

Volume 8, No. 3



July-Sept. 2021

TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

A Quarterly Marian Magazine



Montfort Marian Centre, Bengaluru

*Congratulations to the
New Administration of Montfort Fathers*



Fr. Peter Mascarenhas
(Provincial)



Fr. Michael Sagayaraj



Fr. Prem Kumar



Fr. Ashwani Kumar



Fr. Shibi Jose



Mary, the Model of Beatitudes

In his Apostolic Exhortation, "*Gaudete et Exsultate*" on the call to holiness, Pope Francis invites us to focus on the Beatitudes; they help us attain holiness in our daily living. In the beatitudes Jesus teaches us the way to be happy in this world and gives us his own Blessed Mother as an example of his teaching. The Virgin Mary lived a life of poverty. At the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, she offered to God what the poor could offer. In being meek, Mary approached each situation with tranquillity of spirit that allowed her to accept and trust in the power of Divine providence. She stood by her Son, to comfort and console Him right up to His dying moments. Mourning for death of her son, did not stop her from being a source of consolation to the Apostles. Mary is seen as the model of spiritual happiness and epitome of holiness.

The Beatitudes, like all the teachings taught by Christ, are essentially teaching us how to love and live. Authentic love is willing to sacrifice itself for the best interest of the other. True love calls for death itself, in large or small ways. For example, St. Maximilian Kolbe was a Catholic priest who offered His very own life in exchange for another prisoner in a concentration camp during the World War II. He exhorted his Friars right before being taken to the camp, saying: 'do not forget love!' Mary is the perfect follower of Christ, and is most perfect model of beatitudes, the way she loved and lived her life. St. Joseph is the person who spent the most of his earthly hours and days with Jesus in loving relationship as foster father.

We see this in her magnificat: My soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.... (Lk 1:46). Her attitude towards God was the same as her response to the angel at Annunciation: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, may it done to me according to your word' (Lk 1:38). Also, at the wedding feast at Cana, when the wine ran short, she told the servers, and also tells us: 'do whatever (Jesus) tells you,' that is what made her true follower of Christ: her willingness to do the will of God.

If the tree is blessed, so too is the fruit... and vice versa. In this way, if the fruit of the Womb is blessed, then so too is Mary, from whose womb our Lord was made Incarnate. Since our Lord Jesus came to us in the incarnation through the Virgin Mary; so too His blessings flow to us through her. So we say, blessed art thou Mary, most meek of all God's creatures and Queen of heaven and earth; teach us to be meek that we too can share in this inheritance. Blessed art thou Mary, most merciful; pray for us that we might obtain God's mercy. Blessed art thou Mary, most pure in heart; intercede for us before the face of God that we might grow in purity. Blessed art thou, lover of peace and handmaid of the Lord; teach us to love one another that we may be worthy to be called thy children and the children of our God.

As we know each of the beatitudes teach us a different facet of love. Those who are poor in spirit are generous, share it with others their possessions. Spiritually they have a primary dependence on God, loving the things of God. The meek also think of others before themselves - by expressing their love through humble service. They exhort us for deeper charity. The apostle Paul tells us, "above all these, put on love" (Col 3:14). May we live the way of Christ, His blessed Mother, and St. Joseph, and the beatitudes teach us in all things to choose love. The articles in this issue give us deeper insights into the life of Jesus the Incarnate Wisdom through our Blessed Mother. Mary's whole life was an act of humility and simplicity shared in love and cared in joy. In fact, the Blessed Virgin Mary was the most perfect of Lord's faithful servant. In Mt. 5:9 Jesus teaches us the way to become the children of God in this world. Mary brought the 'Prince of peace', the peace of Christ into this world. Peace must arrive at achieving reconciliation between oneself and God, between oneself and others and one must be reconciled with nature. Mary received that peace of Christ within her and became mediatrix of that peace, the Queen of peace to our modern world.

Peter Mascarenhas smm

Editor & Publisher

Peter Mascarenhas SMM

Editorial Board

Peter Swamy SMM

Selva Kumar SMM

Michael Menezes SMM

John Marie SMM

Yvonne Pushparaj

Thomas Mathew

Bosco SMM

To Jesus Through Mary

DIRECTOR

Montfort Marian Centre

Montfort Fathers, Maria Bhavan

Christ School Road, Bangalore - 29

Mobile : +91 9448845137

E-mail : mcibgl17@gmail.com

Price : Rs. 35/-

For private circulation only

Contents

Editorial 1

Mary, The Poor in Spirit 3

Mary: Pure in Heart 6

Mary the Peace Maker 10

Lively Faith of Mary16

Mary, the Merciful Mother 17

Mary - A Woman of Nazareth 21

Mary Our Guide 26

When COVID killed Goliath 31

Mary, The Poor in Spirit

Tesmy SABS

Gospel of St Mathew 5: 1-12 presents us with the beatitudes which is the blue print for our Christian living. The first beatitude "Happy are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the kingdom of God" (Mt 5:3) is the fundamental condition for all humans spiritual progress and growth. The word, 'Beatitude' literally means happiness or blessedness. It calls us to live a life of poverty, simplicity, humility, justice, purity and love and reminds us to live in peace and harmony with ourselves, our neighbor, and the beautiful world God has created. It is also one of the criterias to judge and evaluate all that we are and all that we do as individuals.

