



THINK HOPE:

Maria Middleton's Unyielding Trust in God Transformed Suffering Into Grace

"Hope is not a feeling. It is a decision."

BY ELIZABETH RACINE

Susan and Brian Middleton share the story of their daughter Maria, who entered eternal life on October 8, 2020, at the age of 18 after a brave and courageous battle with an inoperable brain tumor. A trial that began in shock, pain, and sorrow was ultimately transformed into a journey of joy, sacrifice, and hope.

Reflecting on Maria's witness, her mother Susan recalls that Maria embraced her suffering with remarkable joy. "She did not drag her cross," said her spiritual director, Kathleen McCarthy. "Maria carried her cross HIGH!" Hope is not a feeling. It is a decision.



On her way into Adoration at National Shrine of Our Lady of Częstochowa

Susan Middleton was 44 years old when she gave birth to her daughter, Maria, whom she consecrated to the Blessed Mother at her baptism. From the age of two, Maria attended weekly Adoration with her mother at The National Shrine of Our Lady of Częstochowa in Doylestown, PA, where she learned to journal and to love the Blessed Mother: two gifts that served Maria well throughout her short lifetime.

"I thought the greatest gift we can give this child is to know that she has the most perfect, beautiful mother in Heaven," Susan said. "This is our Mama, the greatest gift that Jesus gave us from the Cross when He said, 'Behold your Mother!' As a result, Maria grew up knowing that Mother Mary was the perfect mom."

Susan laughingly describes how Maria took this to heart, recalling one Mother's Day card Maria made for Susan when she was about five years old. "Inside the card, Maria had written to Susan: 'To the second-best mother in the world.'"

Maria's Life of Purpose and Promise

A beautiful young woman, Maria Middleton was gifted in many areas: academically, athletically, and spiritually, yet she never saw those talents as her identity. She considered them blessings from God meant to be shared through service to others. From winning the Knights of Columbus free-throw contest and setting her school record in the 100-yard dash to performing Irish dance and earning

multiple academic honors, Maria poured energy into everything she did. Recognized for her leadership, she was elected president of her junior class, was inducted into the National Honor Society, and taught Irish dance to younger children—all expressions of her tireless spirit.

Her faith guided her deep commitment to service as a cantor, leading initiatives like coat drives for Mother of Mercy House and fundraising for Building a Bridge to Uganda. As co-chair of her school's mini-thon to support pediatric cancer patients, she inspired her peers to act with compassion. That event, later renamed Hope-A-Thon in her honor, reflected Maria's enduring legacy of devotion, friendship, and selfless love.

The Unforeseen Journey Begins

On January 30, 2019, Maria came home from teaching Irish dance and told her mother, "Mom, for the first time—I did a spin and lost my balance." Susan's "mom alarm" immediately went off. When she asked if Maria's head hurt, Maria replied, "Like always, Mom—at times," brushing it off and adding that the pain usually passed quickly.

Maria's doctor wasn't initially concerned. He suspected muscle strain, so he suggested physical therapy. Her parents did not want to wait to have her checked out. They took her to the emergency room at Doylestown Hospital that same day, where a CT scan led to an MRI. Soon after, a doctor called Susan and Brian into a private

room and said through tears, “This is not good news.” Maria was rushed by ambulance to Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, where she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor—diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma on her brainstem—with no cure and a life expectancy of nine to twelve months.

“How could this be?” Susan recalls. ***“We felt tossed into a nightmare—yet deep down I heard, ‘Be not afraid.’”***

“I prayed, ‘But, God, Maria is just 16 years young.’”

Faced with a diagnosis that offered no hope from the medical community, the Middleton family sought hope through their faith in God. “God is the God of Life, a life stronger than death, and it was our decision at that point to place our hope and trust in Him,” said Susan.

Choosing Hope

“Maria, who had always had a deep spiritual life, led us on this journey of finding *hope*,” notes Maria’s father, Brian. “Maria understood that, regardless of the circumstances in her life, the ultimate in human dignity is your ability to *choose your attitude* about the things over which you have no control.”

