

LUMEN CHRISTI

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS OF MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH ABBEY

YOUR JANUARY Light from the Monastery

1st January – HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD



Here we have *S. Maria, Mater Dei*, “Holy Mary, Mother of God” — her greatest title. The earliest of the Church Fathers, like Saint Ignatius, Saint Irenaeus and Tertullian did not hesitate to give Mary this title. He was truly the Mother of Jesus, and as Jesus was truly God from the moment of his conception, Mary is truly the Mother of God, a title accepted by the whole Church at the Council of Ephesus in 431 when, we are told, the populace rejoiced at Mary’s title.

431 was the year before St. Patrick came to Ireland, bringing the new title with him. Twelve hundred years later *Lucerna Fidelium*, the penal times Irish Catechism, asked the question: “What honour is it proper to give Mary (*Muire*)?” The answer: *Onóir Mhathair Dé*, “the honour of the Mother of God.”

Devotion to the Mother of God has always been at the heart of Cistercian spirituality. Aelred, Abbot of the great Yorkshire Monastery of Rievaulx, gives us a glimpse into that richness: “Let us come to God’s mother. We owe her honour, we owe her devotion, we owe her love, we owe her praise, for she is in truth our mother. Through her we are born, not to the world, but to God.” (Sermon 20)

Mary is shown in the window wearing a crown and holding a sceptre, signs of royalty — *Regina Coeli*, “Queen of Heaven.” Mary was honoured very specially by the Cistercians of the twelfth century under this title, and down through the centuries the *Salve Regina*, “Hail Holy Queen,” has been the last chant of the day in Cistercian monasteries. *Queen*

Muir Mhathair

Ave Maria

Mo Ghrá Ave,

Is tusa mo Mhathair,

Is Máthair Dé.