

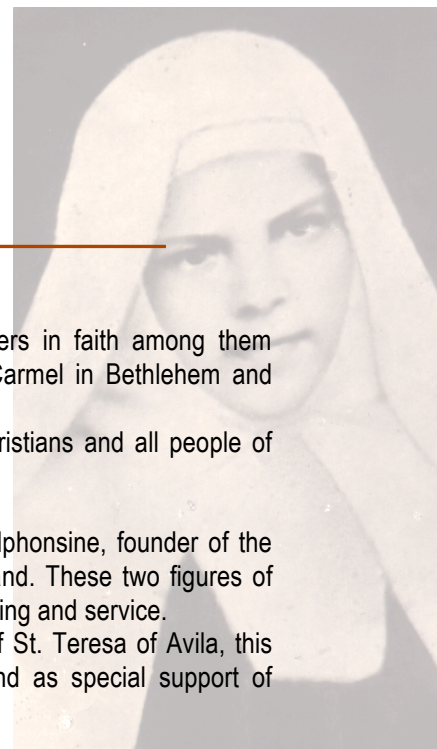
**CANONIZATION
OF BLESSED
MARIAM BAOUARDY**

1846 – 1878

**SISTER MARY OF JESUS CRUCIFIED
CARMELITE OF BETHLEHEM**



Presentation



On May 17th, 2015, Pope Francis will canonize several elders' sisters in faith among them Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified - Mariam Baouardy, Carmelite, founder of Carmel in Bethlehem and Nazareth.

A happy event, a sign of hope, encouragement to faithfulness for Christians and all people of good will of the Near and Middle East in this difficult and troubled time!

With her, other Palestinian religious will be honored, Blessed Marie-Alphonsine, founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Rosary, very active in parish life of Holy Land. These two figures of holiness give a complementary message based on prayer and charity in self-offering and service.

In this year of consecrated life and of the 5th centenary of the birth of St. Teresa of Avila, this daughter of Carmel is given like an example as an elder sister in Christ and as special support of Christians of the East.

This dossier prepared by the Carmel of Bethlehem, is promoted by l'Oeuvre d'Orient. It is proposed as a first meeting with Mariam Baouardy, a Christian from Orient. Her canonization is an opportunity to make known and to spread widely the fruits of holiness of the Church in the East. They are a gift for the whole Church and they challenge all traditions.

Indeed, Mariam is a BRIDGE between the two lungs of the Churches of East and West. She meet ones and others by relating them to their roots and inviting them to communion. To be rooted in Christ and to stay on the course of hope, both need these bonds of brotherhood and communion, and testimonies of fidelity and holiness.

The life of Mariam manifests the relevance of this relation. *"Today more than ever the weight of threats invites us to love and fraternity the fundamental law of social and international relations, in spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness, drawing inspiration from the lifestyle of the Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified and example not only for her people but also for the whole world. May this new lifestyle give us the peace that is not based on fear but on mutual trust"*¹ said Saint John Paul II in the day of her beatification.

These files present some major axes and keys of reading for a first approach to the life and testimony of Mariam:

- A biographical sketch
- Mariam, Flower of Carmel
- In the Breath of the Spirit, the invisible visible
- Mariam, elder sister and support of Eastern Christians
- Mariam, "patroness of peace" for the Near and Middle East
- Mariam and the consecrated life
- Mariam, the joy of hope
- Bibliography and contacts

We thank the persons who have collaborated in the realization of this dossier: Mother Anne-Françoise of the Presentation, prioress of the Carmel of Bethlehem, Mother Maira of the Child Jesus, Prioress of Carmel of Haifa, sister Veronica of Jesus, from the Carmel in Haifa, Father William Marie MERCHAT.

Thanks also to l'Oeuvre d'Orient for its support in the design and diffusion of this dossier.

¹ John Paul II, Homily of beatification of Mariam Baouardy, November 13th, 1983

1. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Galilee: The childhood

Mariam Baouardy was born on 5 January 1846 in Ibillin, a small village of Galilee, between Nazareth and Haifa. Her parents, deeply religious, bore a heavy trial: they had seen twelve children die in infancy. In their deep sadness and with their confidence in God, they decided to make a pilgrimage to Bethlehem to pray at the manger and to ask the Holy Virgin Mary for the grace of a daughter. Finally, Mariam was born nine months later. She was baptized and she received the Confirmation according to the Greek Catholic tradition of her family. The next year, a brother, Boulos arrived to give more joy to the family.

But Mariam was not yet three years old when her father died, then her mother a few days later. When her father saw that death was coming, he took Mariam in his arms asking Saint Joseph to be henceforth her father entrusting him to take care of her. Many times this prayer would be granted. Boulos was adopted by a maternal aunt who lived in a neighboring town, and Mariam by a rich uncle. Some years later, this uncle would move to Alexandria taking Mariam with him.

From her early years in Galilee, she remembered at once the wonder of the beauty of Creation, light and landscape, which spoke to her about God, (this wonder will be reflected in the Hymns that flow spontaneously from her heart during some ecstasies) and the strong sentiment that all things pass away. One childhood experience is decisive for her future life: she was playing with two little birds and she wanted to bath them... but they didn't survive and died in her hand. She was very sad when she had to bury them but she heard these words in her heart, words that will mark her forever: "See, this is how everything passes; but if you want to give me your heart, I shall always remain with you."

Alexandria: the martyr

Mariam was 12 years old; she had been in Alexandria some years, when she learnt that her uncle wished her to marry. Having already decided to give herself entirely to the Lord, she refused. Persuasions, threats, humiliations, bad treatment, nothing could change her decision. Three months later she approaches an old servant of the family to try to send a letter to her brother, who was in Galilee, to get his help. When the servant, who was a Muslim, learnt about her suffering, he advised her to give up being a Christian and to convert her to his religion. Mariam refused, so he angrily pulled out his sword and cut Mariam's throat and then threw her into a little dark street. It was the 8 September 1858.

It was a moment of a supernatural strength in her life. Later she would tell that she was really dead at that moment. It seemed to her that she entered into Paradise, she saw the Holy Virgin, the saints and her parents, and the glorious Trinity... But Mariam's time had not yet come and she woke up in a grotto close to a young woman, who seemed to be a nun dressed in blue. She took care of her, fed her and taught her for 4 weeks. When Mariam was healed, the young woman, later Mariam said that she was the Virgin Mary, lead her to a church and left her.

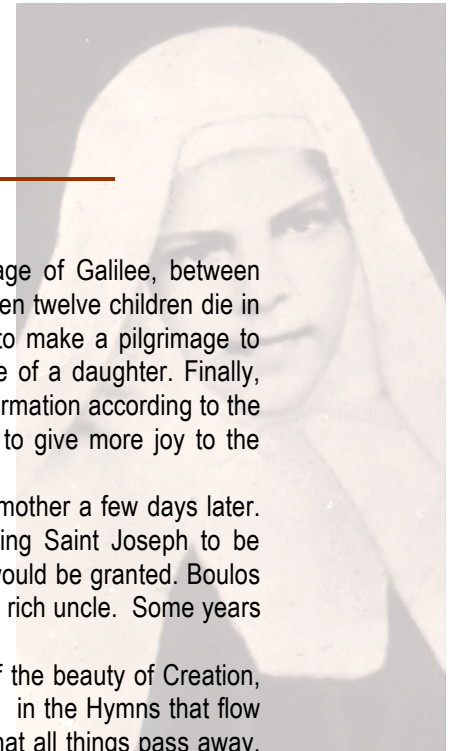
From that day Mariam would go from one town to another (Alexandria, Jerusalem, Beirut, Marseille), working as a domestic servant. She preferred the poor families, to help them, leaving them when she felt that she was too honored.

