MARY OF NAZARETH: FRIEND OF GOD AND PROPHET

Elizabeth A. Johnson, CSJ. Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University in New York City, is a teacher, writer, editor, and public lecturer in theology. She received a PhD in theology from Catholic University of America, Washington, DC in 1981 with a dissertation on analogical language about God. Before moving to Fordham in 1991, she taught at Catholic University of America (1969-91) and at St. Joseph College, Brooklyn, NY (1973-77). Prior to that she taught science and religion in Catholic elementary and high schools.

A past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America, her areas of special interest include the theology of God, christology, science and religion, mariology, the problem of suffering, ecological ethics, and issues related to justice for women.

She is the author of over 100 scholarly essays in books, journals, and encyclopedias, and her work has been translated into German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Polish, Lithuanian, and Korean. Among the books she has authored are *She Who is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (Crossroad, 1992); *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (Paulist, 1993); *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (Continuum, 1998); and *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (Continuum, 2003).

Dr. Johnson loves to teach and was awarded Fordham University's Teacher of the Year Award in 1998. In addition to teaching undergraduate and graduate students, she has delivered numerous lectures and workshops to academic and church groups both at home and abroad.

Deeply involved in the life of the church, she is a religious sister in the Congregation of St. Joseph, Brentwood, NY. Her public service in the church includes being a theologian of the national Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue; a consultant to the Catholic Bishops; a member of the Committee on Women in Church and Society; a theologian on the Vatican-sponsored dialogue between science and religion, and on the Vatican-sponsored study of Christ and the world religions; and a core committee member of the Common Ground Initiative started by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin.

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Miriam of Nazareth, historically the mother of Jesus, called in faith the Mother of God, is the most celebrated women in the Christian tradition. This lecture raises the question of how this contemporary generation of American Catholics can think about and honor her in a way that fits with a post-Vatican II spirituality. Looking to scripture as source, we explore the idea that Mary is a Jewish woman who walked with the Spirit in her own difficult life. The church remembers her now in the communion of saints as a companion, a friend of God who inspires our own commitment in a newly dangerous world.

A gift of the late Maud and Milo Flannery of Spokane makes possible the Flannery Lecture in order to further excellence in theological study and teaching at Gonzaga University. The Flannery Lecture is delivered each year by an outstanding Catholic theologian and presented to benefit as wide an audience as possible.

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