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Welcome to The Marian Blog!

by Arthur Jones



A few first thoughts on the blog's 'structure,' which is quite open to

change as needed. Due to a certain wariness on my part about constantly being online, this will be a twice-a-week Tuesday and Friday blog in terms of my adding new material. My wariness regarding emailing, blogging, Facebooking and the like stems from the belief that we're all in danger of information overload. Information overload's companion is busyness for its own sake. As a much needed antidote to this potential addiction, my own act of self-discipline and restraint is that I only check my emails, blogs and Facebook circa 9 a.m., noon and 4.30 p.m. (It is amazing how that restraint opens up the day.)

The tone we ought to aim for, I think, is a quarter-notch down from the academic. We have an erudite, educated potential readership, but let's make this more a conversation than a debate.

The blog is here for everyone's polite, maturing and speculative thoughts about Mary, the Mother of God

? most often by responding to the inquiring texts of others. Thinking about texts, and reading your responses will be interspersed with art and asides.

In the main, however, the conversation will rely a good deal on promptings initially posed by questions suggested, in the short term at least, by three sources:

- a 2009 talk given by Fr. James Heft, S.M. (?Mary and the Intellectual Life,? later printed in *Origins*), see below.
- the recent book, *Full of Grace: Encountering Mary in Faith, Art and Life*, by Judith Dupre (Random House)
- and my own current, *Mary, A Mother Waiting: Raising the Messiah* (Paulist Press), a blank verse exploration of Mary and Jesus? mother-son relationship during the ?hidden years,? up to the point she eases him forward at Cana into his mission.

Over the medium term, we?ll move on to questions posed perhaps by Miri Rubin?s *Mother of God*, and Tissa Balasuriya, *OMI?s Mary and Human Liberation*. As I?m personally interested in learning more about Mary today as seen through the lives of those in religious orders, especially congregations of women religious, suggestions for a book there would be useful. I?d like to run unusual images of Mary in popular culture, in greetings cards, for example, as in the Vietnamese Christmas card from Hoa and Tom Fox, wall shrines, or incorporation into public advertising. (if you have such images, images with no copyright restrictions, perhaps you could email them to me as a jpeg file for consideration: AJones@NCRonline.org. The blog will take occasional side trips ? shrines? popular devotions? ? and all that should take us through the first year.

At that point we ought to see how far we?ve come, whether the conversation is pointing in a fresh direction, or whether we ought to end it.

Finally, what do we call her, this amazing woman who has strengthened rather than lessened her grip on our imaginings across two millenia? Well, though popularly known as Our Lady, and the Virgin Mary, and Queen of many things, here, she is Mary. The choice is honorable and sound. It?s her name. She was first known as St. Mary, as in one of Rome?s oldest churches, Santa Maria Maggiore. That title, St. Mary, will provide an aside or two along the way.

Here's the first challenge to respond to:

Heft: Ten years ago I said that Christian academics at Christian colleges and universities often have trouble making any direct connection between Jesus and their intellectual work. Ten years later I am asking what Mary, the Mother of Jesus, might have to do with the intellectual life. Ten years ago, I really thought I knew some answers. Now I am not as confident, though I am a bit more optimistic about coming up with something thoughtful than a history professor who asked me incredulously, ?What does a teenage Jewish girl in a backwater of the Roman empire know about the intellectual life??

Ladies and gentlemen, the blog is open.

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In The Marian Blog, *NCR* books editor Arthur Jones invites a discussion on

envisioning Mary, the mother of Jesus, in 21st-century terms.

Jones has been a Catholic journalist since before the Second Vatican Council. This month, Paulist Press releases his latest book, *Mary, a Mother Waiting, Raising the Messiah*. Jones describes his book as an exploration of the mother-son relationship of Mary and Jesus during the "hidden years," until she eases him front and center into his ministry at Cana.

You follow The Marian Blog and news about *Mary, a Mother Waiting, Raising the Messiah* on Facebook ([tinyurl.com/Mary-A-Mother-Waiting](https://www.facebook.com/tinyurl.com/Mary-A-Mother-Waiting)) and Twitter (twitter.com/amotherwaiting).

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