

North American Lay Fraternities

Letter from Fr. Lenny

Dear Brothers and Sisters.

If Mary was 15 years old when Jesus was born, and 33 years later she was at the Cross, she was almost 50 years old when she became the mother of a murdered child. I have never seen an image of Our Lady as a middle-aged woman. She would have far outlived life expectancy of her time.

Before she was Our Lady of Anything, she was Miriam ben Joachim, Mary daughter of Joachim, Mariam of Nazareth. Scripture scholars have discerned that one of the holy women with Mary during his Passion was one of her blood sisters. The ancient Church revered two places of her birth and still question two places of

her death. The Roman Catholic Latin Rite celebrates the Assumption of Mary, while the Eastern Catholic Churches celebrate the Dormition, the falling asleep of Mary, the poetic way of saying death.

For Charles de Foucauld his two years in Nazareth comprised his major immersion into the human and very real Jesus of Nazareth. I do believe Jesus became a three-dimensional Person for St Charles, not a dogma of the Incarnation, but the real man, who worked, sweat and had indigestion. Jesus like us in ALL THINGS but sin. The real human DNA of Jesus was from Mary, of course, even the same blood type.

Of all the saints in history, his experience is so simple and stands out from all the other saints. Most of the great saints had an intellectual/cerebral knowledge of Jesus. Jesus as a theological dogma?

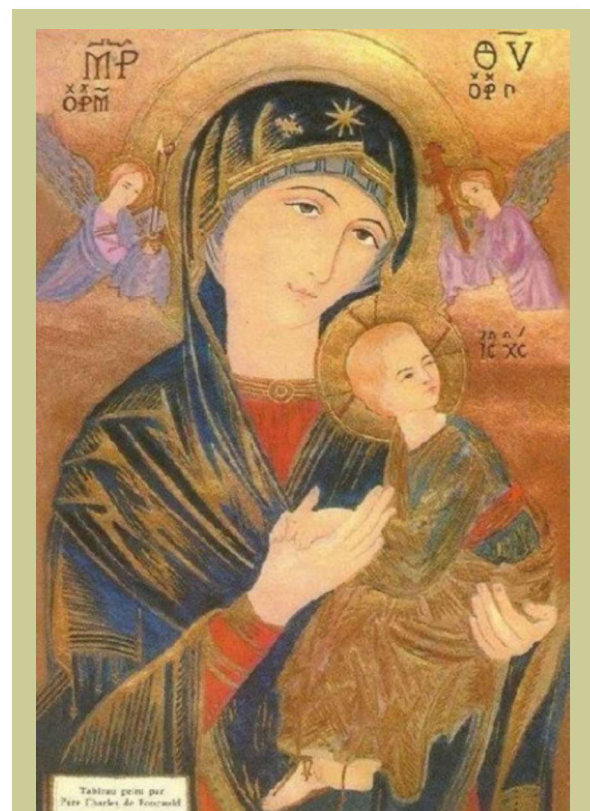
Not according to St Charles - just the opposite.

So, rest for a few minutes with this. Set the scene in your own mind. See the Mary, a real woman in first century Nazareth. She would never recognize herself as we see her in blue and white chiffon with hands that never touched challenging work. For me it is a kind of betrayal to see statues of Mary

portrayed as a kind of fairy godmother totally removed from the struggles of life.

But St Charles de Foucauld knew her, the little lady in Nazareth. Like the presence of Jesus, he experiences and lives with Mary of Nazareth at his side. Just loving her, his mother, and most of all his companion.

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"Mary, teach us to carry Jesus, quietly and humbly, as you have done!"

— St. Charles de Foucauld

Blessed Mother

Editor's Desk

As I write this, the feast day of St. Charles de Foucauld is right around the corner. Without a doubt, Br. Charles had a deep devotion to our Blessed Mother throughout his life. "Our Lady of Perpetual Help," a devotion I refer to in "Desert Ramblings," was especially dear to Br. Charles' heart. His copy of the original painting of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (see the cover page) is now kept in the museum of the Poor Clare Nuns in Nazareth.

