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SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY CONTINUING EDUCATION
ENCORE EVENTS

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sigh of relief, and I marched with the others out onto the *bema*, the area around the ark from which the service is conducted.

And I have to say that that night changed my spirituality forever, because it was the first time, as I listened to the cantor chant in Hebrew and the rabbi read from the Torah scroll, it was the first time that it dawned on me that this is how Jesus and Mary would have prayed, given the adaptations of the centuries. This is how they would have worshipped when they were on this earth. And I knew at that moment that, somehow or other, I would have to sort of get inside of Judaism if I was ever going to understand Christianity, if I was ever going to understand Judaism, certainly, and if I was ever going to understand either Jesus or Mary. And that night clearly had a huge impact, which continues to this day.

Now, in the post-Vatican II period, there was a great deal of conversation about the Jewishness of Jesus. But I have to admit that, as a Sister of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I was also interested in the Jewishness of Mary. And so, in the limited time we have—and I could just keep moving on this indefinitely, but—let me just say that my book is more or less focused on five questions. I'm going to read all of them to you right now, and then we're going to take each of them briefly. And then if there will be further questions, hopefully we'll have time for some questions, and then my book will be available.

So let me just say that the questions that have focused my quest, as it were, for the Jewish Mary are, number one: Why has Mary been portrayed as so un-Jewish over the centuries? Secondly: Why are we searching for the Jewish Mary now, and not maybe years ago or even in the future? Thirdly: Has the search for the Jewish Jesus helped us to find the Jewish Mary? Fourth, and what might seem like a very unlikely question: Can the Pharisees tell us anything about Mary? And lastly: How might Mary have prayed?

Now, most of us, or many of us here do know the story—how our images of Mary have changed so radically over the centuries. Instead of a nice little Jewish . . . I have to tell this one story. One time, when our clergy were having our weekly clergy meeting—and we used to rotate every month to a different venue—and this particular time, we were in the Conservative synagogue. And our topic for discussion was Mary.

And the Protestants and the Catholics were at each other's throats. And the Protestants were saying, "You Catholics just divinize Mary. You make her more important than Jesus. She's almost like a goddess." And the Catholics are saying to the Protestants, "Your problem is, the only time you haul Mary out is on a Christmas card." And finally, one of the rabbis said, "I don't know what you're all upset about. She was a nice little Jewish girl." [laughter] And we all had a good laugh, but seriously it sort of brought us all back to a certain kind of reality.

So we have to admit that, as far as art and architecture—or mostly art but some architecture as well—

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And so as you know, in the very early years there's . . . George Tavard, a famous scholar, believes that there really is no imagery of Mary, or even of Jesus, up until almost the fourth century. And we know that what we call the Patristic Period, the period of the Fathers of the Church, is often considered to be the period of the Fathers of the Church.

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Mary. Line drawings: so Mary with Jesus as the Lamb of God, Mary who's supposed to be with the anchor, which symbolizes hope, Mary with the bread of Our Lady of the Eucharist.

And we also begin to move into the more ethnic depictions of Mary. And so here we have, I believe, a Chinese version of Mary and the C

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Now what happens, as we know, is that in 1943, with "*Divino Afflante Spiritu*," an encyclical of Pope Pius XII, he said that Catholic scholars could indeed use modern historical critical methods for biblical interpretation. So this was like a very liberating experience. In addition to that, not too many years right after that, we have the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. And as you probably know, nice little shepherd boy goes into a cave and throws some rocks in, and hears a bunch of plinks, and goes in and finds these old scrolls and discovers that some of them, one of them, I believe, is the oldest complete Isaiah scroll in existence. This was just phenomenal that this could even be discovered at this time. We should also remember that the 1940s was the decade of World War II and the Holocaust.

But what we begin to find as we move into the fifties and sixties is Catholic, Protestant and Jewish scholars start to work together, particularly with things like the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *Nag Hammadi* documents. And you know what they discovered? In addition to the fact that they could work together, they even liked each other sometimes. And they decided, hey, we need to do more of this and we need to find out what we can learn from each other. And we'll talk about that in just a minute. What I would like to say, however, is it is a sense of which, why are we searching for the Jewish Mary now? Because I believe, in addition to the opening up of biblical studies and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and things of that kind, we had this experience called Vatican II.

