

# Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southern Portugal's Sacred Celebrations:

*Echoes of Tradition*



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By

Paulo M. Barroso

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“Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book!  
That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!”

The Book of Job 19:23-24.



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## PREFACE

“Grant that we may faithfully dedicate ourselves to Your service  
through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin,  
and may we proclaim, in words and deeds,  
the glory of Your Name.”

*Colecta do Tempo Pascal–Comum de Nossa Senhora  
(Collect of Easter Time–Common of Our Lady).*

The prominent place that the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, the Lord, holds in the Church’s Liturgy is very evident to all of us, especially in the many religious expressions of popular piety among the Christian people. This is a unique “liturgical fact” of great importance and meaning, as this cultural dimension of worship lies at the heart of the Liturgy, embraced and understood as the ritual celebration of the salvation fulfilled in Christ.

The Calendar of the Virgin’s numerous memories and feasts; the Sacrament of the Eucharist in which the Virgin Mother of Jesus is remembered and evoked with particular love; the sacramental rites, which express her presence and intercession in different connotations; the Liturgy of the Hours, where Marian piety is present in so many expressions of praise and supplication; the cultural buildings as spaces dedicated to the Virgin as well as other forms of liturgical art—poetry, music, painting, sculpture—all show that the figure of the Virgin occupies a particularly central and significant space. But it is the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II*, the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, that gives us a brief yet luminous paragraph on the meaning of the Virgin’s presence during the so-called liturgical year, the celebration of the mystery of Christ over time:

*“In celebrating this annual cycle of Christ’s mysteries, holy Church honours with especial love the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son. In her the Church holds up and admires the most excellent fruit of the redemption, and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless image, that which she herself desires and hopes wholly to be.” (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 103).*

This text highlights the doctrinal foundation of the Virgin’s presence in the Liturgy. It is the worship and contemplation of Jesus Christ that brings to the spirit the contemplation of the Virgin Mary. The Son is found through

the Mother, through Mary, who has always lived indissolubly united to the history of our salvation. By honouring Mary, the Church glorifies Christ, from whom all privileges come to Mary. The text emphasizes that the worship and contemplation of Jesus Christ, the centre and source of all Christian worship—the memorial celebration of the Paschal Mystery of the Lord—also brings to spirit the contemplation of the Holy Virgin Mary, who in a unique and singular way is “joined by an inseparable bond” to the work of salvation and the mystery of the Easter of the Lord, His Son. The Son is always found through the solicitous and tender presence of the Mother.

This conciliar statement clearly tells us that the Church remembers Saint Mary in the celebration of the cycle of Christ’s mysteries and in an intimate relationship with them. The solemn feasts or memories of the Virgin, and even those of the saints, receive light and meaning in Jesus Christ.

For this very reason, the feasts in honour of the Virgin are not a parallel cycle to the feasts of the Lord, nor do they acquire greater meaning than this one. We can underline from this very important text four reasons which affirm why the Church venerates the Virgin Mary with particular love during the liturgical year: she is the Mother of God; she is intimately united with His Son’s work of salvation; in Mary, the most excellent fruit of the Mystery of Redemption is admired and exalted; and everything the Church desires and hopes to be is contemplated in Mary as in a pure image. In fact, Mary is a daughter of this Church, but she is a “super-eminent and unique” member (*Lumen Gentium*, 53), representing its best achievement and perfect image. This is beautifully expressed in the Church’s prayerful words proposed in the IV Preface to the Masses of Our Lady, where Mary is invoked as a sign of consolation and hope: “*Humble servant, she accepted your word and kept it in her heart; admirably united with the mystery of redemption, she persevered with the Apostles in prayer, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit; she now shines on the path of our lives as a sign of consolation and firm hope*”.

The magnificent *Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, Marialis Cultus—The Right Ordering and Developing Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* (2.02.1974) presents in detail the feasts in honour of the Virgin Mary and offers the best catechesis on the Marian Calendar: “*Mary’s life, through the mission entrusted to her by God, is closely linked to the mysteries of Christ; and surely no one has followed the path traced by the Incarnate Word more closely and effectively than she, nor does anyone enjoy greater grace and power with the Most Holy Heart of the Son of God and, through the Son, with the Heavenly Father*”. In honouring Mary, the Church always wishes to glorify Christ, from whom all privileges flow to Mary. She is by the grace of God the most excellent fruit of redemption and exalts it. The

ultimate purpose of the worship of the Blessed Virgin Mary is to glorify God and lead Christians to live in complete conformity to His will (*Marialis Cultus*, 39).

For a deeper understanding of the cult of the Virgin Mary, we can follow, among other proposals, the following itinerary: the witness of Sacred Scripture (first century); the pre-Nicene era; from the Councils of Nicaea (325) and Ephesus (431) to Gregory the Great (604); the seventh century—the decisive century for the Marian cult; the eighth and ninth centuries; from the tenth century to the beginnings of the Council of Trent (1545); from the end of the council of Trent (1563) to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965); the post-conciliar liturgical renewal.

In the *New Testament*, we find not only the liturgical foundations concerning Mary but also the testimonies—albeit very inchoate—of the veneration of the Christian communities for the Mother of the Lord. It suffices to revisit the Gospel according to St. Luke, where Mary appears as “the servant of the Lord”, “the believer”, the “daughter of Zion”, the “wife of Yahweh”, the “mother of the Messianic King”, the “full of grace”, the “blessed among all women”.

Most authors agree that the liturgical worship of the Mother of the Lord follows the worship of the martyrs. However, we must remember that this devotion was initially exclusively local and referred to a space and a date: the site of burial and the date of death. We do not know the date of Mary's death, and no community possesses her body. On the other hand, the veneration of Mary does not appear to have been solely local.

