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Maria

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From the editors of *Maria*, Sarah Jane Boss and Sr Cathy Jones

This edition of *Maria: A Journal of Marian Studies* is testimony to the rich diversity of content a journal dedicated to academic discussion of the study of Mary can attract. As always, we are grateful to all who have contributed to it. A special note of thanks goes to Chris Maunder who, as co-editor with Sarah Jane Boss, re-launched *Maria* in 2021, and without whose dedication and academic expertise this journal would not exist. While remaining on the advisory board, he has now handed on the baton of co-editor to Cathy Jones.

We are delighted to be able to share Chris Maunder's talk given at the recent Centre for Marian Studies (CMS) 'Celebration of Marian Scholarship'. This one-day conference marked the establishment of the CMS at St Mary's University, Twickenham, and the new location of the Marian library collection in the crypt of the university chapel. As well as containing many fascinating insights from his studies of Marian apparitions of the past two centuries, Chris Maunder's article, *Mary of the Visionaries: Wisdom from the Mouths of the "Uncultured"*, includes accounts of a meeting with the visionary Angela Volpini in Casanova Staffora in northern Italy, and visits to apparition sites, like that of Ham-sur-Sambre in Belgium, which have almost been forgotten with the passage of time. Such personal insights make this a particularly engaging article.

The 'Celebration of Marian Scholarship' was also an occasion to welcome the first three honorary fellows of the CMS, all of whom made presentations at the conference: Rev. Professor Andrew Louth, Rev. Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch and Professor Tina Beattie. Andrew Louth's English translations of three significant Greek Marian texts are included in this edition: a translation of an extract from *The Life of the Virgin Mary* by John the Geometer, extract from Theophanes III of Nicaea's *Discourse on the All-holy Mother of God*, and a section from Michael Psellos' remarkable *Homily on the Salutation to the Mother of God*.

Turning to the role of Mary in contemporary society, an article written jointly by Sr Ngoc Nguyen and Joseph Evans explores how the Virgin Mary is a source of strength, comfort, and hope for Asian women, with reference to Our Lady of La Vang (Vietnam) and Our Lady of Health (Vailankanni, India). With many concrete examples, they discuss the positive impact veneration of Mary has upon women who are marginalized and face discrimination, and they demonstrate the powerful role the female authority of Marian shrines has in challenging the patriarchal societies of Vietnam and India. The article by Cathy Jones, advocating a



Pneumatological recentring of Mary's ecclesial motherhood, also acknowledges the significant role of Mary in contemporary Christian spirituality. However, Jones maintains that this can become unbalanced when the primarily Pneumatological reference of Marian titles, including 'Mary, Mother of the Church', is forgotten. Drawing upon work by René Laurentin and Heribert Mühlen, she emphasises that Mary has often displaced the Holy Spirit and calls for a recognition that while both the Spirit and Mary are rightly called 'Mother of the Church' the title is primarily Pneumatological.

Jessica Hughes' review of Salvatore Sorrentino's *Nel silenzio il sussurro di una voce: L'itinerario spirituale di Bartolo Longo* is likely to leave the reader who is unable to read Italian hoping that an English translation will soon be available. Pompeii is home to one of the largest Marian shrines in Italy, welcoming as many visitors as the UNESCO archaeological site, and Hughes relates how Sorrentino explores the spiritual journey and relationship with Mary of Blessed Bartolo Longo who is largely responsible for the creation and expansion of this shrine. Sarah Drummond's *Divine Love: The Art of the Nativity*, reviewed by Eowyn Kerr di-Carlo, also promises to be a much-appreciated book. Di-Carlo stresses the attractiveness of the work and the extensive research underlying it, describing Drummond's thematic approach to the nativity, where individual elements of the story are given their own chapter, offering new insights to well-known images as well as bringing often overlooked works of art to the reader's attention.

We are taking the opportunity of being a new editorial team to reflect on how best to take *Maria* forward. One straightforward change is the modification of the publication schedule to May and November each year. A more substantive change is that, in addition to peer reviewed articles, translations and book reviews, we propose to add 'discussion pieces' and letters to future editions, with the aim of enabling as many voices and perspectives as possible to be actively engaged. This will be an opportunity for non-peer reviewed Marian research or perspectives to be shared and engaged with by others in subsequent editions. In this way we hope that *Maria* will become a forum directly enabling Marian conversation and dialogue. We warmly invite readers to contact us with proposals for discussion pieces and look forward to the conversations these will generate.