You will find in all of the major articles/letters in this issue much to reflect on. For sure our Blessed Mother is more than just a flat image on a holy card. According to Melanie Golder, author of the article "Mary and Me," Mary is even a housekeeping coach!

News From Lay Fraternities

From California

Instead of our regular monthly online Lay Fraternity meeting, we invited Fr. Lenny to give us a retreat on the topic, "Love your enemies" (Luke 6:35). In addition to looking at Scripture from the Old and New Testaments, Fr. Lenny asked us several questions to ponder. Does Jesus ask us to do things completely contrary to our human nature? Is it contrary to our human nature to forgive? Does everyone

have the inner resources to deal with terrible things? What is your image of God? Echoing the words of Pope Francis, do you see the church as a court or a field hospital? Do you see Jesus on a throne as judge or a shepherd? Can we unlearn to hate? Thank you, Fr. Lenny, for taking the time with us to tackle an especially difficult mandate of Jesus.

Fr. Lenny

Continued from page 1

May your Nazareth be as real and filled with Jesus as was the life of St Charles.

You are loved and prayed for each day. Let Mary be your mother and sure companion on your journey.

Fr, Lenny Tighe, Fort Mill SC.

I can be reached at stchdefoucauld@gmail.com

"I propose to keep in myself the will to give to Mary all my actions, all my satisfactory works, all my spiritual life, so that she may offer and give everything to Jesus. Union with Mary: union of my whole life and all my works with Mary: I intend to keep in myself the will to do and offer all things with Mary, through Mary and in Mary... Union with my whole life and with all the works of Mary: I intend to keep in myself the will to be united in my whole spiritual life and in all my apostolate with Mary in her totality, with all her interior life and with all her work. I intend to keep in myself the will to work to transform myself into Mary, to become another living and working Mary, to transform my thoughts, my desires, my words, my actions in her and for her, my prayers, my sufferings, my whole life and my death..." Charles de Foucauld, in Nazareth

Editor/Circulation:	Arlene Moeller	nalf@moeller2001.com
Responsible for the North American Lay Fraternities:	Ciro Piccirillo	brothercharlesusa@gmail.com
Communications:	Jose Dario Perez	enlalucha68@gmail.com
Chaplain/Advisor:	Fr. Lennie Tighe	stchdefoucauld@gmail.com

Do you have news or information to share? Please send an email to the editor.

Mary, a Presence Who Opens our Paths of Humanity

Sometimes all it takes is a very simple moment - opening the shutters in the morning, greeting a neighbor, taking a pause in the middle of a heavy day - to sense that something within us is longing for more. Sometimes a simple “*Here I am*” is enough for God to open an unexpected path within our humanity. Mary is the luminous proof of this. Her life, so humble in appearance, carries a spiritual depth that continues to shape our way of being in the world as persons, as a Fraternity, and as Church. In her, humanity discovers how God draws near gently, respecting our rhythms, our fragilities, our slowness. Mary is not only a witness to a mystery; she is its pedagogy.

In this season of Advent now beginning, she teaches us how to wait - not a passive, anxious, or resigned waiting - but a waiting that is inhabited: the waiting of a woman who carries a promise greater than herself, who walks forward without understanding everything, who keeps her eyes open to the subtle signs of the Kingdom. Mary teaches us the active patience of those who know that God is already at work within history, even when everything seems motionless. She reminds us that in our communities, in our families, in our often-weary humanity, the Lord’s coming finds its way through our simplest actions, our meaningful silences, our choices to trust.

