

Deepening our Relationship with Mary

Pondering Other images



July, 2026

OPENING PRAYER

We start with visio divina, using two images of Mary that we'll focus on a traditional Greek icon, the Hodegetria, known in English as "Our Lady of the Way" and a modern interpretation of "Our Lady Star of the Sea" by Marianist Sister Emily Sandoval.

Visio Divina is a Latin phrase that means "Divine Seeing". It's a way of praying with sacred art that has 4 steps: Gazing, Reflecting, Responding and Resting. So we invite you into a time of quiet. Choose one of the images: First, look slowly and

deeply at the image you've chosen. What do you see and what draws your attention? Take a second, longer look. Pay attention to how the image speaks to you. What feelings, memories, hopes does it evoke? Respond in prayer by offering thanks or praise or intercession. Take a moment to rest in the image again - enjoy a few minutes of stillness - and again, offer the feelings or insights you've gained to God.

Turn to another person or two and share something that you noticed and how it moved you.



Source: Orthodox Church of America.



Artist: Sr. Emily Sandoval, FMI. Used with permission from the International Marianist Research Institute.

Short Litany to Our Lady Star of the Sea & Our Lady of the Way

Our Lady, Star of the Sea, pray for us

Our Lady of the Way, pray for us.

Our Lady, who points us to Jesus, pray for us.

Our Lady, Guide of the lost, pray for us.

Our Lady, Mother of Families, pray for us

Our Lady, Mother of Sorrow, pray for us

Our Lady, Mother of Justice, pray for us

Our Lady, Mother of the Lonely, pray for us

Our Lady, Mother of Joy, pray for us

Our Lady, Mother of Hope, pray for us

Our Lady, Mother of God, pray for us

Our Lady, Help of Christians, pray for us

Our Lady, Wayfinder, pray for us.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Mary as Wayfinder

Hodegetria, “The One who Points the Way,” Known in English as Our Lady of the Way

The Hodegetria (Hodēgētria, Greek) Icon of the Mother of God is understood as the first icon of the Church. It dates at least back to the early 5th century and features a Madonna and Child in which Mary gestures to the child Jesus with her right hand as she holds him with her left. Jesus' right hand is extended in the teaching position with two fingers extended and he holds a scroll in his left. Very early icons of Jesus the Teacher (7th century) depict the grown man Jesus with his right hand in the same position, holding the full book of the scriptures. Mary's pointing to Jesus is read as her showing us the way of salvation - as Jesus says in Jn 14:6: “I am the way...” The name of this icon derives from the Greek word “hodegos” which means “guide,” and “hodos”, meaning “road” or “way” or “path.” Thus, the icon's name declares Mary as our guide along the road.

This emphasis of Mary as a guide (to Jesus) is important as recent church teaching has clarified Mary's role. Article 21 of *Mater Populi Fidelis* (Mother of the Faithful People of God) quotes a frequent theme in Pope Francis' homilies on Mary, saying she “never wished to appropriate anything of her Son for herself. She never presented herself as a co-Savior. No, a disciple.” Article 22 presents “Mary as the first and foremost

collaborator in the work of Redemption and grace,” and goes on to quote scriptures that are near and dear to all Marianist hearts: “as the ‘handmaid of the Lord’ (Lk 1:38), Mary directs us to Christ and asks us to ‘do whatever he tells you’ (Jn 2:5).” The document emphasizes that we need to stay balanced in the reverence we give to Mary and see her as the first Disciple and the mother Jesus passed on to us at the cross. While she has a crucial role in bringing Jesus to birth and continues as guide, intercessor, and our model of discipleship, he remains the sole redeemer and mediator.

Pope Leo celebrates Mary as our guide, in closing his encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* (Magnificent Humanity): “I entrust our desire to the Mother of Christ, to the Woman of the Magnificat, that she may guide our steps through this time of change.” The encyclical focuses on the new situation we face in safeguarding the human person when confronting technologies that can yield both great possibility and potential harm. Mary's Magnificat is held up as a model of seeing and proclaiming the power of God, even in challenging times. She can point us to look at the world from the vantage point of the vulnerable and to let the Spirit move us to be “weavers of hope” (article 245).



Stella Maris (Latin), or Star of the Sea

“Star of the Sea” is one of the most ancient titles given to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Christine Valters Paintner (2022) tells us that ancient mariners would call their compass “star of the sea” because of its shape. This title for Mary comes down to us from St. Jerome in the 5th century who translated Mary’s Hebrew name, Miryam (“drop of the sea”) into Latin using Stella Maris. Mary was understood as one who guides seafarers home and souls back to Christ.