The first significant Marian allusion found in the celebration of the liturgical year is in the homily of Melito of Sardis during the Easter Vigil, between the years 160 and 170 (second century), where he mentions the Mother of Jesus four times:

*“For the sake of suffering humanity he came down from heaven to earth, clothed himself in that humanity in the Virgin's womb, and was born a man... It is he who was made man of the Virgin, he who was hung on the tree; it is he who was buried in the earth, raised from the dead, and taken up to the heights of heaven... He is the mute lamb, the slain lamb born of Mary, the fair ewe... Such is the One who made heaven and earth and who formed, in the beginning, man, who was announced by the Law and by the Prophets, who incarnated in a Virgin.”*

No less significant is the reference to the Virgin in the proclamation of faith in Baptism and the Eucharistic Prayer of the Apostolic Tradition attributed to Hippolytus of Rome: “*Jesus became man by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary*”.

It is known that the liturgical cult to the Virgin came from the East and was born from the traditions that emerged and were developed in Jerusalem in the fifth and sixth centuries, in memory of biblical accounts and in places that witnessed the presence of the Virgin. It seems that the feast celebrated on August 15 in memory of Saint Mary constitutes its foundation. This feast of Mary, the *Theotokos*, later became the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. By the mid-fifth century in Jerusalem, a feast dedicated to the Virgin as the “Mother of God” was celebrated in the Church of Kathima, located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Later, at Gethsemane, where the Orthodox preserved the memory of the Dormition of the Virgin and the Empty Sepulchre, the mystery of the glorious Assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary began to be celebrated, which was established in the Liturgy with the title of the Dormition (*Koimesis*).

At the end of the sixth century, Emperor Mauritius imposed the celebration of this feast on the entire empire, and all the Churches of the East accepted it. In Ethiopia, there is a distinction between the death of Saint Mary, celebrated on January 16, and her Assumption on August 15.

All the Churches also celebrate the *dies natalis* of Our Lady, the Nativity of the Virgin, and her Entry into the Temple, similar to what was celebrated for martyrs and later for saints in general. By the sixth century, the annual observance of the feasts of Mary was already established.

In the West, after the Council of Ephesus, Pope Sixtus III (432-440) dedicated a basilica of great importance to the Virgin, which is still known today as Saint Mary Major. It was the first Church erected in the West in honour of the Virgin.

Rome also honoured the Virgin: the octave of Christmas was already celebrated as a day commemorating Mary. Additionally, Rome honoured her with a significant Solemnity celebrated on January 1, following the Nativity. Since the seventh century, the Birth of Saint Mary has also been celebrated, which can rightly be called the first Marian feast of the Roman liturgy. Subsequently, the feasts of February 2, March 25, August 15, and September 8 were introduced—these are the four most important Marian feasts established since the time of Pope Sergius I (687-701): Assumption of Mary (650 in Rome), August 15; Nativity (680-695 in Rome), September 8; Annunciation (660 in Rome), March 25; and Purification (642-649 in Rome), February 2—today, the feast of the Lord or Presentation of the Lord.

From the seventh to the fourteenth century, these feasts were maintained. It was Urban VI in 1389 who established the feast of the Visitation, now transferred to the May 31, placed between the Annunciation and the birth of John the Baptist on June 24. A century later, Sixtus IV introduced the feast of the Conception of Mary (1477).

From the seventeenth century onwards, the number of feasts expanded: in 1683, Innocent XI introduced the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, fixed on September 12 by Pius X; the feast of Our Lady of Mercy was added in 1696). In the eighteenth century, Pope Clement XI universalized the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary in 1716, and Benedict XIII introduced the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel into the Roman calendar in 1726. In the nineteenth century, Pope Pius VII introduced the feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. In the twentieth century, Pius X established the commemorations of Our Lady of Lourdes in 1907; in 1931, Pius XI introduced the feast of the Maternity of Mary; in 1944, Pius XII extended the feast of the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary to the entire Church, and he instituted the feast of Mary Queen in 1954.

All reforms purify, focus on the essentials, readjust perspectives, simplify attitudes and methodologies, and eliminate what is unnecessary and erroneous, which distorts the fundamental and essential. This was the objective of the liturgical reform, which still needs to be fully realized with renewed spirit and wise creativity.

Regarding the worship of the Holy Virgin Mary, its primary orientation is clear: to restore the veneration of the Mother of God within the celebration of the mystery of Christ. The Liturgy celebrates the mysteries of salvation, which have historical consistency; it is a memorial celebration. This is a fundamental criterion for interpreting the meaning and relevance of the feasts of the liturgical year. Above all, those celebrations that commemorate the saving events in which Mary plays a central role, closely associated with her Son Jesus in the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, should be valued. In a second group, there are the celebrations and commemorations that highlight aspects of the Virgin's life or enshrine significant devotions handed down by Tradition.

The Guidelines for the Marian Year, issued by the *Congregation for Divine Worship* on May 2, 1987, emphasize that liturgical celebrations are the primary forms of Marian worship, while guarding against any separation between the worship of the Virgin and that given to Christ. In fact, there is no independent Marian cycle: the time of Christ and the Spirit, which constitutes the liturgical year, contains privileged moments that celebrate, in a more or less unique way, the memory of Mary's presence in the history of Salvation—always pointing toward Christ.

*"A language continues to be used, and cultic manifestations are given a direction that is not in harmony with the teachings of the Second Vatican Council regarding the figure and mission of the Blessed Virgin, and the worship that should be offered to her. This occurs, for example, when devotion to the Virgin is presented as the easiest or most pleasant way to*

*find God or Christ, or when expressions may lead one to believe that mercy prevails in the Mother and justice in the Son. This is not the teaching of the Church”.*

The most significant innovation in the cult of the Virgin Mary is the appearance the *Collectio Missarum de Beata Maria Virgine*, published by the *Congregation of Divine Cult* on August 15, 1986. The Portuguese edition was released on August 15, 1997. This collection presents 46 Masses in two volumes: the first contains the Missal, with prayers and prefaces, and the second contains the Lectionary. It is presented as an appendix to the Roman Missal.