The poverty that Jesus proclaims in the first beatitude is not economic poverty but it is the spiritual poverty of the person who accepts and acknowledges his desperate need of God, irrespective of what he has or has not, he realizes that he needs God. This virtue of poverty does not consist only in being poor, but in loving poverty. That is why our Lord says "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:3). Jesus not only calls the poor fortunate but even rewards them with the kingdom of God. They are blessed because they desire nothing but God. Our everyday experience teaches us that the poor person is free of anxiety. He owns nothing but has everything. He has the Lord and the Lord alone as his portion and cup, whereas a rich person who is attached with his wealth has the added anxiety of finding out the ways to protect and guard it from being stolen.

Being poor in spirit is a loving gift from God that enables us to consider God as the greatest

treasure and to place our total dependence on Him by renouncing voluntarily all that we have and all that we could have acquired for the sake of the Kingdom. Blessed Virgin Mary stands before us as



teacher of poverty in Spirit. Her parents Joachim and Anne offered Mary to God in the Temple when she was only three years old. From this event we understand her unique holiness which was nurtured from the very beginning of her life. Mary was a mere unmarried, unschooled and unknown village girl from Nazareth. Yet, the Bible speaks that there is no one else who prepared more intensely and intimately for the birth of Jesus than Mary.

By her own life example she taught us the value of poverty and showed herself how to be poor in spirit when "she gave birth to her first born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Mt 2:7). Mary did not complain suffering this hardship. On the contrary, she rejoiced at the birth of Jesus despite the poverty of her surroundings. Though Jesus was born in a manger in the midst of true material poverty, Mary trusted in the providence of God and found her security, joy and contentment in God alone. Her spirit of poverty was manifested in her simplicity of life, total dependence on God, awareness of God's fullness, her emptiness and openness to God.

From Mary's first appearance in the Gospels she is clearly shown to be a person who embraced both material and spiritual poverty. God chose this poor young girl of Nazareth to be the mother of the Messiah. When angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, without knowing what would happen to her, she said in sheer faith "Behold the handmaid of the Lord be it done to me as you say" (Lk 1: 38). She was fully and only the servant, the handmaid of the Lord. Though she suffered all kinds of privations and indignities she remained steadfast in hope and believed that nothing is impossible with God (Lk 1:37). She was born and brought up poor and lived and worked like a poor woman. But she put her hopes and expectations in God alone. Therefore Mary's life is an example for all of us in our spirit and practice of poverty.

Mary's whole life was act of humility and simplicity too. She accepted and surrendered to God's will in all things. When Mary visited Elizabeth after the Annunciation, her cousin exclaimed, "Blessed is she who trusted that the Lord's word to her would be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45). By her acceptance of the Word of God about Jesus, Mary is the first disciple of Christ and of the poor of Yahweh. She committed herself wholeheartedly to the Divine adventure that far surpassed her own powers and in which she was the servant of the Lord.

When we look at the life of Mary we can see that she believed that the promise made to her by the Lord would be fulfilled and she sanctified every moment of her life by virtue of her unshakable faith, unending hope and intense love for God. Therefore Mary is one of the Lord's "faithful poor". In fact, the Blessed Virgin Mary was the most perfect of Lord's

faithful servant. There is no one else who understood, assimilated, lived and treasured everything in her heart and pondered over the events of her son, following the will of God at all times as the Blessed Mother. To be poor in spirit is to be devoid of all pride and trust in the power of one's own spirit. It is to be freed from all reliance on one's own ideas, opinions and desires. Mother Mary was ready at every moment to accept whatever God disposed and to hold God's decisions in her heart.

God looked upon her lowliness and called this poor young girl of Nazareth to be the mother of Jesus. Therefore in her Magnificat she praises the Mighty one, who has done great things for her and who lifts up the lowly. She indeed had reasons to say that, in God was her joy and therefore she says "My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favor on her lowly servant (Lk 1:47-48). She proclaims that God offers a tremendous treasure to those who embrace a life of poverty by saying "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty (Lk 1: 53). God puts down the mighty and raises the downtrodden. He is always on the side of the oppressed and never abandons them. In this world she loved and desired no other good but God, who alone deserves to be loved. Mary's life of simplicity and poverty teaches us that, God wants not the skill of our hands but the love of our hearts.

At the presentation of the Child in the temple, Mary and Joseph offered the traditional sacrifice of the poor. "and to offer a sacrifice, according as it was written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons" (Lk 2: 24). Out of love for poverty she did not disdain to marry St. Joseph, who was only a carpenter and afterwards to help him with the work of her

hands. In a word, she lived poor and she died poor.