In the collected notes for homilies and sermons, Fr. Chaminade’s notes on the Holy Name of Mary, Fr. Chaminade quotes directly from St. Bernard: “She is that star of Jacob whose brilliance sparkles on the mountaintop, penetrates the depths and illumines the whole land. If she has hold of you, you will no longer fall. If she guides you, you will not falter. If she favors you, you will reach your destination. Should Mary, Star of the Sea, be taken away, what remains except obscurity...” Chaminade also sees Mary in this Scripture from Ecclesiasticus 24:9: “Over the waves of the sea and over the whole earth and over every people and nation, I have held sway.” Just as Jesus is remembered as calming the storm on the sea, seafaring people have appealed to Mary and share many stories of Mary’s protection.

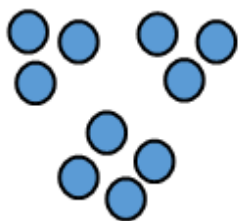
St. Bernard showed absolute trust in Mary’s capacity to be a guide. “She is that bright and distinguished star to be raised above this vast ocean, sparkling with merit, shining with character. Whoever you may be, grasp that, as this age runs its course, you are tossed on the waves by gales and storms more than you walk upon dry land; do not turn your eyes from the beam of this star if you do

not wish to be swamped by the storm! If the waves of temptation engulf you, if you are running onto the rocks of adversity, depend upon the star, call upon Mary. If you are thrown about on the waves of pride or ambition, speaking ill of others or jealousy, depend upon the star, call upon Mary. If anger or greed or the cares of the flesh batter your soul’s boat, depend upon Mary.... In dangers, in straits, in perplexity, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let her name be always in your mouth and in your heart, and, if you would ask for and obtain the help of her prayers, do not forget the example of how she lived.” (Gambero, p. 140)



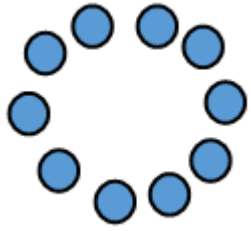
We easily see the influence of St. Bernard, writing in the 1100’s, on Fr. Chaminade, who constantly invites us to take Mary into our home as John did, and into our prayer as well. Reflecting on this image of Mary, we become aware of all those in our own day who are migrants, refugees and travelers who call out for assistance. Mary’s solicitude for poor fisherpeople in Aparecida, Brazil, and the rescue of Portuguese fisherman at Velankanni, India are just two of the many stories of rescue attributed to Mary that we might reflect on as we ponder our own Marian response to those in need. Mary continues to show us the way.

We can join in the prayer that opens the liturgy for the memorial of Our Lady Star of the Sea, celebrated on September 27. “Lord God, Redeemer and inspiration of souls, in the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of the Sea, you have provided a light in the storm; by her favour and prayer, grant that we may set a course through these times to reach our safe haven with you.”



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ♦ When have you experienced Mary guiding you?
 - ♦ What are some ways that you or your community could use Mary’s guidance?”
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LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION

In the Hodegetria icon, Mary does not seek the viewer's attention for herself; she directs it entirely to Christ. In our roles here, what does it practically look like to "point away from ourselves" and toward the greater mission of our community?

St. Bernard noted that Mary is the star that illumines the darkness. When you feel "lost at sea" in your daily responsibilities or when crises arise, what are the core values or practices that act as your North Star to help you regain your bearings?

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer to Our Lady of the Way by Jessica González Uhlig, EdD

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of the Journey, we thank You for the time we have spent together today, and for the "food for thought" that has nourished our minds and spirits. As we prepare to leave this space, we look to Mary, our Mother and our Wayfinder, to guide our steps forward.

All: O Holy Mary, Hodegetria, Our Lady of the Way, in the ancient icon, you do not draw attention to yourself. Instead, your hand gently and constantly points the way to your Son, Jesus. In a world of noise and distraction, teach us to follow your pointing hand. Form us to be living icons in our own communities—leaders who guide others not toward our own glory, but toward the truth and love of Christ.

Leader: O Stella Maris, Star of the Sea, the waters of our daily lives are often turbulent, and the horizon is

sometimes obscured by the demands of our time. Yet, we take comfort in the ancient promise that you hold sway over the waves of the sea and over the whole earth. Calm the storms within our hearts, our work, and our world.

All: As Blessed Chaminade taught us, you are the star whose brilliance illumines the whole land. We trust in your navigational grace: If you have hold of us, we will not fall. If you guide us, we will not falter. If you favor us, we will reach our destination.

Leader: May we leave this space with the courage of wayfinders. Help us to read the signs of the times, to bring hope to those navigating the darkness, and to always rely on your maternal protection when obscurity threatens our path.

All: May the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit be glorified in all places through the Immaculate Virgin Mary. Amen.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Apostleship of the Sea Booklet, shared by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Stella%20Maris%20Liturgical%20Resource%20Booklet.pdf>

The Chaminade Legacy, Volume 2, 2008, Document 177., p. 350.

Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. 2025. Mater Populi Fidelis. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20251104_mater-populi-fidelis_en.html

Marianist Community Meeting Kits are provided for the Marianist Family by the North American Center for Marianist Studies, NACMS. Additional Community Meeting Kits, as well as other Marianist Studies resources, are available at nacms.org.

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