This way of living the waiting fits perfectly with the witness of Brother Charles and the spirituality of Nazareth. Nazareth is the place of almost nothing yet a daily life that becomes a space of encounter with God. Mary is its hidden soul. She shows how the smallest things can become immense, how fidelity in little matters can transform a life. She opens for us these paths of everyday hope: sweeping the floor, preparing a meal, accompanying someone in silence, doing one’s work with simplicity... all this under her gaze becomes a place of visitation. With her, hope isn’t floating in the clouds; it settles into what is concrete and ordinary. She teaches us that God slips in where no one is looking.

Mary also dares the encounter. Before fully understanding what is happening to her, she sets out in haste toward Elizabeth. She chooses to let herself be moved by another’s joy, to let her own mystery be illuminated in relationship. Through this visitation, she shows us a deeply human path: the risk of the other. In a world where distances widen and where we sometimes prefer to avoid the unknown rather than face it, Mary reminds us that fruitfulness is born from moving toward the other. For our Foucauldian spirituality, this visitation is an icon: going toward another in respect, gratuity, and simplicity. Her visit to Elizabeth remains a model for



today: daring to meet, to listen, to rejoice together. This is a missionary act.

Mary also shows us what it means to be a presence - not a loud or intrusive presence - but a silent, accompanying, prayerful one. She embodies a way of serving the Church that does not seek to shine but to sustain. Like Nazareth she remains where ordinary life unfolds - attentive to needs, faithful in small things, guardian of inner peace. For our Lay Fraternities, she is a powerful model: a presence that “*proclaims the Gospel through her whole life*” without unnecessary words. A presence that makes others exist, that reassures, that supports. Her style is a precious antidote for a shaken and noisy world.

In our experience of Church as in our human experience, Mary accompanies us not as a distant figure, but as a mother who walks beside us, who understands what weighs on us, what discourages us, what gives us hope. She takes us by the hand to set us back on our way; she murmurs trust when we hesitate, and she always brings us back to her Son. Her presence teaches us that the Church grows through tenderness, fidelity, and patience - the very things Advent seeks to awaken in us.

Brother Charles loved to contemplate Mary as the one who shows us Jesus, but also as the one who teaches us how to live near Him: simply, humbly, with a wide heart. She opens for us realistic, incarnate paths of hope: hoping in an ordinary day, hoping in a difficult relationship, hoping in a discreet service, hoping in the small fidelities that weave fraternity. She reveals that hope is not an abstract ideal but an inner work - patient, tenacious - the work of God within us.

By contemplating Mary, we discover how God wishes to shape us: gently, deeply, truly. She teaches us the art of availability, the art of presence, the art of encounter. She teaches us that our ecclesial mission always begins with that interior space where the Word can come to rest. In these approaching days of Advent, she invites us to make our lives a place where the Promise can take flesh.

May her “*Here I am*” become ours as well. May her step toward Elizabeth inspire our own: to go toward the other so that joy may awaken, so that the Gospel may breathe again, so that the Lord may be born, once more, in our humanity.

“Here I am”

Your Brother from the North,

Ciro Piccirillo

International Coordinator
Lay Fraternities of Charles de Foucauld

Nazareth

Please submit your articles for the March 2026 issue
by February 20 to nalf@moeller2001.com.

Mary and Me by Melanie Golder

I am at least the third generation of Rosary devotees. My paternal grandmother died with her rosary in her hand. My mother, herself a convert to Catholicism, taught me by example to love the rosary. As I was finishing graduate school, I prayed a 54 day rosary novena to discern whether I should become a Carmelite nun or get married. I was impressed with the results. I was married to a devout Catholic man within a year!

In the past 10 years I have grown much closer to Our Lady. I consecrated myself to her through *33 Days to Morning Glory* by Father Michael Gaitley, MIC. In this consecration we were encouraged to turn everything over to Mary's care. "Mary, my Mother, I give myself totally to you as your possession and property. Please make of me, of all that I am and have, whatever most pleases you" (page 124).

For me, this meant relinquishing control over my most precious possession, my children. I struggled with this, but I decided to take a leap of faith and release my children into Mary's care.