But she would become also the witness of this invisible world in which we believe without seeing it, and that she experienced so strongly during all her life.

In Marseille: Sisters of Saint Joseph

In 1865 she was in Marseille where she met the sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition. Although she was 19 years old, she looked only 12 or 13; she spoke very bad French and her health was also bad. But she was accepted as a postulant and she was very happy that she could finally give herself fully to the Lord. Always working hard, she spent most of her time in the kitchen or the laundry. But each week she relived the Passion of Jesus. She received the stigmata (but she was so simple that she believed that it was an illness), and all kinds of extraordinary graces begin to appear. Some sisters were quite disconcerted, and at the end of the two years of novitiate she was not admitted into the congregation.

There was then a sister of St Joseph, mother Veronica, who had asked to enter Carmel but she must wait a little in the convent in Marseille. During this time she replaced the novices' mistress who was sick and so she met Mariam whom she understood and appreciated so well that asked her to come to



Carmel with her.

Pau: The Carmel

Mariam was welcomed with joy on June 1867 and here she always would find love and understanding in the midst of all she would have to live through. She entered into the novitiate the next month and she received the name of Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified. She asked to become a lay sister, because always she felt more comfortable when she was serving others and also she had difficulties in reading the Divine Office. Her simplicity and generosity won the heart of her sisters. These words, when she came out of an ecstasy, are the fruit of her life: *"Where there is charity, there God is also. If you think of doing good for your brother, God will think of you. If you make a hole for your brother, you will fall into it, it will be for you. But if you make heaven for your brother, it will be for you."*

However, she was not perfect and at times she criticized herself for her hastiness. The gift of prophecy, the attacks of the Devil or ecstasies... among all the many divine graces that she received, there was, very deeply, the knowledge of her nothingness in front of God: when she called herself "the little nothing", it was really a profound expression of her being. That allowed her to penetrate the unreachable depth of divine mercy where she found her joy, her delight and life. *"Humility is the happiness of being nothing, it is not attached to anything, and it is never tired of anything. It is contented, happy, always happy, satisfied in everything... Blessed are the little ones!"* Here lies the source of her abandon among the strangest graces and the most disconcerting human circumstances.

India: The foundation of the Carmel of Mangalore

Three years later, in 1870, she left with a small group to found the first Carmelite monastery in India, at Mangalore. The journey on the ship was an adventure and three nuns died before arriving. But other sisters are sent and at the end of 1870 the monastic life began. The extraordinary experiences of Mariam continue without impeding her for the hard work and the troubles inherent in a new foundation of which she is really the very soul. During her ecstasies, the sisters sometimes could see her in the kitchen or other places with a radiant face; sometimes she took part in spirit in the events of Church, for example persecutions in China; and sometime she seemed to be possessed by the Devil, but only exteriorly, causing her to live terrible torments and fights. That was the beginning of many misunderstandings in her community, and some of the sisters doubted the authenticity of her life. Nonetheless, at the end of her novitiate she made her vows on 21 November 1871; but the tensions in her entourage finally made her return to Pau in 1872.

She return to Pau

Back in France, Mariam took up again her simple life of lay sister, surround by the love of her sisters, and her soul expanded. During some of her ecstasies, despite her illiteracy, but with the fervor of her gratitude towards God, she improvised poems of very great beauty, full of oriental freshness and charm, in which the entire creation sang to its Creator. At other times, she was suddenly drawn to the top of a tree, upon a branch that could not support even a little bird, by the impetus of her soul towards the Lord... She was then like a witness of this transfigured universe described by the prophet Isaiah (In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together...) or by the author of the Apocalypses (the woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars...)

"Everyone is sleeping. And God, so full of goodness, so great, so worthy of praise, He is forgotten!... No one thinks of Him!... See, the whole nature praises Him, the sky, the stars, the trees, the grass, everything praises Him; but man who knows his good deeds, who should praise Him, he sleeps! Let us go, let us go to wake up the universe."

Many people come to her for comfort, advice, prayers, and they return enlightened and fortified after their meetings.

A short time after returning from Mangalore, she began to speak about the foundation of a Carmel in Bethlehem. There were many obstacles but gradually they all disappeared, sometimes against all hope. A benefactor, Miss Berthe Dartigaux, would be completely devoted to her. His confessor, Father Estrate, of the Congregation of Betharram, encourages and supports her to the end.

Bethlehem, Nazareth, Emmaus, and her entrance into Heaven

Finally Rome gave the permission to found a Carmel in Bethlehem and on 20 August 1875 a little

group of Nuns left for the Holy Land. The Lord himself guided Mariam in choosing the location and the design of the buildings. As the only Arabic speaker among the sisters, she oversaw the works: “diving into the sand and the lime” she gained quickly the sympathy of the workers; the community began to live in the convent from 21 November 1876, while some works continued.

She also prepared the foundation of a Carmel in Nazareth. She went there to buy a site in August 1878. During this journey she had a vision of the location of Emmaus, which was then purchased for the Carmel by Berthe Dartigaux.

Back in Bethlehem she watched over the works; the heat was very tiring. She fell down the stairs and broke an arm while bringing drinks to the workers. Gangrene quickly set in and Mariam died a few days later, on 26 August 1878, aged just 32 years. She was beatified by Saint John Paul II on November 13th, 1983.

2. Mariam, flower of Carmel

Mariam was born in Galilee, at the foot of Mount Carmel foothills, between the large port city of Haifa, which is the summit of the Carmel mountain range, and Nazareth. Her earliest years were bathed in this atmosphere majestic and austere. It was the seedbed of an extraordinary adventure of holiness. When she entered the order of Carmel, she would find a natural link between her culture and her spiritual path.

- **Carmel, oriental roots**

The Carmelite family finds its roots in this eastern land. Indeed, the first hermits who become the brothers of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel settled at the end of the XII century on the slopes of the Carmel' mountain ranges, near Haifa. They were looking for ways of union with God in a life centered on prayer and meditation of the Word of God. In this place, bare and open to the horizon of the Mediterranean Sea, their quest of the absolute found and marked the paths that would be taken and deepened later by the great spiritual of the Order.

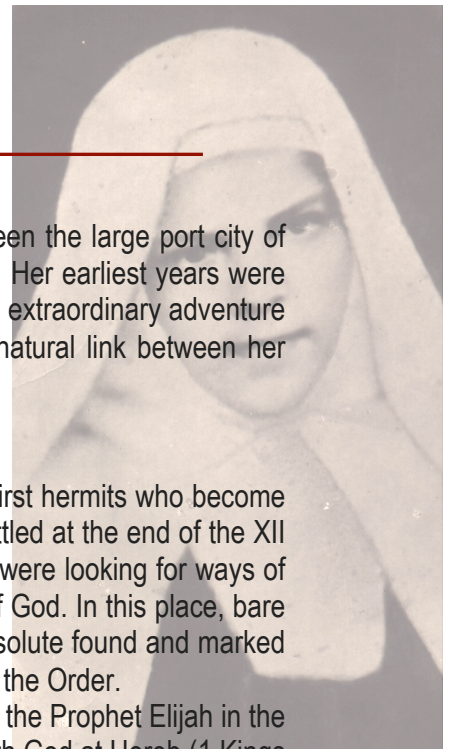
We find their spiritual and biblical roots in the particular experience of the Prophet Elijah in the ninth century before J.C. In this spiritual family, the encounter of Elijah with God at Horeb (1 Kings 19) is a source of inspiration for prayer: the learning process of the relationship with God is lived in silence and listening while leaving a free place to manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The experience and teaching of St Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross have given precious lights to illuminate and guide the path of those who venture themselves on the slopes of Carmel.