These Masses are intended for Sanctuaries and for the celebration of Saturdays during Ordinary Time when there is no obligatory memory (*Collectio Missarum de Beata Maria Virgine*, 21). This custom of Saturday Votive Masses, which allows the Christian people to express their deep liturgical devotion to Mary, has come down to us from the Roman Calendar and dates back to the Carolingian monasteries of the late eighth century.

I believe that all the Christian people of the Diocese of Algarve, along with all devotees of the Virgin in this region, must feel deeply honoured and grateful for the timely and excellent work of Paulo M. Barroso, now coming to light. Indeed, it addresses a significant gap in the recognition and appreciation of the most important feasts in honour of the Virgin Mary celebrated in this region, which has always flourished under the protection of Saint Mary. This work, marked by in-depth research, sensitivity, and Christian and Marian spirituality, serves as a practical, functional, and insightful guide, as suggested by the author himself. Its title is: *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southern Portugal's Sacred Celebrations: Echoes of Tradition*. Through its sociological lens and openness to other fields, such as religion, philosophy, and anthropology, this book highlights the most important religious feasts in the Algarve dedicated to the Virgin. It brings together 72 of the most expressive feasts across the region's 16 municipalities. Our deep gratitude goes to the author for this laborious and timely contribution, which greatly enriches our religious and cultural heritage. We hope that all readers of this book feel inspired to visit the region and take part in one of these festivities, rediscovering the prominent role of the Virgin in the lives of believers and those seeking new and fulfilling meaning in their lives. With Mary, let us all learn to joyfully proclaim, in faith and actions, the mystery of God, the source and Creator of all life.

Father Carlos Manuel Patrício de Aquino  
Priest of Loulé and Querença.

# INTRODUCTION

“What I ask of the free thinker is that he should confront religion in the same mental state as the believer.”

Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

In the Algarve, as throughout deeply Catholic Portugal, thousands of people collectively express their faith since ancient times, following traditional practices and rituals, entrenched beliefs, popular devotions, and symbolic and religious customs. These traditions express a local and cultural identity in three main forms: *latría*<sup>1</sup>, *hyperdulia*<sup>2</sup>, or *dulia*<sup>3</sup>. These expressions of faith, deeply rooted in the region's identity, are passed down through generations, forming an integral part of its intangible cultural heritage. This book addresses the intangible cultural heritage of religious feasts in the Algarve, highlighting the significance of these practices and their role in maintaining cultural continuity. Following Durkheim's guidance in the epigraph at the beginning of this introduction, the free thinker must approach religion with the same reverence as the believer, thus “he who does not bring to the study of religion a sort of religious sentiment cannot speak about it! He is like a blind man trying to talk about colour” (Durkheim, 1995, p. xvii).

Religious and popular feasts, especially those devoted to Our Lady, the Virgin Mary, play a central role in the preservation of this intangible heritage. The study of *hyperdulia* in the book focuses on these Marian devotions, which are a key expression of the Algarve's deep-rooted cultural and spiritual traditions.

In the context of Catholicism and popular piety, to Mary of Nazareth is given many titles and invocations. Some of these are unique, allowing Mary to become better known, more familiar, and closer to local communities. Popular piety recognizes and proclaims Mary through the dogmatic

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<sup>1</sup> From the Greek *latreía*, “worship”, i.e. the worship due to God.

<sup>2</sup> From the Greek *hypér*, “beyond”, and *douleía*, “servitude”, worship rendered to Our Lady, the Virgin Mary.

<sup>3</sup> From the Greek *douleía*, the cult given to the saints.

acknowledgment of her holiness and her role as an intermediary between the sacred (divine) and the profane (human) realms.

In matters of faith, Our Lady is professed as the Virgin Mary; in terms of sanctity, she is venerated as St. Mary. Her status is affirmed through key dogmas or truths of faith, including a) the Divine Motherhood, b) Perpetual Virginity, c) the Immaculate Conception, and d) the Assumption. Chosen by God to bring Jesus into the world, Mary embodies both the sanctity of the sacred realm and the humanity of the earthly realm. Her nature is thus unique, and the feasts, titles, and invocations in her honour are both distinctive and widespread, not only in the Algarve, Portugal, but throughout the world.

The practices of hyperdulia show collective dedication within a system of beliefs, rites and celebrations to Our Lady. Dedication means *devotio*, sacrifice, worship, the observance of religious and pious practices dedicated to divine entities, such as Our Lady. In his *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas (1947, p. 2048) considers devotion a special act of the will “whereby a man offers himself for the service of God Who is the last end”. The hyperdulia falls within this context (Velasco, 1995, p. 392). Hyperdulia extends across the Algarve, from the coast to the interior, and every month people reconnect with an ancestral and traditional past. This book deals with 72 Marian feasts in the Algarve. The entire region is represented in these social practices and behaviours of hyperdulia. Devotional celebrations to God, Jesus Christ and the saints are excluded, as well as feasts inserted in the three important and traditional festive cycles in Portugal (Carnival, Easter, and Christmas).

The geographical area of the Diocese of the Algarve corresponds to the District of Faro, a surface area of 5071 square kilometres. The traditional and religious feasts of this area make it unique. The population is concentrated in the Southern coast of the Algarve. However, the typical pilgrimages are rural (Sanchis, 1992, p. 39). The genuineness of popular culture and religious feast is more visible and felt at celebrations that take place in small and isolated places. Nevertheless, religious practice in the Algarve does not differ much from other regions of Portugal, especially regarding the titles and invocations of Our Lady; it is the intensity of the religiosity, the rites and religious entities (such as saints or representations of the Virgin Mary) that change (Espírito Santo, 1990, p. 15).

