

Mary's Look

Marianist World Day of Prayer
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by Isabella Moyer

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I had a great disadvantage in writing this presentation. How I wanted to have the opportunity to spend time within this chapel in prayer and contemplation—to be inspired by the Madonna of this shrine, to be inspired by the holiness of this site, and to be inspired by the spirit of faith shared by the many pilgrims who have travelled here. I offer these simple and humble thoughts to Notre Dame du Cap, and I pray that her inspiration will guide me in both my writing and in my sharing with you.

How is Mary looking at us today?

A mother has many different looks. Each is a response to the present needs of her ever-changing and growing child.

David, my husband, and I have a favorite statue at home, a statue of a nursing mother. It was made by Helen Norman, a well-known liturgical sculptor from the prairies. The statue reflects the mother and the child at her breast within a circle of love—the mother's arms completely enfold the baby. The baby suckles with great contentment, her small hand laid securely on her mother's breast. The mother's head and gaze is tilted down, toward the child. The simple circular lines reflect the total focus between mother and child in the nursing relationship. In this tender moment of nurturing, it is as if the world does not exist outside this mother/child bond.



As the child grows, so does the mother's look. There is the look of pride at each small accomplishment, the no nonsense look of "Mama means business," and the adoring, heart-warming look when the wee one is finally fast asleep at the end of a hard day. (David says that God made children so cute when they're asleep to give us the strength to face the next day!) With small children, a mother must bend down or pick the child up to be able to look them in the eye. (Sometimes she has to catch them first!)

The ages of our own five children now range from 24 down to 16 years. As children enter adulthood, the mother's gaze again grows with them. I no longer have to bend down or pick them up to look at them in the eye. We can now look at each other face to face. And, with adulthood, comes a new relationship between parent and child—an awareness of each other's wisdom, a sensitivity to each other's needs, a realization that there is the possibility of collaboration and mutual support. With maturity and independence comes more responsibility—both within the family and within the world as they each find their way in life. The mother is still called to embrace and comfort the adult child. She is still called to nurture them when needed. But she is also called to challenge them . . . to take their gifts and use them for the good of the world.

How is Mary looking at us, the Marianist Family, today? I do not believe that she is gazing down at us because as Marianists we have invited her to join us at the table when we gather in community. We have invited her to be with us as we pray. To be with us as we take the Gospels in one hand and the newspaper in the other hand, to try and seek the signs of the times. And, when we recognize the places in our *here and now* where "there is no wine," Mary nudges us into action—action that is grounded in the words of her son at Cana to "Do whatever he tells you."

Mary is looking at us eye to eye. And, she is looking deeply into our eyes. It is the look of intimate love, searching for the inner soul of the person. Sometimes when someone gazes at us so intensely, we feel discomfort and uneasiness. Our eyes flit nervously. We lack confidence in ourselves and dare not allow the other to look deep within us. Mary DARES us to gaze into her eyes as shes gazes into ours. She DARES us into a deeper relationship with her. She DARES us to KNOW her, LOVE her, and SERVE her. She DARES us to trust her.



Notre Dame du Cap in Quebec, Canada