Very quickly the presence of the Virgin Mary became obvious for the Carmelite friars. They had read in the story of the announcement of the rain (1 Kings 18), the figure of Mary bringing the blessings of God to humanity, like a rain of graces for the men dried up by sin. They took her for mother and protector - *Mater et Regina Decor Carmeli* – the scapular that they wear is a sign of this special relationship with the Mother of God.

- **Carmel, a bridge between Orient and Occident**

The turbulent history of the Holy Land led the Carmelite brothers to the West. There the Order developed and was structured through the thirteenth and fourteenth century in various European countries.

With St. Teresa of Avila reform in the sixteenth century, a new branch is born, that of Discalced Carmelites. It was this second branch of the hermits' stump that experienced the greatest development during centuries. The personality and the teaching of Mother Teresa have profoundly marked it. Since the XVI century, generations drink from this fountain. Mariam found in it the environment and the spiritual intuition that allowed her particular grace to grow.



The living roots of Carmel and its inspiration remain in the East. The prophet Elijah and the Virgin Mary play a large place there. The presence of the Carmelites in different countries of the Near and Middle East maintains and invigorates the historical and identity bond. It is necessary for Carmel and beneficial to this region of the world.

So, Carmel is a bridge between East and West, as a link between the two cultures where Christian faith has sprung up and developed. Its message is relevant to these two historic lungs of the Church. It invites all Christians to be rooted in a relationship with the Lord through prayer and the Word of God and to live the Gospel in charity and humility.

- **Mariam, Carmelite**

On entering the Carmel of Pau in 1867, Mariam sang her joy of being daughter of Carmel. She feels herself at home. *"Oh my mother, I cannot tell you the happiness I have to be in Carmel, I think I'm in paradise and I think how I will be in heaven, since it is like that on earth. Oh what charity! ... All day we keep silence, solitude... silent, loneliness, finally it is more paradise than Carmel. It is impossible to express all that I feel and all the truth."*²

She found in Carmel the air she breathed when she was a child at the foot of Mount Carmel. Secretly, the Lord had prepared for this vocation consecrated in the Carmelite family. The quest for the Absolute of God - "Solo Dios basta" – found its roots in the experience of Elijah. In silence and prayer, she sought and met the living God.

The Virgin Mary was very present in her way. As a Mother and mistress, she guided her and taught her the ways of union with the Lord in humility, trust, charity and detachment of created things. Here we find the essential teaching of St. Teresa of Avila.

The communion of saints is an aspect proper to the Carmelite life, especially with St. Joseph protector of Carmel, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and other Carmelite great figures. We find this aspect as characteristic in the life of Mariam. Her mystical friendship with Mother Teresa rooted her in the charism of the reformer, and has marked out her way through the spiritual Mansions and the hard Ascent of Mount Carmel. Her experience is similar to that of the great spirituals of the Order and in its own way illustrates their teaching.

Her life of charity, her deep humility - "little nothing of Jesus" - her union with the paschal mystery and her love of the Church attest the depth of the work of the Holy Spirit³ in her. Watching her live, listening to her words, we understand that a life centered on listening attentively to the Word of God and the welcome of his presence (in prayer and silence) can only bear fruits of holiness!

*"You have been truly a spiritual daughter of the prophets and the Gospel because you have been able to give us the sense of God, the sense of sin, and the sense of conversion: you have known how to introduce into your body and your soul, as lines of fire, the divine voice of Jesus of Nazareth. You used to call yourself a "little nothing", but this little nothing which you are, contains more force of life than a hundred philosophical and theological treatises. Authentic daughter of Carmel in a time of skepticism, you have known to affirm the transcendence of God-Love who continues to pursue our existence throughout the meadows and marshes of our time."*⁴

- **Flower of Carmel**

Flower of Carmel, daughter of the prophets and the gospel, her experience is a bright point of reference for all those who want to move forward on the path of union with God. Her experience joined Christians in the East and in the West, like a bridge of charity with the colors of Carmel.

² Carmel of the Child Jesus - Bethlehem, *Lettres de la bienheureuse Marie de Jésus Crucifié*, Collection Carmel vivant, Editions duCarmel, 2011, L 1

³ Cf. document « Dans le souffle de l'Esprit Saint, l'invisible visible »

⁴ Carmelo MEZASSALMA, in *Le livre céleste de Mariam. Lettre à la Bienheureuse Marie de Jésus Crucifié, la « Petite Arabe »*

To her brothers and sisters of Carmel, she reminds the beauty of a life offered in the intimacy of the Lord, the living God who gives life. To this spiritual and religious family, she launched the challenge of a dynamic presence and fruitful testimony akin to these two lungs of the Church.

To all those who thirst for God, she gives the taste of drawing from the Source in silence and prayer, and living in charity and humility.

In the great tradition of the saints of Carmel, "the little nothing of Jesus" offers us a legacy to make our lives a "living flame of love" because in her words, "there is only love that can fill the man's heart.

My journey with Mariam is of the order of the Spirit. She wanted me to know her and that we may start together a friendship for which I give thanks! This Carmelite sister, unknown in general, is a message for us today, especially in our Middle East tormented by war and violence.

The friendship that was born between our future saint and me it is not mere coincidence, but of the order of the Spirit. With this Carmelite Palestinian sister of this wounded and torn earth by conflicts and wars, I am invited, me a Lebanese Carmelite, to pray and to work together for peace and Love in our world and in the suffering Middle East, hoping against hope ...

Sister Lina of the Child Jesus, Carmel of St Joseph, Isfia

3. In the Breath of the Holy Spirit, the invisible visible...

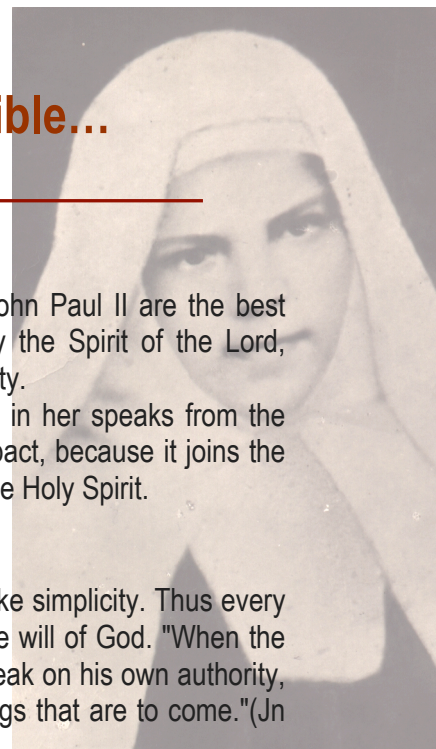
"In her, everything speaks of Jesus".⁵ These words of saint John Paul II are the best compliment that we can give to a Christian! A life totally inhabited by the Spirit of the Lord, nourished by the Word of God and the sacraments and radiating his charity.

Eastern culture was the seedbed of the sanctity of Mariam. All in her speaks from the East and in the spirit of the East. Yet her message has an universal impact, because it joins the roots of the Church and Carmel and begs to vivify them in the breath of the Holy Spirit.