Again, I have been impressed by the results. Knowing my kids are under Mary's protection has gifted me with an unexpected, supernatural sense of peace. Rather than feeling uncomfortable that I am no longer in control of their lives, I know that Mary is in the background faithfully working to bring all things to good for them. It has released me from much of the useless worry I used to have about my children.

Since I committed myself to Mary, my unemployed son found a godly Catholic wife during the Covid lockdown, and I have been blessed with two grandchildren. I am blessed beyond my wildest dreams!

Recently I decided to bring Mary into the smallest details of my life. Since I have been living alone, I have struggled with keeping my house neat and tidy. I asked for prayer from some prayer warriors. I told them it seemed like a trivial thing to pray about, but it was a real stumbling block in my life. I thought it dated back to my early childhood when I resented the time my mother devoted to cleaning her new house every day rather than playing with me. They said, "Well, you have a new mother now."

So I asked Mary, my Mother, who I imagine kept a nice neat house for Joseph and Jesus, to teach me how to keep house. When I am tempted to just lay an object down in the most convenient spot, I hear Mary saying gently, "No. No. Just put that away." Or when I am distracted, she murmurs, "Now just take a moment and finish that task."

In addition, she is encouraging me to do regular cleaning. I put on a rosary recording, a Catholic podcast, or the sung Liturgy of the Hours and clean until it is over. This regular cleaning is making a visible difference in my home. She is making me aware that part of my problem is that I have too many things that I don't need, and that being tidy would be easier if there were just less things in my life, and everything had its own place.

I am amazed (but so grateful) that Mary is willing to help me not just in big things but in the really trivial aspects of daily living. Don't be afraid to trust yourself to her. You will be impressed by the results.

Editor's Note: Melanie is a member of a Lay Fraternity in California as well as a member of Apostoli Viae of the Carmelite spirituality.

Beyond the Christmas Card by Sr. Mary Roberta Revering

Initially, I was going to share how Mary seemed to be the ultimate example of knowing how to wait not only patiently but fruitfully, which I believe is a legitimate portrayal. But I also didn't want to portray her as the "meek and mild" image that I had learned as a child. So I looked at different places where Mary appears in the Gospels besides the Annunciation and the Birth of Jesus - hardly in themselves images of unhealthy subservience. For example, consider Luke 2:48 when Jesus stayed behind on the way back from the Passover Festival in Jerusalem. Mary says "Son, why have you done this to us?!! Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you." I hear a frazzled mother's voice instead of a sweet-sounding reproof, "Jesus darling, why have you done this to us?"

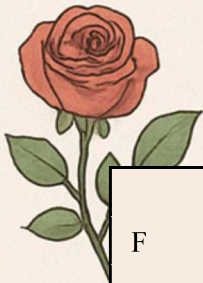
In John 2 Mary asks Jesus to increase the supply of wine that had run low. This is hardly a timid request of her grown son at a public gathering. It seems to me like Mary knew and shared life's difficulties without ever retreating into pious spirituality.

In John 19:25 we read, "Standing close to Jesus' cross were his Mother, Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene." It continues, "Jesus saw his mother standing there." What daunting courage it must have taken for Mary to have witnessed the crucifixion and to remain "standing there" until the end.

While I've since grown beyond my childhood images of "Mary Meekness," I'm grateful to have grasped how in Mary dogged determination and gentle perseverance can co-exist as she offers all of us, women and men alike, a realistic model to follow.

Editor's Note: LS Mary Roberta has been a member of the Little Sisters of Jesus for over fifty years. She is currently residing in Baltimore.





