

# Nurturing a Love for Mary

Greetings!

When I was three years old, my family moved to South Bend, Indiana, because my dad was starting graduate school at the University of Notre Dame. We lived in a neighborhood near campus, and several times a day we drove past Mary atop the golden dome of one of the buildings. We didn't even get to the grocery store without seeing her. Soon after we moved, my grandparents visited, bringing with them my great-grandmother, who was in her eighties. We had to run a quick errand, and as soon as Our Lady came into view, I shouted, "Hi, cousin Mary!" I had latched on to the part of the Visitation narrative that connects Mary and Elizabeth as cousins.

My grandmother looked over at my great-grandmother, who had tears in her eyes. "Mom, what's wrong?" she asked.

"She feels so close to Mary," my great-grandmother said. "It's beautiful."

Many children feel a special connection to the Mother of God. My toddler insisted we move a small statue of Mary from my bedroom into the living room where he plays. He talks to her throughout the day. "Hi Mayeeeee," he calls as he speeds by on his noisy toddler feet. Young children understand what it is to be nurtured and cared for. They respond to her maternal love for them.

This closeness they feel translates easily into celebrating Mary, and indeed into celebrating her as the Queen of Heaven. For this simple mom who loves and nurtures us as she did her child in Nazareth long ago is also the mother of the King of the Universe, and her courageous yes changed the course of history.

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There are many ways to celebrate Mary as queen. The most traditional is a May crowning, during which a procession is held and a crown of flowers is placed on Mary's head and a hymn to her is sung. May crownings are often done in



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the parish or school, but many people will also crown Our Lady in their homes. Another tradition is to make a small table into a prayer altar dedicated to Mary. A small statue, a holy card on a stand, or an icon can all help us to focus on her as our mother and queen, who is always willing to intercede for us when we call to her. And, of course, the Rosary both draws us closer to Mary as we contemplate her life and honor her special role in salvation history.

When we think about royalty, we think of them as exalted and distant. But when we consider Mary, Queen of Heaven, we know that she is as close to us as our own mother.