- **In the Breath of the Holy Spirit**

Mariam abandoned herself to the action of the Holy Spirit with childlike simplicity. Thus every event of her life found in him its light, helping her to know and to live the will of God. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." (Jn 16, 13)

"This morning I was sad because I did not feel God. I seemed to me that my heart was like iron. I could not think of God; and I invoked the Holy Spirit, and I said: It is you who made us know Jesus. The apostles remained with him long time without understanding Him; but a drop of you made them understand. You will also make me understand Him. Come, my consolation; Come, my joy; come, my peace, my strength, my light. Come, give me the light to find the source where I



⁵ Saint John-Paul II, speech to pilgrims, November 14th, 1983

need to quench my thirst. A drop of you is enough to show me Jesus as He is... And I felt the fire burn in my heart. The Holy Spirit refuses me nothing".⁶

We are here in the heart of the experience of Mariam: the key to enter into her interior garden is the surrender of her life to the action of the Holy Spirit. "*Holy Spirit, enlighten me. What should I do and in which way I can find Jesus?*" she exclaimed. Unaware of the depth of his spiritual life, Mariam called herself the "*little nothing of Jesus*"; she expected all from him. It is the Holy Spirit himself who led her in this path of intimacy with the Christ.

Witness is the prayer he has inspired to her:

*"Holy Spirit, inspire me,
Love of God, consume me;
On the true path, lead me.
Mary, my Mother, watch over me;
With Jesus, bless me;
From all evil, from all illusion,
From all danger, preserve me."*

"The Spirit" inspires everything ", our thoughts, our actions and our prayer. He unites us to God and to our brothers. Mariam is a witness of the power of this daily breath... The mystery of Salvation and the adventure of Christian life are summarized in this prayer!"⁷

This dimension was prophetic because, in her days, no one was speaking of the Holy Spirit in the Latin tradition. Without even realizing it, she was a bridge, helping the West benefit from the rich Oriental tradition.

The concrete fruits of this action of the Spirit were humility and charity. Both go together. "*What must I do to acquire, my God, your true love? So the Almighty God descends towards me, just a little dust. Here is how he made me understand: a soul that wants to have the real love of God wants God to be loved by all*".⁸

"If humility is not optional, for Mariam it is the very condition of holiness". Today, holiness is not prayer, or visions (or) revelations, nor the science of speaking well, nor clichés, nor penances; it is humility ..." Point of attention neither to exceptional graces nor to the excesses of spiritual zeal of her time, the important thing is this abandonment in all things to love of the Lord. Mariam, recognizes herself little, so the Lord could accomplish his work in her: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Mt. 5: 3) And Mariam added: "*In heaven, the most beautiful trees are those that have committed the greatest sin; but they have used their miseries as manure that surrounds the roots ..."* That's a source of hope and terribly redoubtable! God uses everything to sanctify us including and especially our sin, which deposited at his feet, is the ground of our humility and therefore our holiness."⁹

Charity is the other fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is an unconditional love for the Lord and a constant attention to the life of her neighbors. "*There is only love that can fill the human heart*", Mariam tells us. Following St. Teresa of Avila, in humility, charity and detachment, she has lived with her heart in Heaven and her feet on earth. Gradually she was unified internally by the Holy Spirit; her life became a call to communion, to unity and concrete charity.

⁶ Denis BUZY, *Thoughts*, Carmel of Bethlehem, 1997, p 36-37

⁷ Cf. William Marie MERCHAT, *Prier 15 jours avec Marie de Jésus crucifié*, Ed. Nouvelle Cité, 2012, chap.10

⁸ Carmel of the Child Jesus - Bethlehem, *Lettres de la bienheureuse Marie de Jésus Crucifié*, Collection Carmel vivant, Editions du Carmel, 2011, L 11

⁹ William Marie MERCHAT, op. cit., p 57

*"When you see a tear in the dress of another, do not tear it more; but cut a piece of your coat to mend the hole ... Jesus will wear you with the bridal dress."*¹⁰

*"I heard a voice saying to me: "People in the world and communities look for novelties in their devotions and neglect the true devotion to the Paraclete. That is why there is error, disunity and there is no peace and light. They are not calling the Light as it should be called; and it is the Light that makes us know the truth. Even in the seminaries it is neglected ..."*¹¹

These two quotes illustrate the concrete attention to the neighbor requested by Mariam and the importance of communion, fruit of the "devotion to the Paraclete."

- **Mariam of Jesus Crucified**

Mariam, in Carmel, Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, is primarily "Mary of Jesus." This desire of union with Christ is concretized in her loyalty in the midst of human and spiritual trials. *"See, this is how everything passes; but if you want to give me your heart, I shall always remain with you"*.¹² These words heard interiorly in her childhood were a constant light, especially in times of trial and choice. Her deep attachment to Christ in the mystery of the cross had become the preferred way of her holiness. The Holy Spirit taught her gradually to welcome this mystery. Through her experience, she recalled the centrality of our faith.

The life of Mary of Jesus Crucified, marked in body and in her soul by the mystery of the cross, makes us turn towards the Christ the Redeemer. In Him we find "the way, the truth and the life." (Jn 14: 6) Her testimony opens for us a twofold way: that of mercy received in the sacramental life and that of the offering of our life. It finds its source and its fulfillment in the mystery of the Eucharist. With Mary of Jesus Crucified, we receive the invitation to immerse ourselves in the paschal mystery, source of God's Mercy, and to enter into Christ's offering. "May he make of us an eternal offering to your glory", we ask in the third Eucharistic Prayer.

- **The invisible visible**

Mariam, like the lover of the Song of Songs, offered herself to the transforming love of the Lord who gradually invaded her with his charity. It manifested itself through the extraordinary mystical phenomena. These are only like a drawing in broad strokes of the action of the Holy Spirit in her.

With Mariam, the invisible becomes visible, what the eye does not see, the soul reveals. *"The stories of her mystic life are largely a supernatural overflowing: very disconcerting for a occidental mind, less for an oriental mind ... However, natural and supernatural are not a stranger to one another, they are not hermetic; otherwise what would be prayer? Everything is a matter of dosage and balance, the wise or the Cartesians would say ... It's all about love and availability, lovers say ... When we love, we desire nothing other than to be united to the beloved. In a friendly or romantic relationship, gestures express and orient this desire. In the spiritual life, there are also frames, rites but the Spirit blows where he wills and as he wants ... And the desire is there, sometimes burning like a furnace..."*¹³

Her eastern culture and the action of the Holy Spirit are the keys to understanding this inner freedom and this radiation. They also attest to the relevance of Mariam testimony for the Church and in today's society in the Orient and in the Occident. If Mariam is a bridge between the two cultures, she offers to each of them the possibility of finding again its roots

¹⁰ Denis BUZY, op. cit, p 74

¹¹ Denis BUZY, op. cit, p 39

¹² Pierre ESTRATE, *Mariam, Sainte palestinienne ou la vie de Marie de Jésus crucifié*, Pierre Téqui, 1999, p 14

¹³ William Marie MERCHAT, op. cit., p 82

For many people in the Occident, the reality of God is no longer obvious and the invisible is reduced to what the eye human can not see but the machines may scrutinize carefully. On the other hand, many Oriental people, polluted by materialism or destroyed by the endless conflicts, are tempted to despair of this invisible.

Occidental and Oriental societies are in need of finding their identity, living roots, spiritual life and spirit of fraternity to move forward in peace and trust. Mariam has something to transmit and to offer to them to help them to take these steps towards Life.

The simplicity of her life and her words may reach every person. Images, parables, poetry ... express beyond words, beyond the visible, so real for the heart that opens itself to the Holy Spirit. The words we are collected of Mariam are as many doors opened towards the invisible or from the invisible to invite us to enter in the intimacy with God. How many people say they have found in Mariam an elder sister who guides them towards Christ!