BLESSED MOTHER MARY

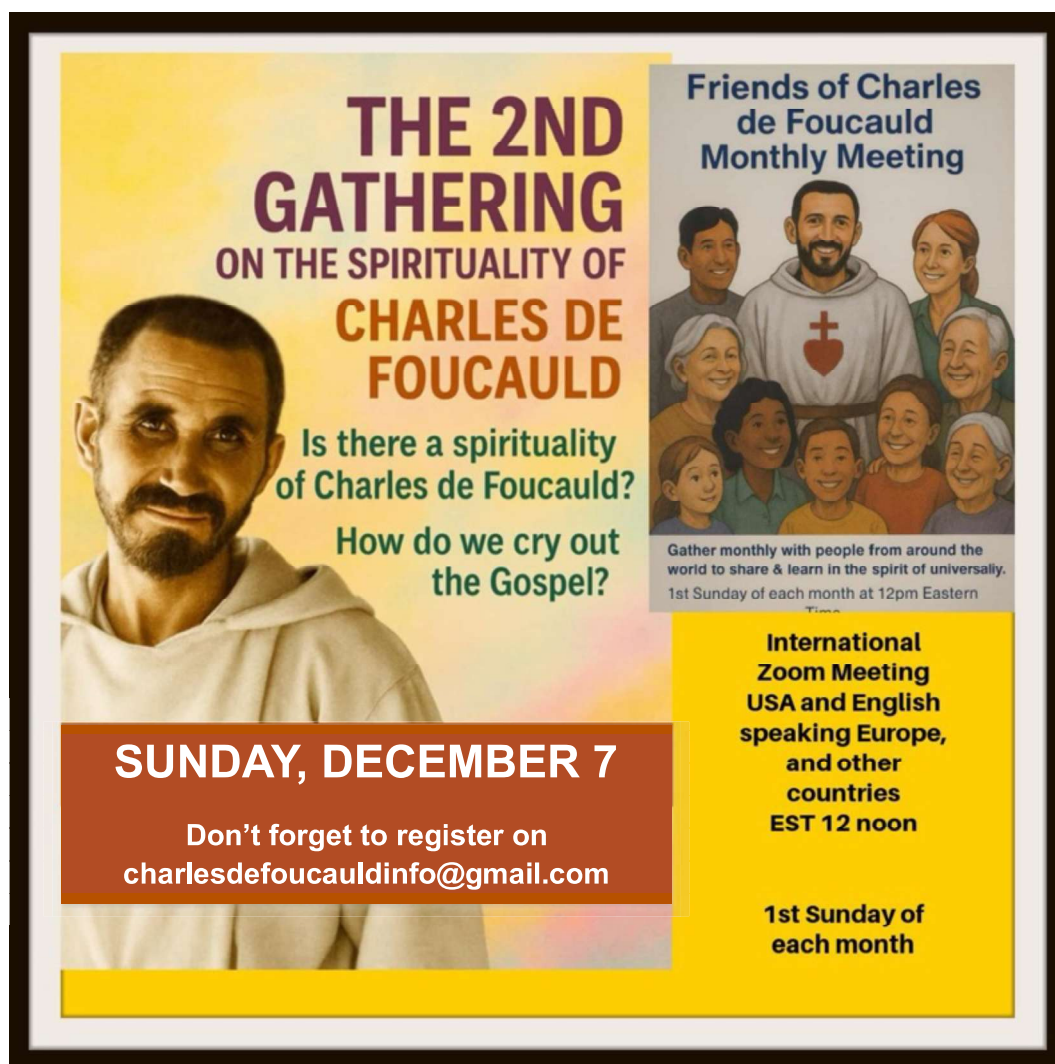
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Advocate
 Angel
 Annunciation
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 ArkOfTheCovenant
 Assumption
 Baby
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 Cana
 Conception
 Consecration
 Fiat
 FullOfGrace
 Galilee
 Gold
 Guadalupe

Hail
 Handmaid
 HolyFamily
 Immaculata
 Immaculate
 Jesus
 Jewish
 Joy
 Lourdes
 Magi
 Magnificat
 Manger
 Marian
 Mary
 Mediatrix
 MorningStar