Two weeks after her diagnosis, her parents asked her how she was doing, and she said, ***“You know, Dad, regardless of the circumstances in my life, my mission and purpose remain the same, and that is to know, love, and serve God in this world, and ultimately, to be happy with him eternally in Heaven. My emotions will rise and fall, but my Faith is not an emotion, it’s a commitment, and I will not despair. I will choose hope.”***

With despair beckoning at their doorstep, Maria chose to walk the path before her with faith and hope. Susan and Brian, transformed by their daughter’s witness, now seek to offer that same hope to others facing profound loss and grief. Susan reflects that these “no-way-out” situations are actually invitations” to unite suffering with Christ, realizing that withdrawal only deepens fear. Instead, the family turned to prayer. As word spread, prayer requests for Maria circled the

globe—from persecuted Christians in the Middle East to children in Uganda. “It is unbelievable,” Susan says. “This power of prayer.”

About a month after her diagnosis, Maria wrote a poem titled, “Prayer,” which later appeared on the back of her memorial card:

Prayer

by Maria Middleton 2019

The overwhelming power of
prayer
Revealed in dark and scary
times
When one is blinded by fear
and confusion
God’s radiant light
penetrating throughout

Revealed in dark and scary
times
Providing hope in shining
armor
God’s radiant light
penetrating throughout
Swaddling His children in
comfort and peace

Providing hope in shining
armor
As one enters their journey
into the depths of the
unknown
Swaddling His children in
comfort and peace
Complete trust and faith
given to persevere

As one walks their journey
into the depths of the
unknown
When one is blinded by fear
and confusion
Complete trust and faith
given to persevere
The overwhelming power of
prayer.

The Present Moment

Maria knew one thing very clearly: that she had to remain in the present moment. That’s the only place to find God. God isn’t found in the past. And

the future, tomorrow, is known only to Him. When we stay in the present moment, we have less worry and less anxiety, and we can feel His love in so many ways.

“So, with this suffering mother’s heart, I cried, and I prayed, knowing that this suffering, though mysterious, is very powerful,” said Susan. “Suffering is transformative. It changes us, and it can make us more like Jesus.”

Uganda Prayer Connection

“We say doctors can give a diagnosis, but God gives the prognosis – they gave Maria nine to 12 months to live,” says Susan, “and yet, *exactly* nine months to the day when we were handed this diagnosis, on October 31, 2019, Brian, Maria, and I were on an airplane heading to Uganda!”

A friend of Brian’s who was involved with the organization, *Building a Bridge to Uganda*, had sent the Middletons’ prayer request to Father Joseph in Uganda, who shared it with the students there.

Maria soon received a photo of the students at John Paul II High School in Uganda where over 600 children were praying for Maria! They were holding a sign that read, “PRAY 4 MARIA!”

One girl from the school, named Patience (which Susan says “was a message for this mother”), wrote a beautiful letter to Maria, telling Maria how she hoped and trusted in God and how she was praying for her. She told Maria that even though they lived on opposite sides of the world and might never meet, she wanted to give her hope. She also shared that her younger brother was suffering from sickle cell anemia.

Months later, when Maria was invited to make a wish through the Make-A-Wish Foundation, she chose to donate her wish to help Patience’s brother. Though the Foundation could not bring the child to the United States for treatment, it connected his mother to a doctor in Northern Uganda. Maria’s selflessness surprised even the Make-A-Wish representative, who said she had never heard a request like that from a 16-year-old. When Maria was told she could make another wish, she

asked Father Joseph what the children at the school needed. After hearing the list, she chose security cameras to be purchased for the high school on her behalf.

That trip to Uganda was full of grace. Maria met Patience in person, and in her journal that year she wrote, *"2019 was the best year of my life. Each day has its own great joy, if you stay present, and you don't worry about all the things that don't really matter, anyhow. Joy and pain co-exist. What do you choose to focus on? 2019 was the best year of my life."*

Joy in Suffering

As Maria's health declined, her joy remained visible. Despite being confined to a wheelchair, she found ways to laugh with her mother. Susan recalled one of Maria's nicknames for her: "Hei Hei," after the silly chicken in *Moana*. Once, Susan forgot to lock the wheelchair brake and they ended up on the floor laughing. Another time, while trying to help Maria into bed, the two of them found themselves in an awkward tangle and had to laugh through the struggle. Their suffering did not erase their sense of humor; in some ways, it deepened it.

