

▲ The image of Our Lady of La Leche nursing the infant Jesus was crowned during a special coronation ceremony Oct. 10, 2021, at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine.



Echoing Mary's Yes: A Jubilee of Hope Consecration

BY BISHOP ERIK T. POHLEMEIER

As we continue our journey through the Jubilee of Hope, I invite every Catholic in our diocese to join me in a renewed consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary—our mother, intercessor and guide. This act of devotion will take place on Saturday, Oct. 11, 2025, at the National Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche in St. Augustine. This date coincides with the Jubilee for Marian Spirituality in Rome and the feast of Our Lady of La Leche, a special patroness for our diocese.

We will gather for a day of prayer, learning, fellowship and Mass, which will include the consecration. For anyone unable to attend in person, I encourage you to participate from your parish or home, either individually or in groups. To prepare for this consecration, I recommend using either the traditional *Preparation for Total Consecration* by St. Louis de Montfort or a more contemporary but faithful guide, *The Fruit of*

Her Womb by Benedictine Father Boniface Hicks.

In God's perfect wisdom, he chose to create humankind in love and established the plan to redeem us when we turned away. This perfect plan of redemption took the form of the Incarnation. God enters the world in human form with a profound act of humility that expresses perfect love for us.

God's plan for entering our world in human form unfolded

in an unexpected way. God chose to enter the world through Mary. This child had been chosen by God and filled with grace so that in the fullness of time she would be given a question. When the angel appeared and Mary expressed her fiat, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The Christ child became the man to redeem all humanity. We are joined to him in the marvelous exchange that gives life where there was death. Just as the Son was given to all humanity, so is the Mother. She senses that all generations will call her blessed. She is told that the sword of suffering for human sin will pierce her heart. At the moment when death passes into new life, she is given to all humanity as the undeserved gift when Jesus says, "Behold your mother!"

For her place in God's plan, Mary has always been honored in the Church. We pray with Mary

because God chose to come to us through a mother and entrusted us to her care. We return to God through the same mother in a plan that takes nothing away from God. Our devotion to Mary praises God's creation and follows God's own example.

Jesus himself honored Mary not only for her role as mother but for her perfect love as a disciple. Blessed is she who most perfectly does the will of the Father in heaven.

Over the centuries, the Church has grown in understanding the mystery of God's choice for Mary. Love for her has taken on the flavor of every culture and time. She has been welcomed across time and across the globe as mother and protector. She always teaches her faithful children a more perfect love and more direct path to Jesus. When we commit to seeking her intercession and following her example, we end up on the narrow path that leads to salvation.

On Oct. 10, 2021, during the Canonical Coronation of the image of Our Lady of La Leche, Bishop Felipe Estévez consecrated the diocese to her care. As part of this Jubilee of Hope, I intend to repeat this consecration and encourage every person in the diocese to prepare for their own personal consecration to Mary as we ask her prayers for this part of God's Kingdom.

Mary well understands her purpose with her song, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord." God chose Mary for a key part in the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus—the greatest act of love and liberation in history. God gives Mary to us as guide and protector for our own part in God's plan. In this Jubilee of Hope, we respond to God's gift with great devotion. I pray that our consecration to Mary will echo the yes that leads us on the shortest path to salvation. 🍀