.
Marian and Liturgy
Fr. Thomas A. Thompson, S.M.
Mariology Since Vatican II
Fr. Johann G. Roten, S.M.

June 20–July 29
June 20–July 1
June 22–July 1
June 20–July 1
July 5–15

July 5–15
July 5–15
July 18–29
July 18–29
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Eleousa: "The merciful Virgin of Tenderness . . . Our Lady of Vladimir, the icon which continually accompanied the pilgrimage of faith of the peoples of ancient Rus" (Redemptoris Mater, 33).

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