

# 'We all could use a reminder of our mother's love'



One of my favorite places to visit is the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wisconsin. I was fortunate to attend a college only a couple hours away from the shrine, and between different Catholic groups I was a part of and the fact that one of my friends was from the La Crosse region, I probably made the journey three or four times during those years.

If you've ever been to the shrine, you might remember a Rosary walk with blue mosaics for each mystery. I remember taking a picture of each mosaic when I first visited in high school with my family. Later, when I returned as a college student, I was especially struck with the depiction of the Annunciation. As is the case with many images of the Annunciation, Mary is kneeling with her arms outstretched in surrender and belief that what the angel said would come to pass. Of all renditions of this pivotal scene in Christianity, this one strikes my heart the most. In fact, if you visit the Rosary walk page of the shrine's website, you can see a glimpse of the image.

I've sat in front of that mosaic image both in quiet wonder and tearful prayer – and not just while visiting the shrine. For the last five years, this image has been the image on the lock screen of my phone. And I have no intention of changing it any time soon.

There is something about her posture and her serene countenance in this mosaic that first grabbed my attention and continues to hold it. Maybe it's because I long to have that openness to the will of God but feel like it is so far beyond my reach. Yet when I look at this image, peace comes over me, and I hope.

Since the middle of July, I've been preparing to renew my Marian consecration on the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Aug. 15, using the book "[Totus Tuus: A Consecration to Jesus through Mary with Saint John Paul II](#)" (OSV, \$15.95). When I first made this consecration during my senior year of high school, I used the popular book by Father Michael Gaitley, "33 Days to Morning Glory," and later in college I picked up St. Louis de Montfort's "True Devotion to Mary," the original book for consecration. Then, last summer, my women's group used "Totus Tuus" to do a group consecration. And while the other two books have their merits, this one was the perfect balance for me – both rich in theology while not being overwhelming, both simple yet profound.

So this year, as I renewed my consecration yet again, I chose to reread "Totus Tuus." And the more I read through its pages, the more at peace I feel, just as when I'm sitting in front of the Annunciation mosaic in La Crosse.

As I'm writing this column, I'm counting down the days until I make a quick weekend trip to visit the shrine once more. True, it's no longer a quick two-hour drive, but the hours spent in the car will be worth it. Why? Because I want to go visit my mother, and I need a reminder of the peace God gives us through Mary.

Marian consecration is different for everyone. For me, it has come with a slow devotion to the Rosary and having a love for Marian artwork. But more than anything, it has led to me resting in the knowledge that even when I'm separated from my loved ones, I still have my mother beside me. In those times when the dark moments of the soul seem darkest, I can whisper Hail Marys under my breath, or even subconsciously, and let my mother soothe me.

It's been a long year, and yet, somehow, it's already August. We all could use a reminder of our mother's love, and she is more than willing to bestow it on her children, if only we

ask.

So, as I visit the shrine, as I sit before the image of the Annunciation at the Rosary walk, I will rest in its peace and pray for you all. Mary, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

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