Total Trust in God

Despite her numerous accolades and achievements, and even when stripped of all her earthly abilities, she defined herself in all cases in one simple way—as the child of an all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful Father in Heaven.

"On May 29th of 2020, Maria said to me, 'Don't worry, Mom. Jesus already won the spiritual battle, so I will be fine.'"

On June 3, 2020, Maria aspired while bedridden at home, and her parents rushed her to the hospital. Her heart rate soared and her condition was unstable. The

family thought she might go home to heaven that night. After she was stabilized, Susan went to Maria's bedside, where Maria asked Susan if she had been afraid.

"Maria, are you kidding me? I was petrified! Weren't you?" Susan asked.

"She looked at me so calmly, and replied, 'No, Mom. God has this.'"

That simple answer captured the depth of her trust. It also reflected a pattern that had become clear to everyone close to her: Maria did not merely believe in God; she trusted Him completely.

Maria and Susan made it a habit to begin each day by praising God, following the example of the saints. *Susan found comfort in the Psalms, especially the idea that praise offered in suffering becomes a sacrifice. She came to believe that praise is an antidote to despair.* For the Middletons, it became a way of deepening faith, hope, and trust.

"Psalm 16 says that 'He that offers praise as a sacrifice glorifies Me,' so we incorporated that practice each morning," said Susan.

"I was looking up what is the greatest Praise of God, and found out it's Psalm 145:

'I will extol you, my God and King; I will bless Your name forever and ever.'

"Praising God is an antidote to despair. Everyone should try it! Praise of God deepened our faith, our hope, and our trust in Him."

A Spiritual Impact

As prayer for Maria spread, its effects reached far beyond her family. People who prayed for her found themselves returning to church and the sacraments, some after years away. One man went to confession for the first time in



Maria and Patience



"Praying 4 Maria" Sign



Maria with the children in Uganda



more than 20 years. Priests were also affected by Maria's witness; one who had been thinking of leaving the priesthood found renewed zeal after spending time with her.

Maria's devotion to the Rosary also inspired others. During the pandemic, friends organized Zoom Rosary meetings that drew participants from her high school, parish, and DeSales University. One of the gatherings included more than 2,000 people. Her quiet witness was becoming a public source of revival.

A Victim Soul

As the tumor progressed, the only way Maria could communicate now was with her eyes – up for 'Yes,' and down for 'No.' Susan described Maria at this point as "living with one foot in heaven, and one foot on earth."

Kathleen McCarthy, Maria's spiritual director, relates the following story. "I was at Mass with a friend of mine, a Catholic Charismatic priest who has manifested many gifts of the Holy Spirit, and asked if he would like to join me in praying over Maria at the hospital."

They went to Doylestown Hospital where they prayed the Chaplet of Saint Michael to the nine Choirs of Angels.

"Lo and behold, when we opened our eyes, Father and I saw angels all around Maria's bed and room," said Kathleen.

Father then explained, "The angels are ministering to Maria, going up and coming down, ministering to her."

Father kept looking up at the ceiling, saying he also saw many saints around the room, and he named some of them. Kathleen said, "I did not see all the saints; I only saw one saint right next to Maria in full regalia, like she was protecting Maria. I

knew instantly and unequivocally it was St. Joan of Arc. She smiled at me, and I smiled back at her."

Neither Kathleen nor Father knew of Maria's strong devotion to St. Joan of Arc throughout her short life, even dressing up like her as a little girl.

Maria's mother recalls, "What we were looking at with temporal eyes was the complete opposite of what was going on in the spiritual realm."

"Father said Maria was a victim soul who was living in the eternal, that Maria has given her 'Yes' to God to allow Him to use her suffering for the good of others... she was fighting the eternal battle to save thousands of the darkest of teenage souls, young souls who have fallen into the grip of Satan. He told us that Maria is snatching them out of Satan's hand by her fiat, offering her suffering for their salvation."

