

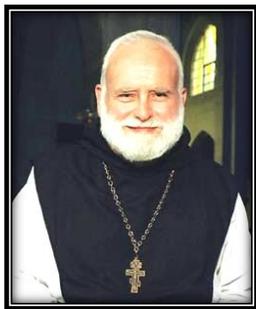


## (RE)TURN TO MARY

If you are a reader of Our Holy Redeemer Sunday bulletins, you have had the opportunity over the years to read all the *real* news that is fit to print. (Yes: *real* news as opposed to the *fake* news that Pope Francis addressed in his message for *LII World Communications Day*.) Very often, that real news has pertained to vocations, and when it did, homegrown vocations were highlighted to call attention to “the call”.

Amongst the vocations to the Priesthood that came forth from the pews (if not the Baptismal font) of our absolutely beautiful church and/or parochial school, vocations written about in parish bulletins past and present, is Rev. Father M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O. (1931 – 2005).

In 1987, Father Pennington wrote a book entitled: *Mary Today: The Challenging Woman*. Part of the book’s introduction is provided to you here in an attempt not only to give you insight into the way Father Pennington awakened to the call to be a Priest, but also as a means for you to (re)turn to Mary. That (re)turning will connect us to the reparation, healing, sanctification, and renewal that took flesh in Mary’s womb, takes flesh on our Altars, and dwells amongst those of us who follow God’s lead and turn to Mary!



“Who is Mary? The Mary we find portrayed in the Gospels and Acts? The Mary who is proclaimed to have been assumed body and soul into Heaven? The Mary who has been appearing again and again in our world in so many different guises? Do Dogmas like that of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception really change the way we know this woman? Who is Mary? And who is she in my life? Who ought she be in my life as a disciple, a follower, a friend, and lover of Jesus Christ?

To these questions perhaps each one of us has to find her or his own answers. Some of us might prefer not to ask these questions, not to be bothered by them – at least not now. Others of us cannot escape them. Mary is not only “there”; she is *here* in our lives. We can’t just ignore her. Somehow she has gotten into the fabric of our lives. After all, she is the Mother – and a Jewish mother at that – of our Friend and Lord.

I was raised in what was probably a fairly typical middle-class Catholic home of the pre-Vatican II era. Mother was second-generation Irish. Dad had Presbyterian upbringing. He had first come to know Mary as a young man at the peak of his romanticism. He probably got to know her more through his saintly mother-in-law than through the priest who instructed him in Catholic beliefs. Among my earliest memories of church is fidgeting in the pew beside Grandma after Mass while she prayed her beads.

I can remember October rosaries, the May shrines, the crowning of the statue of Mary, the processions of roses. The beads were in my father’s hands when he died at thirty-three and while he lay in his coffin. I do not think I have ever seen a person die without the beads in her or his hands. They become a mute prayer when the lips can no longer manage words and the mind and heart are too weary to do naught but trust and want.

God has His own ways of reaching into our lives and touching our hearts. One day I picked up a little booklet from a stand near the door of our college reception hall and stuck it into my pocket. A few days later when I was riding a bus on Staten Island I pulled it out and began reading. That was 27 January 1951. ***That reading changed the course of my life.*** (emphasis added) The booklet was Saint Louis de Montfort’s *The Secret of Mary*. It argued for entrusting ourselves completely to Mary as Jesus had done in His conception, childhood, and youth. Four days later I did that. In the language of de Montfort, I consecrated myself and I was given the name Mary. Five years later I would be consecrated a Monk by the Church on the day honouring her birth (8 September).”