Mariam lived the invisible visible in her intimate relationship with the Virgin Mary and the saints. From her childhood, the Virgin Mary visited and specially protected her. She found in Mary a model of faith. The Mother of God, who became her mother, taught her how to fully accept Jesus into herself and put Him in the first place. The young religious would discover a whole Carmelite religious education that she would transmit to her sisters. *"Oh! How Mary's faith was pleasing to Heavenly Father! By her faith, every day Jesus grew in her. This same faith, if we have it, will make grow Jesus in our heart"* she said.

The deep friendship lived with St. Teresa of Avila, St. Joseph's presence and the communion of Saints, are other accents of this invisible which become visible to Mariam. She offers this to us like a legacy to remind us of the essential.

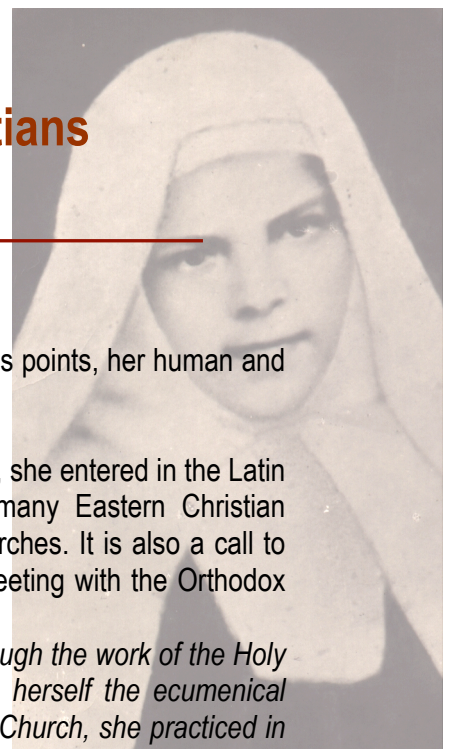
In very broad strokes, we have chosen just some of fruits of the life and witness of Mariam. A call to live in the Holy Spirit, united to Christ the Redeemer, opened to the invisible communion in charity and humility. What a program, as a bridge between Heaven and Earth, between Orient and Occident!

4. Mariam, elder sister and support of Eastern Christians

Mariam is an elder sister in faith for Eastern Christians. At various points, her human and spiritual experience unites them deeply.

- Her father from the Maronite rite and her mother a Melkite Greek, she entered in the Latin rite by becoming religious. Mariam shares this reality with many Eastern Christian families. This diversity is a source of wealth in the Eastern Churches. It is also a call to communion between the different Churches especially in the meeting with the Orthodox Churches.

"It is through the nothing of total humility that we may reach, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the perfection of Christian unity. Our Blessed refined in herself the ecumenical sensitivity: she was baptized in the Byzantine rite of the Melkite Church, she practiced in Egypt the Coptic rite and the Latin rite as a religious, like that she shows the unity and harmony of spiritual life through the different liturgical traditions to which she adhered."



The Catholic Eastern Church considers her as one of its purest and most important glories, and repeats to her complacently, "You are the honor of our people! The Oriental people and especially Palestinians recognize in her a daughter of their land and race ..."

14

- The story of her family lived the experience of migration of Lebanon / Syria to Palestine, then in Egypt. Mariam herself traveled extensively depending of events. Her religious life leads her to the roads of France, India and the Holy Land. She shares this reality with many Eastern Christians displaced for economic or political reasons, or because of situations of conflict and persecution. She encourages her brothers to stand firm in their faith through those trials.
- Like many Eastern Christians, she had to confess her faith in difficult situations, even in violent situations. The trial of her "martyrdom" in Alexandria, at age 12, witnesses to her fidelity to Christ and the Church: *"I am daughter of the Roman Catholic Church, and I hope, with the grace of God, persevere in my religion which is the only true one."* Mariam encouraged and supported her brothers to remain faithful to their faith in a difficult context. She calls each one of us to be peacemakers, dialogue and unity by a life of charity and attention to everyone, Christians and non Christians.
- Deeply oriental, Mariam has kept the freshness of her culture. Her words and her poetry, very pictorial, reflect this rootedness in the Eastern world. She is a fruit of this land where religion and social life are inseparable, where natural and supernatural are not strangers, where faith and reason are not opposed. Her experience invites Christians of the Orient to:
 - be proud of their roots, because they are alive in the legacy they carry, in their daily lives and the transmission they are called to do. Her canonization is an occasion of pride and joy. The Church in the East gives fruits of holiness today and not only in a distant history! In a context of difficulties and a certain humiliation, they see in this canonization the recognition of the Christian existence in Orient.
 - To find again their identity and to let it be recognized as a component of the world and Arabic culture: Eastern Christians have contributed greatly to the Arab culture since the origins of Christianity until today. Conflicts, increasing migration and waves of violence have deeply wounded their identity and their sense of being full members of their societies. Often caught between their ties with the West and their sense of belonging to the Arab sphere, they are tempted to flight, despair or some forms of assistance from the religious and charitable institutions. The example of Mariam is a source to draw, in their history and faith, the wealth that Christianity can offer to their countries.
 - to be active in their societies and artisans of peace: the testimony of Mariam calls them to be actors in their societies on par with the other components. The charitable commitment, social, cultural, economic and policy of Eastern Christians is an essential element of life of the Arab world. The life of Mariam testifies the importance of being present in men's lives as members of a society and as artisans of peace.
 - to be faithful to their faith: Many testimonies attest how her experience encourages Christians to find again a relationship with the Lord and to the Church. *"She speaks our language, she has the same sensitivity, even the same reactions ..."* they say. *"In her, everything speaks of Jesus"*¹⁵ said Saint John Paul II. Her simplicity of life and her

¹⁴ Mgr Sotir Ferrara, Bishop grec-melkite of Piana degli Albanesi, Italy, homely

¹⁵ Saint Jean-Paul II, speech to the pilgrims, November 14th, 1983

cultural proximity make of her an elder sister in faith. Thus she opens a way of hope through the actual difficulties.

To build themselves up, youth and families are thirsty of vast horizons, of light and peace. They find in Mariam the elder sister who has gone through the trials, has remained faithful to her faith and had lived as artisan of peace.

The canonization of Mariam is a sign of support for Eastern Christians. This event is a blessing for the Church in the Near and Middle East. It attests to its vitality and radiance through the saints in its history, those of early times, those of the contemporary world - Mariam is one of these – and the Martyrs today.

We recognize the signs of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of this young saint and in the Church. Secretly or more openly, the Holy Spirit acts and transforms hearts. He sows peace and hope. He gives strength to live in faith and charity, especially in the heart of the trials.

As an elder sister in Christ, present in the communion of saints, with her Carmelite mantle, she envelope the Eastern Churches and encourages her brothers and sisters to live in their land the adventure of Christian faith.

The experience and the life of Mariam, opens us to the Invisible. In the Creed we say we believe in one God, the Father, and Maker of the universe “visible and invisible”. All the extraordinary mystical experiences of Mariam’s life – that God has permitted- have for us, I believe, one main purpose: To open us to this invisible world –and real- which is the world of God who dwell in our hearts through Faith. It seems to me that the message of Mariam is of particular importance for men of our time, materialistic, postmodern and technologist who hardly believe in this invisible world of God. It is a call to live the exciting experience of God who alone can fulfill our deep desire the Absolute.

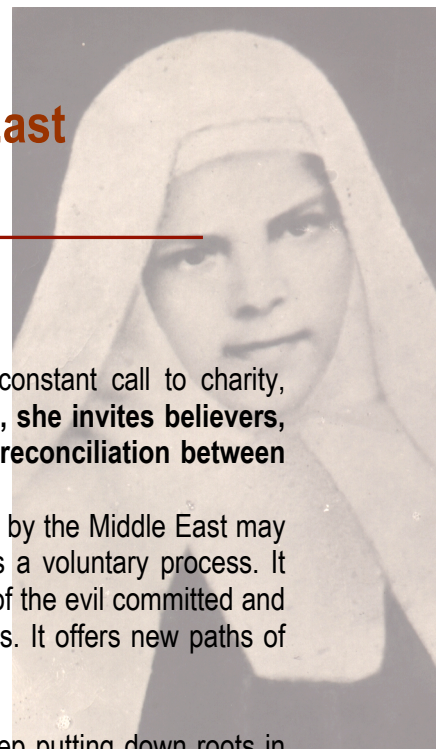
Firas ABEDRABBO, Beit Jala

Mary of Jesus Crucified is as a charismatic figure in whom we have the confluence of many supernatural phenomena, as a very significant anthology for the study of mysticism. Yet the simplicity of her figure as an illiterate woman, she appears as a Palestinian peasant farmer, full of goodness and common sense, realistic and wise, but especially with a bright stamp of profound humility, of unfailing obedience, of friendly and practical charity toward everyone without exception, from her sisters to the workers working on the construction of the monastery of Bethlehem who recognized in her a saint.¹⁶

J. CASTELLANO CERVERA, ocd

¹⁶J. CASTELLANO CERVERA, ocd, speech « *La Bienheureuse Marie de Jésus Crucifié - Une fleur de sainteté et un signe d'unité sur la terre de Jésus* »

5. Mariam, « patron of Peace » for the Near and Middle East



The spiritual experience of Mariam and her message are a constant call to charity, reconciliation and peace. **In a very concrete and deeply spiritual way, she invites believers, especially all Christians to commit themselves fully for peace and reconciliation between peoples and communities.**

To speak of reconciliation in the dramatic situations experienced by the Middle East may seem premature. But peace is based on justice and reconciliation. It is a voluntary process. It opens the paths of living together as possible, based on the recognition of the evil committed and suffered, the forgiveness considered possible and the healing of wounds. It offers new paths of justice, respect and listening.

Mariam's experience teaches us that peace is founded on a deep putting down roots in the Lord, source of all peace. *"When you see a tear in the dress of another, does not tear more; but cut a piece of your coat to mend the hole ... I tell you, and I repeat. Jesus will wear you with the bridal dress. Instead of looking for reopen de wound by throwing vinegar in it, we must instead seek to soften and close it with the oil of charity"*. These words of Mariam are a testimony of a practical charity which is the seed of peace and reconciliation.

In her life we discover three dimensions of reconciliation: the path to inner and communitarian peace: the reconciliation with her personal history, an experience of unity of the Church and a call to live together among believers of different religions.

- **Reconciliation with her personal story:** Mariam was a young woman hurt by the trials of life (very young orphan, rejected by her family because of her refusal to marry, persecuted for her faith, taken for mad and possessed in religious life, in search of her brother whom she never found again...).

She could have gotten lost in suffering or in different compensations; she abandoned herself to the Holy Spirit who transformed her in someone transparent and radiant. *"As clear and transparent objects become radiant when they are struck by a ray of sunlight and transform themselves into a light source, so it is for the souls who bear in themselves the Holy Spirit"*.¹⁷

- **An experience of the unity of the Church:** Her ecclesial experience at the crossroads of various rites and different churches shows us how **unity is possible if one is seeking the essential; charity united with faith in Christ, one Pastor of the Church.** *"The renewal of our churches needs the pure heart of Mary of Jesus crucified ... We must indeed have hearts who see God to build our churches and make them places of communion, of prayer, of encounter with God and of reconciliation"*,¹⁸ wrote the Catholic Bishops of the Holy Land in 2003. This can be a source of dynamism and renewal for the churches that seek their paths through complex situations.

¹⁷ Saint Basil the Great

¹⁸ Pastoral Letter of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land, 2003

- A call to live-together among believes of different religions: *"Ecumenical dialogue is related also to the interreligious dialogue. The three religions that profess faith in the one God and share the most significant pages of the Old Testament were present, close to Mount Carmel since ancient times. As well as by personal experience Mariam is a sign of unity among Christians of the Orient and the Occident, likewise her personality and her being part of the Order of Carmel make her a point of encounter between Islam, Judaism and Christianity. We know that, apart from economic and political interests, it is mainly the lack of peace between the three religions which represents a very serious threat to peace in the Holy Land and worldwide ... On November 13th, 1983, Saint John Paul II said that Mariam, "belongs by race, by the rite by her vocation and her pilgrimages, to peoples of the Orient from which she is somehow representative, is like a gift for the universal Church and for those who, in sad conditions of struggle and blood where they are, may appeal especially to her fraternal intercession with a great confidence in the heart, hoping that through her prayers we can finally establish peace and concord on this earth where " the Word became flesh ".¹⁹*

At the moment of her beatification, Saint John Paul II said: " Today more than ever the weight of threats invites us to love and fraternity the fundamental law of social and international relations, in spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness, drawing inspiration from the lifestyle of the Blessed Mary of Jesus Crucified and example not only for her people but also for the whole world. May this new lifestyle give us the peace that is not based on fear but on mutual trust"²⁰ or: "Mariam is the fruit of the Holy Land. In her, everything speaks of Jesus. And first of all the places where she lived ... she who was often mangled by events and by the people, she has continued to spread peace, to reconcile hearts. She wanted to be "the little sister of all". How her example is precious in our torn, divided world, which is darkened so easily in injustice and hate, without regarding for the rights of others to a dignified and peaceful existence! "²¹

"She wanted to be" the little sister of all". To all those who want to be artisans of peace and reconciliation, Mariam offers this universal fraternity. It is an attitude of the heart, a way of life that recognizes in every person a brother or sister in humanity. In the drama of current conflicts, with Mariam, a door is opened. She invites all those who recognize themselves in this journey of faith in God and man to commit themselves concretely for justice, peace and reconciliation.

"Fear not, little flock. The day of the Lord will come like the sun at high noon" said Mariam. Her canonization is an opportunity to remind everyone that peace and reconciliation are possible. They need men and women of good will, of patient effort and prayer. Her testimony challenges all believers, Jews, Christians and Muslims because all of them receive from their tradition a call to build a world of justice and peace. Every meeting, every word, every action may be opportunities to make grow peace.

With the Blessed Mariam, we are invited to pray and work so that the Lord's day, day of peace and light may come soon in our land.

¹⁹ Mgr Sotir Ferrara, Bishop grec-melkite de Piana degli Albanesi, Italy, homily

²⁰ Saint John Paul II, Homily of beatification of Mariam Baouardy, November 13th, 1983

²¹ Saint Jean-Paul II, speech to pilgrims, November 14th, 1983

6. TESTIMONY: Mariam and the consecrated life

“Mother, everyone is sleeping.... Let us go, let us go to wake up the universe...”
“Jesus is not known Jesus is not loved!”

This invitation of sister Mary of Jesus Crucified is in deep communion with the call sent out by Pope Francis in this year of consecrated life: *“I am counting on you “to wake up the world”, since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy”*.²²

A heart in love with Jesus Christ wakes up the world; it rises from sleep and indifference and vitalizes the innermost fibers of the human heart. A man or woman who burns for the living God attracts the whole universe and becomes an intercessor for all, without distinction. That's what made the saints since the first Christian communities. This is what Mariam has lived, a Saint for our time, marked by the indifference, a Saint of the periphery...

In this Year of Consecrated Life and the 500th anniversary of the birth of St. Teresa of Avila, let us note the words of Mother Teresa: *“the friends of God should be strong to sustain the weak”*²³ With Mariam, this "strong" friend of God, we receive an appeal to be guided and called out by her example.

- **“Love is not loved”**

Since her childhood, Mariam has found the love of Christ manifested through a radical call to follow Him and to receive Him in the Eucharist. She became a tireless beggar of this love. This is put on evidenced by the exceptional development of her spiritual life and her desire to let others know this love.

This story of her sisters illustrates this passionate love that invites all creation to praise the Lord for his love. One morning, the prioress of the Carmel finds Mariam ecstatic, sitting on a small bench in front of an open window. She said, *“Mother, everyone is sleeping. And God, so full of goodness, so great, so worthy of praise, He is forgotten!... No one thinks of Him!... See, the whole nature praises Him, the sky, the stars, the trees, the grass, everything praises Him; but man who knows his good deeds, who should praise Him, he sleeps! Let us go, let us go to wake up the universe.”*²⁴

- **Humility**

In his apostolic exhortation "Evangelii gaudium" Pope Francis recalled that the great changes in history have come true when reality is seen from the periphery rather than the center. It is the perspective of the humble person standing by the roadside or among men. Mariam has lived this attitude of humility before God and others, always seeking the last place in the families where she was servant and in her community. *“The little nothing of Jesus”* found her joy in humility and obedience.

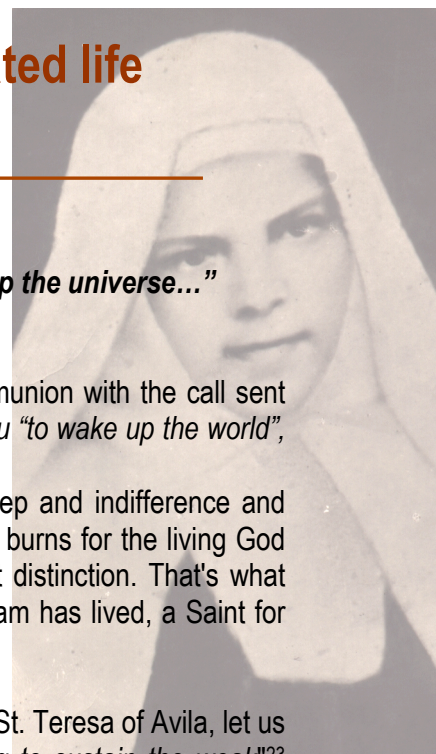
Since her vision of hell, when she was a young girl, she heard the voice that instructed her: *“In hell, there are all kinds of virtues, but there is no humility. In heaven, there are all kinds of sins, but there is no pride”*.²⁵ This humility is a major accent of her experience: despite her extraordinary graces, the Lord allowed that she did not realize what she lived. On the contrary, the thought of her nothingness rendered her deeply happy: *“A humble soul is happy to be despised,*

²² Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter « To all consecrated people », November 2014, chap. II

²³ Saint Teresa of Avila, *Life*, 15,5

²⁴ Denis BUZY, *Thoughts*, Carmel of Bethlehem, 1997, p 57

²⁵ Denis BUZY, *Thoughts*, Carmel of Bethlehem, 1997, p 109



*to be nothing; she is not attaches to anything, and is never irritated with anybody. A humble soul is happy, joyful always and satisfied; she has the Lord ever present in her heart*²⁶.

Her novice mistress testified of her obedience, to the point of a miracle. She even invited her sisters to live an uncompromising obedience: *"Woe to the man who does not sacrifice everything to obedience: his desire, his will, all that pleases a human. If he does not make this sacrifice, he will never see God ... "*²⁷

• **Spiritual Warfare**

Consecrated life requires an ongoing commitment to fight against the Adversary who seeks a thousand ways to deviate those who begun to walk with the Lord. This aspect is very important in Mariam's experience.

In her, the spiritual warfare and the fight against evil are manifested violently in particular through the episode of diabolic possessions. She confided to her sisters: *"Jesus will give Satan the power to torment me during forty days and I will suffer a lot. The devil will have no power over my body; my soul will remain hidden to him. Jesus has promised to protect it ... Satan won't be able to affect it"*.²⁸ During those forty days of trial, Mariam uttered only words of praise to Jesus and expressed her desire of union with the Suffering Christ to collaborate in the salvation of souls. No word of complaint came out of her mouth.

• **The gift of self**

Pope Francis said that the Church grows "by attraction": *"All have the right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but "by attraction"*.²⁹

The consecrated life through its finest figures gives this testimony. Mariam, in her awareness of God's love for her and for everyone, she spent herself lavishly to offer this Love to all. With a "Eucharistic" generosity, without limit, she became bread for all. To serve, love and worship Jesus in the other, was a permanent and natural concern in her.

The Lord told her: *"It is to the extent that you love your neighbor that I know how much you love me"*³⁰ And Mariam exhorted her sisters: *"Just as you prepare the way for your brother or sister, the Lord will also prepare one for you. If you see stones along your neighbor's path, remove them discretely without him being aware of it. If you see a hole, fill it discretely... If you're thirsty and someone gives you water, give this glass to your brother who is thirsty, even if you are thirstier than he. You can be sure the Lord will offer you to drink from His hand ..."*³¹

In the school of the Holy Spirit, with Mariam, we receive solid instruction on charity, humility, spiritual warfare and the gift of self. Her experience in these areas and her particular attention to the sanctity of consecrated people invite us to take seriously her testimony and her call: *"People in the world and religious communities look for novelties in the devotions and neglect the true devotion to the Paraclete. That is why there is error, disunity and there is no peace and light"*.³²

In this year of the consecrated life, here we have an invitation to hope and fidelity for all consecrated people.

²⁶ Denis BUZY, *Thoughts*, Carmel of Bethlehem, 1997, p 107

²⁷ Denis BUZY, *op.cit.*, p 142 (Thoughts, French edition)

²⁸ Archives Carmel of Bethlehem, CR I

²⁹ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation « *Evangelium gaudium* », 2014, §15

³⁰ Denis BUZY, *Thoughts*, Carmel of Bethlehem, 1997, p 64

³¹ Denis BUZY, *Thoughts*, Carmel of Bethlehem, 1997, p 68

³² Denis BUZY, *Thoughts*, Carmel of Bethlehem, 1997, p 39

God was pleased in choosing "the little one" that the world was not expecting, He filled her with mystical graces and made her a privileged instrument for the expansion of Carmel in India and the Holy Land, for being a shining example in the fight against the power of darkness and for reviving the devotion to the Holy Spirit, "the Dove of fire", as she liked to call him ... Contemplating her life in prayer and spiritual fraternity of Carmel, we ask her to help us to revive our prophetic vocation to be able to witness to Christ and His Kingdom.

Sister Veronica, ocd, Carmel of Haifa

7. Mariam, the joy of hope

The spiritual experience of Mariam is an outpouring of joy, Easter joy, transfigured by the mystery of the Cross. Without ever stopping in face of the difficulties and trials endured, Mariam let herself be led by the Holy Spirit. It was the crucible of a deep joy that nothing could extinguish.

To live the Beatitudes is a source of joy and peace. Mariam is a sign of that for our time. We will note three dimensions of this joy: the joy of knowing that God loved her and to be able to respond to Him with her personality, culture and in the events of life; the joy of giving herself in the consecrated life and to offer her life for love; the joy of hope that always looks further and passes through the trials in union with Christ, the Savior of men.