Susan wrote down the names of the seven saints that Father said had appeared around Maria's bedside: the Blessed Mother, Saints Jacinta and Francisco Marto of Fatima, then-Blessed St. Carlo Acutis, St. Maria Goretti, St. Therese of Lisieux, and St. Joan of Arc.

Susan thought to herself, "No one is going to believe me, so I quizzed Maria later on to see if she had met these saints that Father had said were there. I named all of the saints he told me about, then threw in some bogus saint names just to see if she was really seeing them. Maria responded 'Yes,' to all the saints the priest named, and 'No,' to the bogus names."

"Father remarked that these were all young saints, working together to help save young souls today. We have but to ask for their help in the spiritual realm and they will help us. Parents can tap into praying for the intercession of these young

saints to help their children."

Brian recalls how "Maria knew there is objective truth, that God's truth is that objective truth. That was one of the rudders that guided her life. We live in a world where the ultimate lie of the devil is that there is no such thing as truth, which creates all kinds of confusion in people's lives, as indicated by the number of young people in despair today. Because Maria knew that, she offered up her suffering, uniting it to Jesus' suffering on the Cross, especially for those young people. Maria lived a life of heroic virtue, and in so doing, Maria knew what true happiness is—she had Joy."

Maria's Redemptive Suffering

People were deeply affected by Maria's witness.

She wrote in her journal, *"I've kind of accepted the fact that maybe I'm sick for a greater purpose... Maybe I'm being used as an instrument to help others find God."*

—Maria's journal entry, August 27, 2019

Maria understood the power of



Maria and her mother, Susan Middleton

redemptive suffering, and offered her suffering for others. She saw her suffering as a way to save souls.

"I'm allowing God to use me," said Maria. Uniting her suffering with Jesus strengthened her resolve. Even with her incredible suffering, Maria rejoiced in the fact that she had more days in which her suffering would save souls.

Maria's embrace of suffering was not passive resignation—it was a courageous act of surrender to the Divine Will. She was not going to cling to her life; she was going to spend it in self-transcendent service to others.

As Kathleen McCarthy said, "Maria would not *DRAG* her cross, but would carry it *HIGH*."

As the end was drawing near, the family stayed at Doylestown Hospital where Maria, though unable to speak or hear, conveyed a message to her mother by pointing at letters on a board.

The message read:

"This is about to be HUGE."

This statement of hers still is unveiling itself in more ways than her family ever thought possible.

Miracles Born of Suffering

"Numerous mystical events unfolded around her," said Susan. "As Maria decreased physically, the Lord increased in her presence. Maria became a spiritual *powerhouse*, transforming the culture of the hospital."

Maria's room, described as a monastic cell, very quickly became an oasis of peace, where hospital doctors, nurses, and even environmental workers would just come in for a few moments of peace and say, "Can I stay here for a few minutes?"

Visitors to Room 2113 noted being struck by the abundant joy and hope of Maria and her parents. Brian thought of it as the Upper



Maria with her family

Room before Pentecost—a place of trembling, waiting, prayer, community, and love. He and Susan called it "a neighborhood front stoop."

Maria was spiritually impacting the hospital's staff and procedures. One of the nurses told Susan that Maria had changed her, and she couldn't quite explain what was happening. Another staff member who had been born Catholic, but had never practiced, consulted Susan about learning more about the Church. Another kept the Rosary the family had given her on her nightstand.

Even agnostic hospital administrators acknowledged that Maria had somehow mysteriously transformed the hospital's culture, fostering unity, awakening love among staff and patients, and bringing people together in ways they couldn't explain.

Hospital visitor restrictions were inexplicably lifted, defying COVID protocols and leaving officials feeling "powerless" to enforce them, which was attributed to a spiritual force emanating from Maria's presence and prayers.

E. Ron Watson, the hospital's Catholic communications director, and co-author of the book about Maria's life, described these as mys-

tical happenings.

Tornado Strike

The local Doylestown community will remember hearing about the tornado that touched down while Maria was a patient at Doylestown Hospital.

