Edmonton Catholic School Division
Parent Newsletters

December 2026

Mary, The Mother of God

As our thoughts start turning towards Christmas and the birth of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, let us take a few minutes to reflect once again on Mary, the Mother of God.

Mary is Jesus' Mother. Mary is the Mother of God. Mary is the Mother of the Church. Mary is our Mother.

We all know well the Nativity Story, where the Archangel Gabriel appears to Mary at the Annunciation, telling her that she will conceive and give birth to the Son of God, Jesus. Mary accepts this news with humility, saying, "I am the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1: 38).

When Mary was in her ninth month or so of her pregnancy, she and Joseph travel the long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, perhaps a week's walk given her condition. They're on the way to Bethlehem to participate in a Roman census ordered by Emperor Caesar Augustus. There she gives birth to Jesus. (Yes, even Mary and Joseph could not escape the dreaded taxman!).

Let us interrupt the story for a moment. I said above that Mary is also our Mother, my Mother. Without a doubt, Mary was born to become Jesus' mother, but she also wants to be our mother. And for me, this summer, in the midst of my third visit to Ukraine during the war, she became just that for me.

I travelled to Ukraine at the end of June to attend a children's pilgrimage at a Marian Shrine, Zarvanytsia. The good people of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton (throughout Alberta) have been helping orphans and children in need in Ukraine for the past 25 years through our Bridge of Hope Ministries, a bridge between Canada and Ukraine.

No offense to Tesla owners but I did not have a good experience in my first ride in a Tesla! When the car that was joining a convey from Lviv, and other parts of Ukraine, to Zarvanytsia picked me up, I thought, this is going to be great, riding in a Tesla, which I've heard so much about. However, my drivers, a lovely couple, kindly offered another bishop and myself the back seats in the car. The problem is that I can get car sick if I don't see what's in front of me. And that's exactly what happened. The driver's seat was so big that no matter what I did to see around it, I could tell that this was not going to be fun.

Three hours later when we arrived at our destination, all I could think of was Lord, get me to my bed so I can lay down for a while before we meet the 200 children and caregivers that had made the same journey. It was not to be. Rather, my drivers thought it best to stop at the little church housing the original miraculous icon of Our Lady of Zarvanytsia and pray before proceeding on to the retreat centre.

What's a bishop to do? I got out and did my best on my weak legs and queasy stomach to make my way into the little church. I stood before Mary and pleaded with her: "Mary, I've come all the way from Canada to greet these young people; and they've come from all across Ukraine,

fleeing the war and the things that young people should never know let alone experience firsthand. All they want are a few days where they can pray, run around, and play like all children. Mary, let me not disappoint them. Let me in a short while – an hour before I was to speak to them and then celebrate the Divine Liturgy (Mass) with them – be Jesus for them, loving them, caring for them, and keeping them safe."

And you know what? My motion sickness, which can usually last a couple days for me, lifted immediately. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, my Mother, came through! I felt 100% better, healed, able to smile and laugh with the young people. Over the next few days, we enjoyed each other's company, ate cake and ice cream, and even danced together! My own little miracle. Thank you Mary!

Zarvanytsia is a wonderful place where miracles happen. The miraculous icon of Our Lady of Zarvanytsia in Ukraine dates back to 1240, when a wounded monk, fleeing the Mongol destruction of Kyiv, collapses by a spring of water in the forest. The Virgin Mary appears to him in a dream. When he awakes, he finds the sacred icon of the Mother of God and a healing spring. Today, Zarvanytsia is widely known as the Lourdes of Ukraine. And Mary continues to work miracles there and beyond.

This Christmas as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let Mary adopt you as her own children. Yes, she is Jesus' mother, but she is also our Mother. Let her love you, let her take care of you as a spiritual mother. May she bring your needs, your prayers, and your struggles to her son Jesus. May she point you ever closer to her Son and help you to follow the Gospel. May she be an example for you – as she was in Zarvanytsia for me this summer – of total trust in God, courage, and unconditional love through life's joys and sorrows.

God bless!

Bishop David
Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton