

# The Faces of Mary in Sacred Scripture

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## 2. *The Spouse – Canticle of Canticles 6:2-10*

The *Canticle of Canticles* is the book of life and love *par excellence*, in the heart of Sacred Scripture. At the center of a symbolic garden, rich in flowers and fruits, we meet a man and a woman, accompanied, every now and then, by a chorus. They represent the eternal couple who appeared on the face of the earth, enveloped by tenderness and the power of love. It is precisely within this human love, according to Sacred Scripture, that the key to reach God's infinite love is hidden. Every form of giving of oneself in love, in fact, has, as its point of reference, the very great union of husband and wife which is also nourished by passion, concrete gestures, sentiments, and feelings. Thus, the Canticle teaches us how to speak of Divine Love without losing sight of human love, also because we have immediate experience, before all else, of this latter one.

The Church's Tradition has always employed this analogy without fear so as to help believers delve into the heights, the depths, and the riches of the love that exists between the Creator and His creatures. Every human being, in fact, has been created to enter into an intimate relationship of communion with the Trinity and with Mary, thanks to the mystical bond that unites her to the Father through the Holy Spirit, the fruit of which is the incarnation of Christ, the most perfect realization of this plan of God. Mary is the spouse *par excellence*. By looking to her, we see to what lengths God's love can go for us. From her, we learn to be, in our turn, Spouses chosen and loved by the Lord.

The entire Canticle has been reread down through the centuries with this Marian optic, above all by monks and nuns. They sought allusions to Mary's story and to her characteristics in the verses; e.g., the Immaculate Conception (4:7), the Assumption (2:10+13 and 8:5), her Virginity (2:2 and 4:12) and her Humility (2:1). The invocations, "Tower of David" and "Tower of Ivory" that we find in the Litany of Loreto, have been inspired by the Canticle (4:4 and 7:5). Even the image of Mary as "Garden of all Virtues" (4:12-5:1) and the representation of the "Black Madonna," so widespread in the world (1:5), harken back to the Canticles verses.

The passage that we are proposing here for meditation surely was the inspiration for Don Bosco when he composed his prayer, "O Mary, Most Powerful Virgin".

### Praying with the Word (Canticle of Canticles 6:2-10):

1. I become aware of God's presence. I imagine that I am in the garden in which Spouse encounters Spouse and I ask for the grace to be able to enter into Mary's intimacy with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

2. I invoke the help of the Holy Spirit by slowly repeating this (or another) prayer:

"O Holy Spirit, flood the depths of my being with the power of your love, as you did for Mary. Help me to know the Father as Mary knew Him. Help me love the Son, as she loved Him. Free and heal my heart of all that impedes me from recognizing myself as being loved by the Father, from the top of my head to the tip of my toes, in a unique and total way; to feel desired by the Son as His Spouse; and to allow myself to be led by you in every step of my life. Amen."

3. I read the *Canticle of Canticles* 6:4-10 slowly and reflect a while on these three points:

- **presence and reciprocal belonging** (vss, 2+3): Mary is God's garden. In her company, God finds joy and rest. God's presence in her is joy and rest for Mary. And I? Where do I find my joy? Where do I find my rest?
- **the gaze of the spouse on the beauty of his beloved** (vss. 4-7): Mary's beauty is her strength. In her, the work of the Creator shines without shadow and without stain and this splendor awes and conquers God's heart and our hearts. I, too, came from God's hands and I was created by Him.
- **the gaze of the spouse sees the uniqueness of his beloved** (vss. 8-10): Mary is unique in God's eyes. At the same time, I, too, am unique to him. Every one of His Creatures - my every Sister and every person whom I encounter – is. I put this question to the Father: "Who is Mary to You? Who am I to You?"

4. I finish this prayer with a heart-to-heart conversation with Mary: I express my sentiments, my joy, my gratitude, my doubts, and all my struggles to her as regard her and my being the Spouse of the Lord.

5. I renew my vows praying the Formula of Profession.

Our Father...

After having concluded this prayer, I sit still and reflect a little: What has the Holy Spirit said to me through this prayer? Has He encouraged me? Has He invited me to conversion? How do I think I may correspond to the gift received in this prayer?