At the end of the priest's visit with Kathleen McCarthy, he had warned that something catastrophic was about to happen and told Brian to pray to St. Joseph, to make the saint his best friend and protector.

A few days later, on August 4, 2020, with no warning, an EF2 tornado tore through the hospital campus with winds between 111 and 135 mph, toppling and overturning cars in its path.

Remarkably, the destruction stopped at the edge of Maria's room, bypassed the other 230 patient rooms, but then proceeded to hit the neighboring medical office building before tearing the roof off the hospital's childcare center at the opposite end of the campus, finally stopping at the edge of the hill on which sat the nearby National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Mercifully, despite causing millions of dollars' worth of damage, there were no serious injuries.



Top: Archbishop Nelson Perez visits Maria to bring Holy Communion

Middle: Susan and Brian Middleton attend the Maria Middleton School Dedication April 2024

God's Eternal Promise

Although Maria's wish was to be healed, her hope was ultimately in God's eternal promise. By October 1, 2020, she could use only one eye to communicate, and Susan asked her if she still wanted a miracle.

"YES!" Her eye went up for "Yes."

"Okay," said her mother. "Have you met Jesus?"

"No," her eye went down for "No."

"I then asked, 'Is the Blessed Mother with you?' She gave me the strongest 'YES!' with her eye. I thought, 'Wow.' Then Maria closed her eyes, and she didn't open them again after that; that was our last conversation, and she fell into a coma. What a gift for me to know that the number one Mama was holding her."

Six days later, on October 7th, the Feast of the Holy Rosary, hundreds of people gathered outside Doylestown Hospital praying the Rosary for Maria *were greeted by a rainbow as the crowd departed.*

In the early morning hours of October 8th, her family noticed that Maria's oxygen levels were decreasing, her pulse very weak. Susan asked Brian if he would call the rest of their children and Father Timothy from the Shrine, and Kathleen McCarthy to come to the room.

"As Brian made these phone calls, I prayed, 'Father God, if there's one thing I've learned over these past months, it's to trust in Your Divine Will being done. Right now, I'm not sure what that is,'" said Susan.

"Father God is so gentle, He's so loving. And, in the silence of my heart, where He talks to each and every one of us if we give Him that silence, He asked me a question: 'Do

you desire Heaven for Maria?'"

"With that, I said, 'Yes, yes, of course! What parent *doesn't* desire Heaven for their child?'"

"Then He said, 'If I bring Maria home to Heaven now, she will not be assailed or attacked by Satan; she will be protected by me along the way, and led directly home.'"

"I said, 'But, Father, she's only 18.'"

"So gentle, so loving, He asked me: '20? 25? 30?'"

"Then I got it. 'Okay, God, I could never say to take her.' And then truly and finally, I internalized, 'It's *Your* will, God, and not mine that needs to be done. Take the steering wheel. *You* drive now. *Your* will be done.'"

As Maria's condition worsened, the family gathered around her bedside in prayer. When Susan briefly stepped away, she told them, "Just bang on the door—I'm only five steps away." Moments later, the knock came, and as Susan and Brian held Maria's hands, her medical stats began to improve. Trusting her mother's intuition, Susan then leaned close and, placing her forehead on top of Maria's forehead, whispered words of permission and love, telling Maria that if God was indeed showing her Heaven and it was as beautiful as He has promised, "then you *certainly* GO!" She assured her daughter that she would explain to others that "something greater than a miracle has happened." Within seconds of that heart-to-heart moment, Maria's heart stopped beating.

Susan later reflected, "I smile now because I know firsthand it is that beautiful."

"So, in times of suffering, I want to encourage everyone not to de-



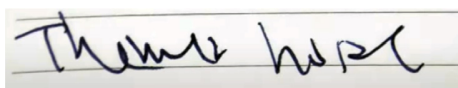
spair, not to lose faith, not to let go of God in your life. Present and unite your sufferings to Christ like Maria did, and watch the power of God unleash."

Maria's Journal and the Think Hope Foundation

Maria's journal is a powerhouse of spiritual wisdom and insight far beyond that of average teenagers.