Now, in the Second Vatican Council we have a couple of documents I want to mention briefly. One is called "*Lumen Gentium*," the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church." There was a very enormous controversy among the bishops as to whether there should be a separate document on Mary coming out of Vatican II or whether she should be incorporated into the document on the Church. And the idea that she should be part of the Church won by a very, very small margin, but it was the first time that people said, "As marvelous and remarkable as Mary is, she too was redeemed, she too is part of the Church."

The other document was called "*Nostra Aetate*," and as you may know, it's actually called the "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions." But the most important element in that is article four, the statement on the Jews. And both of these caused people to start opening up and looking in a new way at how Mary might be viewed.

Now I have to take one little back-step here if I can, because I don't think we'll appreciate how radically different it was to start looking at Mary this new way unless we look at a little bit more of how she was viewed in a period just prior to that, and why what's somet5 (t8.6 (h)-10.6 (e()-1

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melech haolam, hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz: "Blessed are you, Lord Our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us the bread from the earth."

Luke tells us that upon meeting her cousin Elizabeth, she poured forth a prayer of joy, a prayer sometimes called a *kaddish*, a prayer of praise hallowing God's name, similar to what we find in the Canticle of Hannah. Mary and Joseph would have participated in the rites of Jewish ritual purification because we talk about them presenting Jesus in the Temple. Mary would have gone to the *mikvah*, or the ritual bath, with the other women for monthly purification. Joseph and Jesus, when he was of age, and Mary—although women were not always required—would have fasted and prayed all day on Yom Kippur, according to Leviticus 16.

A Jewish view of life is very holistic. In Judaism, there is a *bracha*, or a blessing, for absolutely everything. And according to Jewish scholar David Flusser, Mary is a certain link between Jesus and the Jewish people. Now, there is a genre of rabbinic literature known as *midrash*, a

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crying, so they ask if they can come in. And then there's this sort of ethereal music that's in the background. And the innkeeper and his wife sort of look like proud grandparents. And eventually, the shepherds leave and the angels evaporate, and the innkeeper and his wife go in.

And I have this vision of Mary and Joseph sort of snuggling down in the straw with this newborn baby between them. And in my mind's eye I said, *what might Mary possibly have said to Joseph at that time?* And all I could think of was, maybe she said, "Joseph, do you think we should say a *Shehecheyanu* ?" And together they would pray, "*Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu melekh ha'olam shehecheyanu vekiymanu vehigi'anu lazman hazeh*" – "Blessed are You, O Lord Our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us life and sustained us and brought us to this very special moment."

Well, I shared this reflection a couple years ago with an Orthodox rabbi friend, and 0.349 0 (e)9.6 (n)-1.5

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When I was about 14 years old, I was living with my extended family in the small village of Nazareth in the Galilee during the Roman occupation. I was grateful to be with family and friends, and kept busy carrying out household tasks. I was betrothed to a wonderful young man named Joseph, a carpenter. He was such a good person and eager to prepare a home for us. It promised to be a happy marriage.

One day, I encountered a very powerful invitation from a mysterious figure. I must have looked frightened. And at first, I was afraid. This extraordinary being was enshrined in light, appeared to be from heaven and said, "Do not be afraid, Mary." I remembered the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Say to those who are frightened, be S

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As I traveled along, I came to realize that my willingness to say yes to God's plan was grounded in my deep conviction of the faithfulness of God. I had prayed the *Shema* twice each day and sometimes more, since I was old enough to do so. *Sh'ma Yisrael Ad onai Eloheinu Adonai E ad*: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord Our God, the Lord is One." I always continued with a Scripture passage I love so well, *Vahavta et Adonai Elohecha*: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might. Take to heart these words with which I charge you this day. You shall teach them diligently to your children and recite them when you stay at home and when you are away."

As I recited the words on my journey, I knew I would indeed teach those very words to my son. A child is growing within me, and it is all very mysterious. But I want to share that love with

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