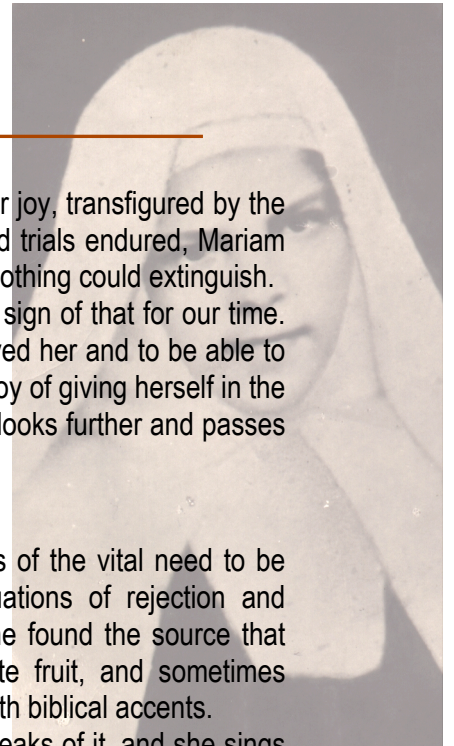
- **The joy of knowing that she is loved**

From an anthropological point of view, Mariam's life reminds us of the vital need to be loved and to love. She was wounded many times by grief, by situations of rejection and misunderstanding. In her relationship with God and the Virgin Mary, she found the source that would satisfy her deep thirst to be loved and to love. The immediate fruit, and sometimes disconcerting, were demonstrations of joy, ecstasies, words and songs with biblical accents.

Mariam is an oriental who is in love! Her heart overflows, she speaks of it, and she sings it through images that evoke the Song of Songs: *"I cannot contain myself: I have such great peace and joy... I do not know what I have or where I am. My heart and all within me melts as the clearest oil, which flows gently in me ... I am in God and God is in me. I feel that all creatures, all trees and flowers belong to God and also belong to me... I would like to have a heart bigger than the universe"*³³

"As the clearest oil" all her capacities to love melt in her and express the joy of being loved by God. This union with God is similar to that described by St. Teresa of Avila in the Book of the Mansions. In a soul open to his presence, the Spirit produces fruits of joy and peace that fill the heart and radiate widely. The transverberation of the heart is a particular seal of this relationship of love: as a mystical wound where joy and suffering intertwine, Mariam was touched by the love of the Lord.

The joy of knowing that she is loved and to be able to respond to that love opens her being to praise. This praise is that of the poor one who recognizes in God her wealth, the child who finds in God the beloved Father or the one who is in love and who finds his good in the



³³ Denis BUZY, *Thoughts*, Carmel of Bethlehem, 1997, p 57

beloved. "I feel that all creatures, all trees and flowers belong to God and also belong to me..." As St. John of the Cross, her union with God makes her touch the great dignity of God's children. Heir of the Kingdom, the creation and its fruit become her heritage. "Who have God has everything, because that all creation belong to God and is in God" she exclaims. The experience of this union makes her the richest and the happiest of the poor. His only good is God; in Him, she found all her happiness and joy".³⁴

Through this emphasis, Mariam invites us to let ourselves be loved and allow God to place in us the charity that responds to the most human need of recognition and love. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" says Jesus (Mt 5: 3).

- **The joy of giving herself**

"Wherever consecrated people are, there is always joy!" said Pope Francis. For Mariam, consecrated life has been the opportunity to discover the joy of giving herself.

The origin of this offering of self is in the episode of the little dead bird in her hands. This is the first great call: "See, this is how everything passes; but if you want to give me your heart, I shall always remain with you". This word resounded when her uncle wanted to marry her when twelve years old and encouraged her to remain faithful to her desire to belong only to God in virginity. Nothing could divert her from this desire, not even the prospect of martyrdom!

Her fidelity to this call was reassured by the teaching of the Virgin Mary that she received in Alexandria, "Mariam, I am always with you. Follow the inspiration that I shall give you. I shall help you".³⁵ There Mariam received a call of confidence in the consecrated life, daughter of St. Joseph, later a daughter of St. Teresa.

The steps of her religious life range from particularly painful moments and intense joys. Thus, the departure from the Congregation of St Joseph of the Apparition is united with the joy to enter Carmel, the trial of her stay in India brought a very real fruit of joy when, after her return to Pau, she left to found the Carmel of Bethlehem.

It should be noted that another accent of this joy is obedience. Mariam was very attentive to obedience both in extraordinary manifestations of her spiritual life and in the practical aspects of community life. Witnesses of it are the accounts where her superiors asked her to come down from a tree where, in ecstasy, she was perched, or the joy of being in the service of her sisters wanting to be the last of all of them.

"In the same way, all those who follow Jesus must set out on the path of obedience, imitating as it were the Lord's "condescension" by humbling themselves and making their own the will of the Father, even to self-emptying and abasement ... The evangelical happiness of a religious is the fruit of self-abasement in union with Christ... And, when we are sad, we would do well to ask ourselves, "How are we living this kenosis?"³⁶

Mariam shows us a path of joy in the gift of self. The offering of self, in the baptismal life and especially in the consecrated life, bears fruit of joy. They tell our world that life finds its deep meaning in the free and loving gift of self.

- **The joy of hope**

In the life of Mariam, the experience of abandonment or rejection regularly crosses the manifestation of love of God, source of peace and joy. The main stages of her life are marked by these two shades, a little, as two sides of the paschal mystery. Nothing stopped Mariam because she found her strength and joy in the unconditional love of God.

Blood and gold could color her blazon. With Mariam of Jesus Crucified, everything passes through the Cross, all is explained through the cross, everything finds meaning in the mystery of self-giving, like Christ on the cross. But this cross is glorious, ever-radiant and thus it is an open

³⁴ William Marie MERCHAT, *Prier 15 jours avec Marie de Jésus crucifié*, Ed. Nouvelle Cité, 2012, p 94-95

³⁵ Pierre ESTRATE, *Mariam, Sainte palestinienne ou la vie de Marie de Jésus crucifié*, Pierre Téqui, 1999, p 19

³⁶ Pope Francis, Homily, February 2nd, 2015

door to true joy. In the spiritual night that inhabited her sometimes she exclaimed: "I suffer, I do not know if I shall be saved. But nevertheless in the depths of my heart I have something which tells me: "Yes, I shall see my God, I will have a place in His beautiful heaven, I shall enjoy Him..."³⁷

The joy of hope springs from this attitude of faith that goes through the night and attaches itself to the only certainty that God is there. "I almost never feel trust; I have no feeling of hope; but I hope against all hope ..." ³⁸ It is union to the paschal mystery and a fruit of this Easter lived daily with Christ, in choosing Christ for Master and Lord. It allows to have a confident view of the world, history and the future because she knows where its roots and its strength are.

"This joy is a positive and realistic view upon the world. Mariam loved the creation and its associated exultations: "See, the whole nature praises Him, the sky, the stars, the trees, the grass, everything praises Him ..." Man is sad because he does not recognize his Creator. Anesthetized by multiple sleeping pills, he is sleeping and in risk of falling into despair. There is a paradox between the human ability to know the benefits of God, to enter into a relationship with him and his sleeping, fruit of his stubbornness to live without God. Awakening opens to joy and the joy of hope".³⁹

"The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew."⁴⁰

Mariam is a beautiful illustration of these words of Pope Francis. She invites us to draw from Christ and the communion of saints, the joy of hope and to offer it to a great extent to our contemporaries.

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³⁷ Denis BUZY, *op.cit.*, p 55

³⁸ Denis BUZY, *op.cit.*, p 50

³⁹ William Marie MERCHAT, *op. cit.*, p 95-96

⁴⁰ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, §1

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CONTATTI

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With the following mention : **Don au profit du projet N°4005 « Centre Mariam », Carmel du St
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Bethléem.**

(A tax receipt can be issued upon request)