Religious feasts are cultural, symbolic, and cyclical, expressing devotion to sacred entities. Such feasts are habitual manifestations through which people believe, feel, live, think or act in accordance with certain values, relate to sacred objects, holy places, and sacred temples in specific moments (Ubertazzi, 2022, p. 23). The concept of intangible cultural heritage refers to the practices and representations that communities recognize as



part of their tradition, that are transmitted from generation to generation, constantly recreated in response to their environment, interaction, and history, providing them with a sense of identity and continuity (UNESCO, 2003, p. 2). Religious feasts are exemplary expressions of intangible cultural heritage, embodying religious practices that form an integral part of this heritage (Labaca Zabala, 2016, p. 3). Religious feasts are vital and plural expressions of intangible cultural heritage, showcasing rich religious, cultural, and social values. These celebrations not only express popular religiosity but also serve as identity markers, passing down traditional knowledge and crafts across generations (Labaca Zabala, 2016, p. 16). They integrate artistic and monumental elements, while music, gastronomy, and the involvement of brotherhoods and fraternities are deeply intertwined, reinforcing their cultural significance. Religious feasts encapsulate a broad spectrum of cultural expressions including traditional rituals, which foster a collective sense of identity and belonging among participants. Religious feasts often involve rituals and ceremonies that are performed in a specific manner, reflecting historical continuity and cultural identity<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, the core of this book is the above collective forms of religious practices and representations, both anamnesis and awareness with which devotees feel identity and belonging, i.e. an autobiography of an entire people (Lima, 2001, p. 109).

The relevance of this approach to hyperdulia in the Algarve is due to three aspects: i) the absence of studies that address popular religious feasts as intangible cultural heritage; ii) the interest in religious, traditional and ancestral practices and representations which move the faith, pagan habits and Christian values that are locally rooted; iii) the lack of widely dispersed practical information about popular religiosity.

The theoretical approach of this book is sociological. Despite the unavoidable interdisciplinarity of the theme, the specific branch of sociology of religion is related to philosophy of religion, cultural studies, anthropology of religion, and cultural anthropology. As Weber (1965, p. 1) states, “the external courses of religious behaviour are so diverse that an understanding of this behaviour can only be achieved from the viewpoint of the subjective experiences, notion, and purposes of the individuals concerned.” If religion is part of the social structure, as Lévi-Strauss (1963, p. 313) assures, this approach conceptualizes the popular hyperdulia as an intangible cultural heritage and its importance in the representation, meaning and shape of collective life.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the feasts of Our Lady of Orada (Albufeira) and their processions at sea, blessings of boats and the sea, and ex-votos of fishermen identified with their patroness are performed for centuries, embedding spiritual and communal values.

The title *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southern Portugal's Sacred Celebrations: Echoes of Tradition* is evocative and purposefully chosen to capture the essence of traditional, popular, and religious feasts in the Algarve, a region in Southern Portugal. The expression “Echoes of Tradition” is intended to suggest the enduring presence and influence of past customs and practices in the present. “Echoes” implies that these traditions, while rooted in history of Catholic Portugal, still resonate in the contemporary country, particularly in the Algarve. It reflects how these cultural practices, passed down through generations, continue to have an impact, even as society evolves and local culture becomes increasingly global, particularly with the presence of foreigners and immigrants, considering that “nearly all European countries are facing significant challenges to their religious heritage, mainly because of an ongoing demographic flux” (Tsivolas, 2014, p. 18). The word “tradition” is central because it hints at long-established rituals and customs that form part of the cultural identity of the Algarve.

Regarding the concept of intangible cultural heritage, this term has a specific meaning within the field of heritage and cultural studies and cultural preservation. It refers to practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities, groups, or individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. Unlike tangible heritage (such as monuments or artifacts), this heritage includes oral traditions, performing popular arts, rituals, and festive events, which are dynamic and living in the Algarve. The book title suggests that the focus is on these less visible but highly significant aspects of culture that define the sacred celebrations in Southern Portugal.

The elements of culture—behaviours, practices, rituals, and customs—are both symbolic and social, and they cyclically appear in feasts of popular religiosity and piety. They express devotion to sacred entities (not limited to Our Lady) and are habitual manifestations through which people believe, feel, live, think, and act in alignment with certain values. These practices relate to sacred objects, holy places, and temples during specific moments that are favourable for devotional expression, communal interaction, and identity formation.

The final part of the title (“Southern Portugal’s Sacred Celebrations”) narrows the geographical and thematic focus. The sacred celebrations in question likely refer to religious feasts and festivals, which are often deeply intertwined with local identity, faith, and tradition in Southern Portugal, particularly in the Algarve. Religious celebrations in the region, such as processions, pilgrimages, and festivals dedicated to saints, reflect both popular piety and cultural history. The use of “sacred” highlights the spiritual dimension of these feasts, emphasizing their religious significance.

Therefore, the title is justified by its connection to tradition and culture, effectively conveying that the book explores the continuity and significance of traditional practices, with a focus on how they are preserved and celebrated as part of Southern Portugal's intangible cultural heritage. By specifying the intangible cultural heritage, the title emphasizes the living nature of these traditions—passed down orally or through practice—and aligns the work with broader efforts to preserve cultural diversity.

This book is composed of five integrated and complementary parts. The first part, titled “Our Lady’s role in cultural traditions”, focuses on identifying, characterizing, and explaining the significance of Our Lady as an entity that inspires popular devotion and drives the celebration of religious feasts in the Algarve, which is the central theme of this book. The second part, “Algarve’s hyperdulia: Marian titles and invocations”, discusses the Marian cult in the region. Part three explores intangible cultural heritage in its religious form, aiming to demonstrate how traditional Marian feasts represent social practices deeply rooted in local communities and reflect ancestral cultural patterns, hence the title “Religious intangible cultural heritage”. The fourth part examines the feasts themselves and is appropriately titled “Popular religious feasts”. This part includes a calendar of the 72 feasts covered in the book, along with a distribution of events by location, detailing which municipality in the Algarve each feast belongs to. It also discusses these feasts as traditional social practices and collective experiences of the sacred, seen as part of the region’s intangible cultural heritage. Finally, part five serves as a brief guide to the feasts and is titled “Celebrating Mary: A guide to popular religious feasts in the Algarve”.