Mother
 MotherOfGo
 Myrrh
 Nazareth
 OurLady
 Prayer
 QueenOfHea
 RefugeOfSin
 Rosary
 StarOfTheSe
 Theotokos
 Virgin
 Visitation
 Wine





Dear Sisters and Brothers,

You are warmly invited to join us for the 2nd Gathering on the Spirituality of Charles de Foucauld, an international Zoom meeting taking place on **Sunday, December 7** (noon EST). This event will bring together people from around the world who are inspired by the spirit of Nazareth and the universal fraternity that shaped Brother Charles' life. This gathering will also serve as a regional meeting for members of the various fraternities in Canada and the USA, a beautiful way to come together during this Advent season and deepen our sense of shared mission.

To participate, please register by emailing: charlesdefoucauldinfo@gmail.com

Once registered, the Zoom link will be sent to you by email. Feel free to invite anyone who might appreciate this time of sharing, learning, and prayer. We look forward to gathering with you in the joy of fraternity.

With warm greetings,

Ciro Piccirillo (Montréal, Canada)

Coordinator

Lay Fraternities of Charles de Foucauld

Desert Ramblings by Arlene Moeller

Since I was fortunate to go to a Catholic Elementary School, I remember well the altars to Mary that were found in every classroom. When I was around eight years old, the teacher assigned to us a project to make at home – a home May Altar. Truthfully, I don't recall my mother ever helping me with homework except this one time. My mother smiled wide when I handed her the paper with the instructions. My mom was not really an outwardly religious person, but she did come from a very devout Catholic family, and her twin sister even became a nun. While I was at school the next day, my mom went to the local arts and crafts supply and bought an assortment of items – shiny blue satin, little bunches of artificial flowers, etc. Later that day I watched in dismay as she stapled the satin inside and outside of the shoe box and glued every item in place. The altar was no longer MY project, but my mother radiated a glow of satisfaction!.....

Now fast forward to high school. I started to have very bad break-outs (pimples) on my face. No matter what I did, the situation just became worse and worse. While paging through a magazine (probably my mother's "Better Homes & Gardens"), I noticed an ad having to do with skin care. I bent my head down closer to get a better look. Yep, it had to do with getting rid of pimples and acne the Christine Valmy, Inc. way. Then I looked at the price (this is around 1970). Gulp – \$25.99! Where in the world would I get that kind of money!! Soon I happened to stumble upon a "Prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Help" and was inspired to pray...hard...that Mary would give me the courage to approach my mother to request her financial help. Up to that point in my life, I don't recall ever asking my mother for money – especially such a large sum. (Asking my father was out of the question!!). After praying Blessed Mother's ear off, I decided one day (when my brothers weren't around) to approach my mother when she was in her relaxed mood (cigarette and a cup of coffee). My mother was in agreement – as long as my father agreed to write out the check (which he did). Thankfully, the products produced great results, and I could return to a more normal emotional life! About fifteen years later I was introduced to the spirituality of Charles de Foucauld and soon learned about his personal affinity to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Blessed Mother was there for Br. Charles as well! I also read about Br. Charles' special love for the Rosary.....

During this same time period I was a volunteer teaching Catholic Catechism to inmates at the Cuyahoga County Jail in Cleveland Ohio in preparation for Baptism. I remember my grave dismay when I observed colorful plastic rosaries hanging around the neck of several inmates who were ushered in to see me. Of course, I said nothing. Not too long ago my husband received a phone call from my adult son who was calling from a secure treatment facility. My son mentioned that he was now wearing a rosary. When I was able to talk to him further on another day, he explained to me that he was now going to church (something he has not done in a long time even though he had received all of the Sacraments when he was growing up). Although I have not been able to see my son yet, I do picture him in my imagination sporting the rosary around his neck. It doesn't bother me at all now.....because now I know that the cross of Jesus is dangling near his heart.

