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

This edition of *Maria* is divided between two broad themes, namely, the biblical narratives concerning Mary—especially those concerning the conception of Jesus—and Mary as a spiritual teacher.

In the last issue of the journal, we started a discussion of the interpretation of the virginal conception narratives, and this theme is continued here. Previously (*Maria* 5.2), Chris Maunder argued that these narratives should be understood purely symbolically, and that, at least in their claim that Mary conceived Christ when she was a virgin, they were not historical. Sarah Jane Boss replied to Maunder's argument in that issue of the journal. In the present edition, we publish a reply by Maunder to Boss's objections. We invite other contributions to this discussion.

We are also pleased to be able to publish a paper by a biblical scholar, Angela Costley, on the New Testament conception narratives in the light of Jewish tradition concerning Jochebed, the mother of Moses. Costley draws attention to Talmudic texts concerning Jochebed, pointing out that these resonate strongly with the Gospel of Matthew, in particular. Although the Talmud is later than the Gospels, the correspondences seem sufficiently strong to suggest that the Talmudic texts are based on more ancient traditions which might have influenced the accounts in the Gospel. As Christ is the new Moses, so his mother Mary is a new Jochebed.

The focus on Scripture is continued in the article by Chris Carr, who examines Luke 1:39-45, that is, Elizabeth's greeting to Mary at the time of the Visitation. Unlike Maunder and Costley, Carr's interest here is not in an historical examination of the text, but in its specifically spiritual content. Carr uses later teachings of the Roman Catholic Church to help draw out of the text an account of some of the tasks and dispositions that are expected of a disciple, and shows how these are exemplified in Mary.

The theme of Mary as spiritual teacher is continued in the article by the Marist brother Matthew Green, who centres on a spiritual tradition of his congregation, namely, the practices of Call, Ponder and Response, in order to show how the figure of Mary—both in Scripture and in later tradition—can provide a framework for Christian formation, both within the Marist family and for Christian discipleship more broadly.

Finally, we present a review of James Tabor's monograph, *The Lost Mary: Rediscovering the Mother of Jesus*. The review is written by Chris Maunder, and he discusses Tabor's work in relation to his own monograph, *Mary, Founder of Christianity*. This discussion partly resumes our consideration of the biblical accounts of the virginal conception.