



Chiara Lubich

Mary

Her Identity, Our Identity

Edited by
Brendan Leahy and Judith Povilus

Mary

Mary has often accompanied the life and spirituality of Christian saints in both the Western and Eastern churches. In this compilation of Chiara Lubich's writing by Bishop Brendan Leahy and Judith Povilus, you'll discover a rich spirituality of the Mother of God which will challenge, inform, and strengthen the reader. Many Evangelicals and Pentecostals have only started our journey of understanding Mary's role in the life of the Christian. Reading this accessible work will bring Christians in these traditions to reflect on the work of the Holy Spirit in deepening one's understanding of Mary, and create needed space for additional dialogue and reflection.

Alexei Laushkin, Executive Director,
Kingdom Mission Society, Herndon, VA

This collection of writings about Mary, the Mother of Jesus, by Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare, not only reflects how this movement developed but also recounts the growth of teaching and devotion regarding Mary for more than half a century. From the beginning of the Movement in the 1940s, Chiara appreciated "the desolate Mary" as a model for Christian life. In the post Vatican II period her enthusiasm emerges for Mary as "the model of the laity" and "the lay person par excellence." She also discovers Mary as the "Model of the Gospel Revolution," plus "Mary, Sign of Protest," and Mary in Ecumenical and Interreligious dialogue. Chiara is a fascinating woman whose varied writings are well worth reading.

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Series Preface¹

“To those who follow you, leave only the gospel.”

Chiara Lubich has articulated the gospel in many ways, which are outlined in twelve cornerstones: *God-love*, the *will of God*, the *Word of God*, *love of neighbor*, the *new commandment*, the *Eucharist*, the *gift of unity*, *Jesus crucified and forsaken*, *Mary*, the *Church-communion*, the *Holy Spirit*, *Jesus present among us*.

Since they emerged in the late 1940s, these points have been inscribed in the souls and in the lives of thousands of people from every corner of the earth. Nevertheless, since Chiara Lubich’s death in 2008, what has been missing is a document that combined many texts, including those yet unpublished, that would illustrate them. This series of books seeks to deepen our understanding of these twelve cornerstones by presenting three sources from which they have emerged:

- the dimension of her personal testimony, especially as Chiara Lubich understood, deepened and lived these points;
- the theological dimension of reflecting on the mystery of God and of humankind;

1. This volume contains Chiara Lubich’s thought and experience on “Mary.” While it is the ninth in this series of titles originally published in Italian by Città Nuova, it is the third to be translated in its complete form and published by New City Press. Other volumes in the series will be translated and published.

- the dimension of incarnating these points in human life via a communitarian experience, in line with Vatican II (see *Lumen Gentium* 9).

The series will include as many as twelve books, through which it is hoped that readers may discover:

- A great spiritual teacher who can accompany them in their spiritual life;
- A deeper appreciation of the communal aspect of Christian life, and the implications of a communitarian spirituality for the Church and humanity;
- A deeper and more personal understanding of Chiara Lubich's life and thought that they can apply in their everyday life.

Introduction

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, the Mother of God. She is the woman most mentioned in the Gospel. More than any other woman in history, she has inspired individuals, families and nations. Indeed, throughout the centuries, countless girls have been named after her. And oceans of prayers have been addressed to her. Some countries even bear witness to her presence in critical moments of their history. Just think of how much Our Lady of Guadalupe, “The Morenita,” who appeared in 1531 to Juan Diego, means for Mexicans and indeed for all of South America right up to today.

From the very beginnings of the Christian story, Mary has inspired poets, song writers, and theologians. The ancient oriental hymn known as the “Akathistos” is a fine example. In the second millennium, the figure of Mary impacted Western culture in so many ways. Here we can think of how St. Bernard praised her in the final song of Dante’s Paradise: “Virgin Mother, daughter of your Son,” or Martin Luther’s striking commentary on the *Magnificat*. And, of course, we are all familiar with the numerous frescoes and paintings, altar sculptures and statues with a Marian theme found in churches and art galleries all over the world, not to mention the sublime Marian icons in the Orthodox tradition.

The era in which we now live, compared to others, is characterized by secularism. And yet, still today Our Lady is a reference point for many. Marian shrines still