The first words that Maria wrote in her diary at age 11 were, "**God is merciful.**"

As Maria's brain tumor slowly stripped her of every physical attribute of her body, the last two words that Maria was physically able to write in her journal were, "**Think hope.**"



The last two words that Maria was able to write in her journal were, "Think hope."

The Think Hope Foundation is named for Maria's final written words and continues her legacy of hope. The foundation's website www.thinkhope.org includes an interview that aired on Relevant Radio shortly after Archbishop Nelson Perez began his tenure as Archbishop of Philadelphia during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. When asked about the most pleasant surprise amid those difficulties, the Archbishop answered, "I received an email from a girl who was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. I had the opportunity to visit and spend time with her and to see the profound faith of this young woman in the midst of not only the Coronavirus, but also the storm of her own medical condition and how she is so faith-filled, so trusting and joyful, that in the midst of everything here in the last couple of days was certainly, for me, an incredible bright light."

Susan later asked why he had opened Maria's email at such a difficult moment. He replied simply, "**Literally, my computer screen lit up to her email. I had to click on it!**"

Other Marvels

Perhaps you learned about:

- The car parade that made national news in April 2020 during the pandemic, when 527 cars paraded past Maria's home to show their love, prayers, and support for Maria, as she watched from inside the house. It was the last time most of them would see Maria alive.
- The news of the victorious De-Sales Men's Lacrosse team who adopted Maria as their family, shouting, "Family MM" for Maria Middleton, going on to win their division championship for the first time ever!
- How Maria's Funeral Mass was attended by thousands of people, either in person or online, with 13 priests presiding on the Altar.
- The fact that four area high schools closed when they heard

about Maria's passing.

- **Primary School was Named after Maria:** There was no primary school for the children in northern Uganda, and while it was being built, Father Joseph visited Maria's parents in the United States to personally ask their permission to name the primary school after Maria. The school, located in Sodogo, Uganda, has now been built, and is called, "**The Maria Middleton Primary School.**" They are using Maria's writings to teach the children.

Susan said in reply to Fr. Joseph, "Father, maybe we should wait." And he said, "Wait for what?"

"Well, wait and see if the Church recognizes Maria," replied Susan.

And he said, "I've walked with two saints in my life: Mother Teresa, and your Maria.

I don't have to wait."

Laughing, Susan said, "So, I just shut up."

Susan and Brian Middleton were present in Uganda for the dedication of **The Maria Middleton Primary School** April 4-14, 2024.

Prayer for Maria's Intercession

Dear God, Almighty Father,

We thank You for the life of Maria Middleton who embodied the Holy Trinity while on earth, bringing Unity, Love, and Hope to everyone she met.

Maria helped bring others to You with her smile, a word, and most powerfully with just her presence.

In imitation of the Blessed Mother, Maria was a little vessel of Grace who poured out Your love on humanity. Like Mary, she united her will to Yours in each present moment.

With profound faith and trust in God, Maria offered her sufferings to the Passion of Christ as a victim soul for the good of others.

We come to You, imploring her intercession, through Jesus Christ Our Lord, for the following need(s):

(Insert Petition)

May Maria be recognized among the Holy Ones, and so enjoy the company of Saints and Angels in praising You in Heaven forever.

Amen.

The Road to Possible Sainthood

Maria's Five-Year Anniversary Mass was at the Shrine of Our Lady of Częstochowa in Doylestown, Pennsylvania and was presided over by Archbishop Nelson Perez. It was filled to capacity, and many questioned:

"Could Maria be a saint?"

The road to sainthood is a formal process that involves many layers of exploration and fact-finding to determine if a person has lived a life of heroic virtue worthy of imitation.

In the case of Maria Middleton, the official cause has not been opened yet. Before any cause can be opened, certain preliminary steps must be followed.

The first phase of this process involves the gathering of information and testimonies from throughout the person's life, including details such as whether a cult, meaning a following or devotion, has developed around her, whether there are proclamations of people claiming Maria's intercession, and whether there is evidence that Maria lived a life of holiness.

This first phase has just begun for Maria. They are at the very begin-



The Middletons with Antonia Acutis and Archbishop Nelson Perez

ning of the process.

