

Immaculate
Heart
College

May 11, 1967

MARY'S
DAY 1967

To our Guests,

Welcome to our celebration of Mary's Day.

This may be a little different from other religious celebrations you have watched or participated in, so we'd like to tell you a little bit about how Mary's Day came to be as it is.

There has always been a Mary's Day at Immaculate Heart College, although not in this current form. Mary's Day, May crownings, and such, have been a part of Catholicism for centuries, adapted, no doubt, from the rites with which pagan cultures rejoiced each year over springtime, rebirth, youth, and growth. It was a simple thing for Christians to translate such ideas to Mary, to dedicate Maytime to her with floral offerings.

Those among you who are Catholics probably took part as youths in the typical parish or parochial school May procession to crown statues of Mary with flowers. This is a tradition that has come down to the present day. Immaculate Heart College had it, too, up to six years ago.

And then we took a serious second look at it. What was the meaning of this tradition for us, college students and faculty, in Los Angeles, California, in these 1960's? Was it important that it have meaning? Was it simply enough that the whole idea was charming, spring-like, and traditional? We began to ask ourselves if it were still religious, and students, too, raised questions about its relevance for them.

Mary's Day had always been part of our communal faith at Immaculate Heart College, but was attempting to express this faith by crowning a statue with flowers a part of our communal search as a college for Truth and its meaning in our individual lives?

We Americans consider ourselves a sophisticated lot. We smile indulgently at, and at times good humoredly go along with, folk rituals our ancestors attempted to transplant here from towns and villages in other times and other places. We go along, but unthinkingly, holding our real selves aloof. We repeat ingrained motions, but we don't participate. Habit and rote require

no engagement, while participation must catch up the whole self, all that one is and thinks and believes. To participate, we must breathe in the spirit which unites all who are part of the ritual.

Deep in our hearts we know that, as human beings, we need to participate in ritual. It is a need that is being voiced aloud today by young people--with increasing urgency among the educated and more affluent. We, as human beings, need to be part of a community. We need to show that we belong, by pausing at some time to join hands, to proclaim and to celebrate unashamedly, whatever it is that joins us together in community.

We could not stop at the simple fact that Mary was and is. If she is, what then? What does she mean--what can she mean--to the world, our world of the 1960's? We could not lay aside our hopes and fears, our heartaches and pleasures. And so we come to her with them. We reaffirm our belief, not shutting our eyes and minds to all that screams at us from contemporary life. We reaffirm our belief as awakened and aware adults.

And that is all there is to Mary's Day.

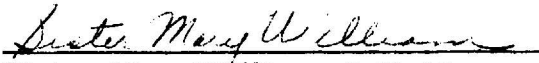
An entire campus contributes its ideas, results of our individual meditations on the religious ideals personified in Mary in the light of one theme; this year's, survival with style--as individuals, as a nation, as a species of creation. An entire art class devotes class time over a year to visualizing these ideas; this year, in the maze set up in the Social Hall.

What we're feeling is suggested in the enclosed copy of a brief talk given in defense of Mary's Day by me on Mary's Day of 1964.

What we're thinking is indicated in the enclosed summary by Sister Mary Corita, I.H.M., of the ideas that inspired the maze.

What we're doing is listed for you in the enclosed program. As you will see, you are joining us mid-way through Mary's Day, which began last evening at sun-down and will continue through this afternoon. Last evening we came together at the close of school to celebrate Mass, to eat a meal of soup and bread, staple menu of the poor and needy of this world, and finally to join together in finishing the decorative touches planned to welcome you, our guests, this morning.

What we are, you'll discover, and, in so doing, maybe discover, also, something about yourselves.


Sister Mary William, I.H.M.
President