All the photographs in this book were taken by the author, who travelled to the celebration sites throughout the Algarve region over several years of research. Many of these celebrations, some in the Eastern Algarve (Sotavento) and others in the Western Algarve (Barlavento), occur simultaneously on the same day and at the same time.

# 1. OUR LADY'S ROLE IN CULTURAL TRADITIONS

“And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, for he hath regarded the low state of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, for he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name.”

Luke 1:46-49.

In Luke 1:46-49, Mary's words reflect profound themes of humility, divine favour, and praise. Certain words stand out as central to her message, such as “magnify the Lord,” which emphasizes Mary's reverence and worship. By saying her soul magnifies the Lord, Our Lady expresses a deep, inner desire to honour God, acknowledging His greatness above all. The word “rejoiced” reveals the joy Mary feels in God's goodness, reflecting her gratitude and the sense of divine grace that brings her fulfilment. Mary identifies God as her personal Savior, highlighting her dependence on His mercy and saving power, which reinforces the idea of a deeply personal relationship with God.

At the same time, Mary acknowledges her humble position, showing her awareness of her own lowliness. Her humility makes God's choice of her all the more remarkable, highlighting His compassion and favour toward the humble. Mary recognizes the significance of her role in God's plan, saying, “all generations shall call me blessed,” and understanding that the honour given to her will resonate through time. By ending with “holy is his name,” Mary reaffirms God's purity, goodness, and absolute otherness—a declaration that all honour and glory are due to Him alone.

The passage's core idea lies in the transformation of Mary's humility into divine favour, as God lifts the lowly and blesses them with purpose. Mary's response highlights the joy, reverence, and gratitude that characterize true worship and trust in God's providence. This passage, often called the “Magnificat” (Mary's Song of Praise), offers a timeless message of hope and humility, celebrating God's power to exalt the meek and perform wondrous deeds.

Marian devotion is a peculiar expression of popular religiosity in the world. Since the Middle Ages, Our Lady<sup>5</sup> has a key role in the local communities. The origin of the cult of Our Lady in Portugal is intrinsic to the foundation of the country. Our Lady is related to the national faith, the "Portuguese soul" or "identity of feelings." (Pimentel, 1899, p. 2). On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. However, long before this, in 1646, King John IV proclaimed Our Lady as the Patroness of Portugal under the title Our Lady of the Conception. Since then, sanctuaries, shrines, churches, chapels, altars, monuments, social solidarity institutions, hospitals, brotherhoods, and feasts in all parishes<sup>6</sup> have been dedicated to Our Lady of the Conception (Aldazábal, 2007, p. 224).

Unlike institutional religion, popular religion is characterized by the spontaneity of collective expression of devotional feelings. Popular religion is that of the so-called "savage sacred", according to Bastide (1975, p. 9), as opposed to closed and hierarchical institutional religion, which tends to regulate and control the "savage sacred". As an expression of the existence of the social group and as a social phenomenon, religion acquires the form of religiosity (Buber, 2012, p. 51).

In the Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas (1947, p. 192) referred to Mary as *Theotokos*, emphasizing her infinite dignity and intimate relationship with God. This title was formally proclaimed at the Council of Ephesus in 431. By the end of the Middle Ages, Marian devotion grew significantly, reflected in various liturgical celebrations, prayers, and sacred images. The peak of this devotion was reached in the twentieth century (Dias, 1987, p. 229), marked by the definitions of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption of Mary (1950), solidifying the theological emphasis on Marian devotion.

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<sup>5</sup> The title "Our Lady" is rooted in Catholicism, though adopted by other Christian traditions. It reflects devotion to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God and intercessor for humanity, emphasizing her maternal, intercessory, and royal status. Associated with Marian devotions like the Rosary and apparitions such as Our Lady of Fátima, the title highlights Mary's special role in salvation and her relationship with believers. It signifies a personal connection with the faithful, offering care and guidance. This global, affectionate term expresses her dignity, role as Jesus' mother, and intercessory power central to Catholic devotion.

<sup>6</sup> A parish (from the Greek *par-oikia*, meaning "neighbourhood") refers to a community of the faithful within a specific territory, under the patronage of a divine entity and the authority of a parish priest (Aldazábal, 2007, p. 224). It is the basic unit of territorial and social organization within a diocese, representing both an ecclesiastical administrative division and the Church's presence in the daily life of communities.

Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (1987) emphasized Our Lady as an archetype of motherhood and a key figure in salvation, while Pope Paul VI praised her unique veneration in several encyclicals and apostolic exhortations. *Redemptoris Mater* describes Mary as “full of grace” and highlights her unparalleled role in the mystery of Christ, surpassing all other creatures, as per St. Augustin's *The City of God* (2010, XVII-xvi). Additionally, Mary is portrayed as a source of wisdom and love, occupying a unique place in liturgy and popular piety (Otero, 2003, p. 393; Bigotto, 2010, p. 7-10).

Due to her privileged status, as Father Antônio Vieira (1954) also emphasized in his *Sermão da Glória de Maria, Mãe de Deus* (*Sermon of the Glory of Mary, Mother of God*), Our Lady serves as a source of wisdom and love for all. Mary's religious significance, rich symbolism, and multifaceted associations are further highlighted by the fact that she was the first Christian figure represented in iconography. She holds profound meaning for countless people, as some of the deepest spiritual and cultural currents converge in her presence.



Fig. 1-1: Feasts of Our Lady of Good Voyage in Alvor, Portimão.

Our Lady is the most in conformity with Jesus Christ through her unique role as her shared suffering and her vital part in God's plan for salvation. The devotion that best consecrates and conforms a soul to Our Lord is devotion to the Blessed Virgin (Montfort, 2017, p. 64). Thus, popular

religion (rather than institutional religion) is the one in which religious feasts and popular devotions are best framed, as popular religion is established in the image of the mother (Espírito Santo, 1990, p. 16). A mother to whom devotees transfer all the situations of their daily lives, i.e. everything a mother can do and intercede for the unconditional protection of her children against the whole panoply of evils. For example, nutrition and protection are embodied in the mother archetype (O'Connell, Airey and Craze, 2007, p. 168).

Our Lady holds a profound place in Portuguese cultural traditions, particularly in the Algarve, serving as a spiritual, cultural, and protective symbol across generations. In her role as patroness and protector, she is venerated not only as the guardian of communities and sacred places of prayer and devotion throughout the Algarve but also as a guiding presence in everyday social practices, including those related to agriculture and fishing in the region. This is evident in the titles given to her, like Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Assumption, and Our Lady of the Conception, each embodying a particular type of intercession, guidance, or protection.

Our Lady is a central entity in the most relevant and significant religious and popular feasts. Numerous events honour her, from processions and feasts to symbolic rituals. These celebrations, such as the feasts of Our Lady of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Conception, and Our Lady of the Assumption—the titles of Our Lady most frequently evoked in the Algarve—are widely celebrated and combine religious devotion with local customs, often involving parades, music, food, and traditional attire.

For example, Our Lady is a significant inspiration for maritime traditions, given that the Algarve has a vast coastline, a rich maritime history, and traditional activities related to the sea. Thus, she holds special significance among seafaring communities, particularly as Our Lady of Good Voyage. Fishermen and sailors pray to her for safe journeys and bountiful catches, and many coastal towns host annual blessings of the boats and processions to the sea.

Our Lady serves as a bridge between faith and cultural identity in the Algarve. In places like Monte Gordo (Vila Real de Santo António) and Quarteira (Loulé), her image is interwoven with local legend and identity, symbolizing resilience and continuity while connecting secular and sacred spheres, particularly related to maritime cultural and economic practices. Through these roles, Our Lady stands as an enduring symbol of unity, guiding communities in faith while shaping local culture and identity.

## 2. ALGARVE'S HYPERDULIA: MARIAN TITLES AND INVOCATIONS

“Everyone wants Mary to be his or her Mother. Whatever age, whatever nationality, all see her as a model of Motherhood. [...] By claiming Mary as their own, they share a very special relationship with Our Blessed Mother.”

Brother Mark cited by Santoro, *Mary in Our Life*.

There are hundreds of Marian titles and invocations throughout the Catholic world. In 1967, 972 Marian titles or invocations were collected in churches, altars, and images in Portugal (Reis, 1967). Each place has different designations and representations of Our Lady. Some are specific and focus on an episode of Mary's life, her power of intervention or attribute; others are more general. All titles and invocations reveal the virtues of Mary.

There are so many and different Marian titles and invocations. Devotees recognize the virtues of Our Lady as an example (Santoro, 2011, p. 17). Our Lady's role as a mother of Christians (Dias, 1987, p. 227) is exalted and glorified, following a popular, loving, peculiar and familiar devotion calling her “Our Lady”. The most frequent title and invocation of Mary in the Algarve is Our Lady of Sorrows, a major symbol of Christian suffering. Our Lady is “the woman of sorrows” and she is associated with Christ as the “man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3). The crucified Christ and the Sorrowful Mary are part of God's saving plan, and both are present in the liturgy and popular piety.

Some Marian popular feasts connote the daily maritime activities of local populations like fishing. Our Lady is requested to protect the fishermen, the sea, and the fishing activity (Barros and Costa, 2002, p. 57). For instance, the feasts of Our Lady of Good Voyage (Alvor, Portimão), Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Burgau, Vila do Bispo), or Our Lady of Sorrows (Monte Gordo, Vila Real de Santo António). In these feasts, Our Lady's procession platforms are carried to the sea by fishermen, so that the Virgin may bless the water. In the fishing towns of the Algarve, religious feasts reflect the importance of the sea and the connection between daily life and the Gospel, as Peter, John, and James—key disciples of Jesus—were fishermen.



In the interior of the Algarve, other Marian popular feasts connote the agricultural activities. For example, the feasts of Our Lady of Good Success (Vale de Judeu, Loulé) or Our Lady of the Lamps and Our Lady of Guadalupe (Raposeira, Vila do Bispo). In these feasts, the iconographic statue of Our Lady is paraded in a portable platform with agricultural products, such as the ear of wheat (a symbol of bread, representing the body of Christ).

An expression of popular piety is the use of iconographic statues. The use of images of liturgical practice has been recognized by the Catholic Church since 787, when the II Council of Nicaea emanated the *Definitio de sacris imaginibus*, defining the legitimacy of the veneration of images (against the iconoclastic tendency) and distinguishing between latreutic *proskynesis* (worship reserved for God) and honorific *proskynesis* (veneration lawfully attributed to the images of the Virgin Mary, the hyperdulia, and to the images of the saints, the dulia).

As St. Augustine (2002, p. 12) observes in *On the Trinity*, we do not know the outward appearance of the Virgin Mary but “we do not believe, we simply know, what a virgin is”, considering that “it is permissible to say without violating the faith that perhaps she had such an appearance and perhaps she did not have such an appearance; no one, however, without violating the Christian faith could say.” Our Lady arouses interest and curiosity that give rise to a panoply of titles, invocations, images, or representations (Fiores and Meo, 1995, p. v).