Even at this early stage, people are already proclaiming miracles due to Maria's intercession. The family cannot be more specific about the details because it is not yet time to begin the formal investigation. Instead, all of the testimonies and stories are being collected, and will be given to the postulator, who is appointed by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to shepherd this process, compile the documenta-

tion, and help present the case to the Archbishop to determine whether to begin the next phase of the process, which could be to open the cause for sainthood.

Only if this phase leads to the opening of a cause for sainthood will the Archdiocese begin the investigation of these stories.

Until then, the family entrusts the process to the Church, praying simply: *Maria Middleton, please pray for us.* ☩

The Thorns That Pierced Her Heart — Prayers on the Seven Sorrows of Mary

BY MARIA E MIDDLETON, AGE 14

1. The Prophecy of Simeon - Luke 2:25-35

Mary, even though you knew the suffering that you would endure, you continued to do God's Will and kept going. As I continue to grow in my faith, please help me to do God's Will and grow into the person He intended me to be. Let me look to you in time of trouble and follow your example.

2. The Flight to Egypt - Matthew 2:13-23

Mary, there will be many times along my journey where I will have to make drastic changes to my plan so I can live according to His plan. Help me accept those changes, although I may not understand them at the time; help me to trust in God's Will for my life.

3. *The Loss of the Child Jesus in the Temple - Luke 2:43*

Mary, what anxiety you must have felt when you couldn't find Our Lord and Savior. You probably felt as if you failed God's plan for salvation, yet you had Hope and didn't give up. Please help me to trust in God during both the good times and the bad.

4. *Witnessing Jesus Carry His Cross - John 19:25*

Mary, how painful it must've been to watch a man of your own flesh, your Son, experience the suffering He went through, yet you continued to stand strong in your faith and follow God's plan. Help me follow your example.

5. *The Crucifixion - John 19*

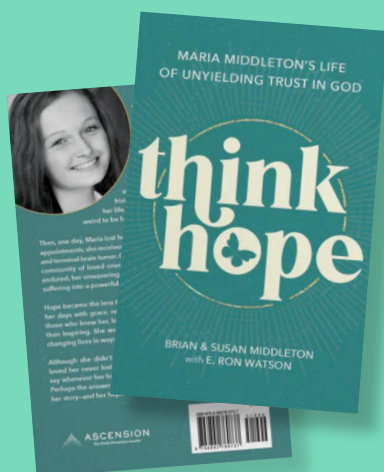
Mary, no ordinary person wants to witness the sickening act of crucifixion, but you had to experience the gruesome crucifixion of your own Son. Then again, you knew that it was God's Will and you kept going. Please help me do God's Will even when I may have to experience suffering or pain. May I always look up to the greatest act of sacrifice- Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

6. *Taking Jesus Down From The Cross - John 19:38*

Mary, how hard it must've been to watch the removal of your Son's corpse. I'm sure a part of you denied that He was dead, maybe you second-guessed that you could've done something to prevent this from happening, but as hard as it may be, you forgave the persecutors, accept the truth and continued to trust in God. Help me to always remember, that sometimes, God's Will isn't in unity with our will, so I must always have trust in God.

7. *The Burial of Jesus - John 19*

Mary, you just did what every mother dreads to do, bury their own child. Some people might've said that it was the end of Jesus' time on earth, but in your heart you know that it was only the beginning. May I look up to you in times of despair and remember to have Hope and Faith in God's plan.



List Price \$19.99

Member Price \$17.99

Book about Maria: The book, *Think Hope: Maria Middleton's Life of Unyielding Trust in God*, tells the story of the last 20 months of Maria's life, and is available from Signs & Wonders. The book, which carries an imprimatur and a nihil obstat, was written by Susan and Brian Middleton, along with E. Ron Watson, who served as the director of communication at Doylestown Hospital during Maria's hospitalization.

The book carries an endorsement by *Antonia Salzano Acutis*, mother of *St. Carlo Acutis*, who reminds readers that "Hope is stronger than despair, and the love of God always triumphs over death."

The book has been named a Finalist for Biography in the 2026 Excellence in Publishing Awards by the Association of Catholic Publishers.