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**Shryock, Jeremiah. Mary and the Interior Life. Brewster, MA:
Paraclete Press, 2023**

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Book Review



Shryock, Jeremiah. *Mary and the Interior Life*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2023.

For some Christians, the topic of Mary can be fraught. Often, Catholics are accused of worshipping Mary, while non-Catholics are seen as writing her off completely. But Fr. Jeremiah Shryock, a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal and a Marian hermit, affirms in *Mary and the Interior Life* that all Christians can learn something from Mary. In his book, based on a series of previously given lectures, Shryock offers readers a glimpse into his own Marian spirituality and explains how Christians can look to the mother of Jesus as the premier example of how to nurture a relationship with God.

Shryock grounds the book's fourteen chapters within scenes from Mary's life, from the Annunciation (chapter 1) to the Assumption (chapter 14). Each contains a spiritual theme or disposition of Mary that, Shryock argues, can aid in the development of every Christian's interior life of prayer and contemplation. Shryock interweaves his own reflections with biblical narrative, drawing heavily on the Gospels to illustrate Mary's spirituality, characterized by "an unconditional and unequivocal yes to God" (20).

The book's first three chapters examine Mary's unconditional yes as it plays out in the Gospel of Luke, when Mary consents to become the mother of Jesus – what Shryock describes as a "perfect" response to the will of God (22). The next seven chapters paint a picture of Mary's faith during the sometimes-turbulent infancy and childhood of Jesus. Shryock draws from scenes such as the flight into Egypt to remind readers of the deep trust required to follow God. The final four chapters look at Mary's role in the adult life of Jesus and beyond, from the wedding at Cana to His death and resurrection, even discussing how she is referenced in the Book of Revelation. In these chapters Shryock emphasizes Mary's devotion to Jesus, especially highlighting how her presence during the Crucifixion speaks to the constancy of her faith in the face of suffering. By showing how Mary chooses to respond to God throughout the New Testament, Shryock encourages readers to emulate her faith and radical trust in the Lord.

His reflective text is further bolstered by the writings of numerous Church Fathers, theologians, and saints. Far from dense and inaccessible, these selections serve to explicate and demystify Catholic theology surrounding Marian devotion for readers who may be new to the topic.

Though brief, Shryock's chapters overflow with biblical and theological insights into the person of Mary. Through a close examination of her life, Shryock reveals that Mary's faith manifests in profound ways that, while rooted in her role as the mother of God, are thoroughly knowable by all Christians. Her intimacy with the Lord, genuine gift of self, obedience of faith, and gentle pondering of God's word are but a few of Mary's spiritual traits that Shryock identifies for Christian practice.

Mary and the Interior Life provides Catholics and non-Catholics alike with a deeper understanding of Marian spirituality. Its engaging content makes it a rich addition to a personal or Church library as a devotional guide or as a resource for those looking to deepen their contemplative practice.

Reviewer

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