The cult of Our Lady, which emerged spontaneously and became integral to Christian worship (Gambero, 1995, p. 365), can be seen as a form of intangible cultural heritage. This practice reflects the deep emotional connection devotees have with the images and statues of Our Lady, treating them as living beings by speaking, touching, and seeking responses (Sanchis, 1992, p. 42). Such rituals and attitudes contribute to the cultural identity and community bonds, preserving traditional beliefs and practices that are essential to the spiritual and cultural structure of society. Marian devotion evolved naturally over centuries, creating local customs and rituals that reflect intangible cultural heritage. These practices, passed down through generations, preserve shared beliefs and values essential to Christian worship, shaping collective identities and making the cult of Our Lady a prime example of this heritage.

Mary is the spiritual reflection of Christ, as Dante (2010, p. 485) acknowledges in *The Divine Comedy*: “But look now at the face resembling Christ [The Virgin Mary’s] / Most clearly, for its clarity alone / Can make you fit and able to see Christ.” Mary is, on one hand, the path by which we reach Christ, and on the other, how Christ came to us as the Incarnate God.

The image or statue is a sign, a representation of the divinity, but this sign become interlocutor, not mere mediator, in the dialogue between devotees and Our Lady. Through the various Marian titles and invocations, devotees find in Our Lady someone who has walked the same path as humanity, knows life, and has experienced the same feelings.

In the Algarve, Our Lady is invoked under 33 different titles (cf. Table 2-1 below) across the 72 feasts presented in this book. These invocations can be categorized in affective terms into two groups: 1) neutral invocations (which do not express affection), and 2) affective invocations (which convey a sense of devotion and impart an emotional weight on hyperdulia), as typified by Sanchis (1992, p. 46).

Invocations of Our Lady in the Algarve	1) Neutral (non-affective)	1.1) Toponymic		Our Lady of the Rock Our Lady of Orada Our Lady of Guidance
		1.2) Based on Our Lady's history / legend		Our Lady of Light Our Lady of Fátima Our Lady of the Lamps Our Lady of Down Our Lady of Carmel
	2) Qualifying the feeling of devotion	2.1) Marian mysteries		Our Lady of the Conception Our Lady of the Assumption Our Lady of the Incarnation Our Lady of the Visitation Our Lady of Glory Our Lady of Rosary Our Lady of Hope Sacred Heart of Mary Immaculate Heart of Mary
		2.2) Marian events		Our Lady of Sorrows Our Lady of Foot of the Cross Our Lady of Deliverance Our Lady of Good Hour Our Lady of Good Success
		2.3) Anthropocentric	Protection and labour activity	Our Lady of the Navigators Our Lady of the Martyrs Our Lady of Good Voyage Our Lady of the Sea Our Lady of the Sailors
			Protection in daily life	Our Lady of the Afflicted Our Lady of Mercy Our Lady of Grace Our Lady of Health Our Lady of Help Our Lady of Support

Table 2-2: Invocations of Our Lady in the Algarve.

The affectionately neutral Marian invocations are further divided into two subgroups: 1.1) toponymic invocations of Our Lady, which are related to geographical aspects and the location of the cult, and 1.2) historical or legendary invocations of Our Lady.

In the second case of affective Marian invocations, these are divided into three subgroups: 2.1) invocations of the mysteries or titles of glory of Our Lady (which evoke admiration and highlight the entity to which hyperdulia is dedicated); 2.2) invocations of events in the life of Our Lady (which call for veneration of specific events that parallel to human experiences); and 2.3) anthropocentric invocations of Our Lady (which present her as a protector, both in professional activities, especially fishing and agriculture, and in everyday human existence).

Most of the Marian feasts discussed belong to the category of invocations of the mysteries or titles of glory (privileges) of Our Lady, as shown in the Table 2-1 above, which organizes Marian invocations in the Algarve into distinct categories that reveal the cultural and devotional nuances associated with each title of Our Lady. These titles are grouped into two primary categories: neutral (non-affective) and affective invocations, each with specific subgroups.

The neutral (non-affective) invocations are toponymic—titles associated with locations, such as Our Lady of the Rock and Our Lady of Guidance—link devotion to geographical sites, highlighting a strong connection between faith and place, and historical/legendary—titles like Our Lady of Light and Our Lady of the Lamps relate to stories or legends, embedding devotion within historical or legendary contexts.

The affective invocations are based on Marian mysteries (titles such as Our Lady of the Conception and Our Lady of the Assumption evoke admiration and reverence, emphasizing significant religious mysteries or theological attributes), Marian events (invocations like Our Lady of Sorrows and Our Lady of Good Hour commemorate specific events in Mary's life, allowing devotees to connect with relatable human experiences), and anthropocentric references (titles such as Our Lady of the Navigators and Our Lady of Health reflect Mary's role as a protector in professional and daily life activities like fishing and agriculture).

The Table 2-1 above illustrates the rich tapestry of Marian devotion in the Algarve. By categorizing each invocation, it highlights how these titles serve diverse roles—from representing historical and geographic connections to providing emotional and spiritual support—indicating the integral role of Marian devotion in the region's cultural and religious heritage. The names or attributes of Our Lady featured in the feasts celebrated are highlighted in the following table, along with the number of times they occur:

<b>Names or attributes</b>	<b>Location</b>
Our Lady of Sorrows (10)	Estômbar (Lagoa); Boliqueime (Loulé); Alte (Loulé); Quelfes (Olhão); Mexilhoeira Grande (Portimão); São Brás de Alportel; Pêra (Silves); Cachopo (Tavira); Santa Catarina (Tavira); Monte Gordo (Vila Real de Santo António).
Our Lady of the Conception (9)	Martim Longo (Alcoutim); Conceição (Faro); Ferragudo (Lagoa); Odiáxere (Lagos); Quarteira (Loulé); Montes de Alvor (Portimão); Monchique; Portimão; Conceição (Tavira).
Our Lady of the Assumption (5)	Giões (Alcoutim); Alte (Loulé); Querença (Loulé); Montes de Cima (Portimão); Cacela Velha (Vila Real de Santo António).
Our Lady of the Incarnation (4)	Carvoeiro (Lagoa); Porches (Lagoa); Espiche (Lagos); Vila Real de Santo António.
Our Lady of Carmel (4)	Faro; Fuzeta (Olhão); Alcantarilha (Silves); Tavira.
Our Lady of the Navigators (3)	Culatra (Olhão); Armação de Pêra (Silves); Salema (Vila do Bispo).
Our Lady of the Foot of the Cross (3)	Estói (Faro); Salir (Loulé); Monchique.
Our Lady of Light (3)	Lagoa; Luz (Lagos); Luz (Tavira).
Our Lady of the Afflicted (2)	Lagos; Armação de Pêra (Silves).
Our Lady of Mercy (2)	Piedade (Lagos); Loulé.
Our Lady of Grace (2)	Querença (Loulé); Sagres (Vila do Bispo).
Our Lady of the Martyrs (2)	Castro Marim; Silves.
Our Lady of Health (2)	São Bartolomeu de Messines (Silves); Santa Maria (Tavira).
Our Lady of Deliverance (2)	Luz (Tavira); Luz (Tavira).
Our Lady of the Visitation (1)	Odeleite (Castro Marim).
Our Lady of the Rock (1)	Lagoa.
Our Lady of Good Hour (1)	Parragil (Loulé).
Our Lady of Good Success (1)	Vale Judeu (Loulé).
Our Lady of Glory (1)	Benafim (Loulé).
Our Lady of Rosary (1)	Olhão.
Our Lady of Good Voyage (1)	Alvor (Portimão).
Our Lady of Fátima (1)	Parises (São Brás de Alportel).
Our Lady of the Sea (1)	Cabanas (Tavira).
Our Lady of the Lamps (1)	Raposeira (Vila do Bispo).
Our Lady of Help (1)	Burgau (Vila do Bispo).
Our Lady of Orada (1)	Albufeira.
Our Lady of the Guidance (1)	Guia (Albufeira).
Our Lady of Hope (1)	Paderne (Albufeira).
Our Lady of the Sailors (1)	Alcoutim.
Our Lady of Down (1)	Aljezur.
Our Lady of Support (1)	Portimão.
Sacred Heart of Mary (1)	Sé (Faro).
Immaculate Heart of Mary (1)	Altura (Castro Marim).
<b>Total (72)</b>	

Table 2-3: Names or attributes of Our Lady at the feasts in the Algarve.

Table 2-2 above presents the various titles and attributes of Our Lady as they are honoured across numerous feasts in the Algarve, alongside the specific locations and frequency of each title's occurrence. Regarding the most frequent titles, Our Lady of Sorrows (10 occurrences) and Our Lady of the Conception (9 occurrences) are the most frequently celebrated titles, indicating strong local devotion, likely tied to the widespread cultural significance of these aspects of Marian devotion. Other titles, such as Our Lady of the Assumption (5 occurrences) and Our Lady of the Incarnation (4 occurrences), also have multiple celebrations reflecting their importance within the region's religious landscape.

Concerning the diverse representations of devotion, the titles range from those highlighting protective roles (e.g., Our Lady of the Navigators, Our Lady of the Sea) to those focused on specific religious mysteries (e.g., Our Lady of the Conception, Our Lady of the Visitation). Unique titles like Our Lady of the Rock and Our Lady of Down suggest a local adaptation of Marian devotion, possibly tied to geographical or historical aspects specific to each location. As for broader cultural and spiritual significance, titles like Our Lady of Mercy, Our Lady of Health, and Our Lady of Good Voyage imply Mary's role in everyday life and protection, especially in contexts such as health, travel, and local livelihoods (e.g., fishing). Furthermore, feasts associated with the Sacred Heart and Immaculate Heart also highlight the devotional depth toward Marian virtues and compassion.

The Table 2-2 reflects the profound attachment to Marian devotion in the Algarve, characterized by a blend of universal titles and unique, local adaptations. The variety and frequency of these celebrations underscore the integration of Mary into the region's cultural, historical, and spiritual fabric, providing insight into how her figure is revered in diverse aspects of community life.



Fig. 2-1: Our Lady of Good Voyage on the Ria de Alvor, Portimão.

### 3. RELIGIOUS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

“[...] religious man attempts to remain as long as possible in a sacred universe, and hence what his total experience of life proves to be in comparison with the experience of the man without religious feeling, of the man who lives, or wishes to live, in a desacralized world.”

Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*.

The above epigraph by Eliade, from his book *The Sacred and the Profane*, highlights the profound connection between religious heritage and the human experience of the sacred. In this book, Eliade contrasts the experiences of what he calls “religious man” with those of secular man. The quote expresses how religious individuals seek to inhabit a world infused with sacred meaning, where every element of life connects to a larger divine reality. This “sacred universe” (Eliade, 1959, p. 13) provides purpose, continuity, and a feeling of transcendence, shaping their understanding of life’s experiences.

Eliade argues that for “religious man”, life is a series of symbolic and ritualistic actions that continuously reinforce a sense of the sacred. In contrast, those who live in a desacralized or secular world—lacking religious feeling or experience—often view the world through a purely material or rational lens, without deeper, transcendental significance. Eliade suggests that this desacralization changes not only how people understand their experiences but also how they relate to existence itself, focusing on the mundane rather than the divine. In essence, the quote emphasizes the distinct realities that religious and secular individuals inhabit: one permeated with sacred meaning and symbolic depth, and the other viewed through a more secular, perhaps existential, perspective. For Eliade, this distinction fundamentally shapes how people experience and interpret life.

Eliade’s quote is closely connected to the concept of religious intangible cultural heritage. His idea of “religious man” striving to remain in a “sacred universe” aligns with how communities use religious heritage to maintain a sense of the sacred within everyday life. Religious intangible cultural heritage—such as rituals, feasts or festivals, oral traditions, and communal practices—reflects this desire to preserve sacred meanings and connections