



Vision and Viewpoint

Joan Chittister

Blessed Among Women

No one ever taught us Marian theology in any organized academic way. They didn't need to even try. It came with the May altars we built in grade school. It came with the crowning of May queens in high school. It came with the rosaries we said in October and carried in our purses and fingered in the dark before sleep at night. It was the DNA of religion in our bones. And it was all about Mary, the *Theotokos*, the Eastern church called her: the Mother of God.

The feasts of Mary in the liturgical year are a virtual catalog of the works of God in humanity and the collaboration of humanity in the Incarnation of the divine in our midst. She is, the ancient prayer reminds us all, "blessed among women." She is simply a woman like ourselves whose acceptance of the will of God changed the trajectory of humanity. The implications for the rest of us are awesome. The implications for women as women are particularly impacting. If God worked through one woman to bring redemption, how is it that anyone can argue that God does not go on working through other women as well?

Recognition of this relationship between God and humankind in the ongoing creation of the world is one of the most ancient teachings of liturgical theology. If it applies to Mary, it also applies to us.

The proper place for devotion to Mary is a clear one: she is the mother, the woman, the human participant in the work of redemption by her Son. She is the one who heard the Word of God in her heart and followed it to the end, whatever the cost to herself. By her unconditional fiat, she became the perfect recipient of God's will that each of us would like to be. Her life belongs not simply to her own life but the life of the world as well.

It is in Mary that we see God's creative will being done. In her, God not only prevails over the inherent weakness of mortality but brings it to the fullness of life for all our sakes. In the memories of the May altars, the crowning of May queens, and the droning of a thousand decades of the Rosary, all those ideas came to life in me and generations of others, came to heart in us, came to stay forever.

—from *The Liturgical Year* by Joan Chittister (Thomas Nelson)