Our blessed mother, the virgin of Nazareth, is the first among all persons consecrated unreservedly to God and she is the most fully formed person in Christ and the model and guide for us to lead a life of simplicity and poverty trusting in the providence of God. She adopted a life style of commitment, self immolation and total surrender to the will of God. Filled with love and service she went with haste to care for Elizabeth, her cousin bearing Jesus in her womb (Lk 1: 39- 56). Following her example let us be generous enough to use our gifts and talents for the benefit of the poor and needy.

As consecrated persons through the vow of poverty we dedicate ourselves to live as poor in spirit and truth and to love the poor with the compassionate heart of Jesus (PC 25). To be poor in spirit is to recognize clearly that one has nothing which he has not received from God, that one is nothing except by the grace of God. It is an attitude of mind and heart, a conviction of the soul. It is the condition of man in total

emptiness and openness before God. Unless we have strong faith and hope in the providence of God it is difficult to find the strength to rely solely on God. Therefore being poor of heart means completely giving all that we have and all that we are to Him. This is what we are called to do. We experience such great peace and joy when we are totally poor, when we depend upon no one except God. So we need to be poor in spirit like Mary, in order to live our vocation in joy and simplicity, to seek the kingdom of God above all things and not to overburden our hearts with so many things of this world.

Following the supreme model of our Blessed mother who was poor in spirit and realizing the problems and the pathetic realities of the lives of the most neglected around us we are called to share with them what we have. Let Mary be our model to accept the inadequacies and insecurities that we experience in our life situations as our privilege and to attach ourselves solely to the heart of Jesus through the ways of love and holiness, on the road of the beatitudes.

JOKES

Between wealth and wisdom what will you choose ?

Teacher : If you are offered wealth and wisdom what will you choose ?

Student : wealth

Teacher: No. That's a bad answer. I will choose wisdom.

Students: that's ok sir. We have to choose what we don't have.

Man who walks in front of car gets tired. Man who walks behind car gets exhausted.

Mary: Pure in Heart

Shibi Jose smm

Introduction

“Holy in body, all-beautiful in soul, and pure in spirit, sincere of mind and perfect in affections, chaste, faithful, pure of heart, and proved in trial, Mary was filled with all virtues” says H. Holstein. The Mother of God as immaculate, innocent, untainted, and unsullied, all pure, all perfect, the very model of purity and innocence, more beautiful than beauty, alone holy and most pure in soul and body; surpassing all integrity and virginity, the only one who has become the dwelling of all graces of the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to be “pure in heart”? Most people would probably say the pure in heart are absolutely free from sin, but actually it means something more, because all throughout the beatitudes, sin is addressed right from the start. Purity of Heart (*Puritas Cordis* in Latin) is an important concept in Christian spirituality, and Mary is seen as its greatest exemplar and embodiment. This helps us to achieve by God's grace, union with God. Mary, the Most Pure Virgin, is seen as the perfect model of one who was totally available for union with God. *Maria Purissima*, Mary Most Pure, is the great example of purity, in that her heart is totally given over to God and pours out love towards those around her.

Purity of Heart in the Bible

The “mothers of Israel” also have a large role in the story of their people. The purity of Sarah and the women of the generation in the desert obtain Israel's redemption; the miracles worked in Egypt are due to the fact that they

abstained from incontinency. Indeed, because of the holiness of the mothers 190 years are taken away from the time of oppression.

Similarly, Mary is connected with the whole community of Israel. When that community is before Sinai, it presents itself as a spouse without stain, and she emerges from the desert shining brightly. Mary, the most perfect disciple loved God perfectly with the purity of a virginal heart completely in the possession of the Holy Spirit.

Our society today revels in dirty jokes, “adult” movies and filthy language. Things that once were universally considered disgusting and vile now seem acceptable. People “call evil good” (Isaiah 5:20) and no longer feel shame about impure thoughts and actions. “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, nor did they know how to blush” (Jeremiah 8:12).

Even those claiming to be right still carry the impurity of sin unless they have repented and have been forgiven. “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags,” Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 64:6). “We have all sinned” (Romans 3:23), and therefore we have all been unclean.



Mary, the most perfect disciple loved God perfectly with the purity of a virginal heart completely in the possession of the Holy Spirit.

The sixth Beatitude states, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). One of the traits that God greatly values is the characteristic of purity. Consider this in its context in the Sermon on the Mount. The previous Beatitude was, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7). The Father is able to show us such mercy because of the same sacrifice of Jesus Christ that also makes it possible for us to be cleansed and pure in heart.

Blessed are the pure of heart

The emphasis of this sixth Beatitude is on the heart. This beatitude shows that the more perfect virtue and use of the gifts of God are the more perfect is one's happiness. It is a beatific vision and the final grace that God gives those who are pure of heart: “...for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8).

The Church both in its teaching and through the lives of its saints, especially our Blessed Mother, affirms that for one who sees the face of God, it is impossible to sin. As we reflect on this unique quality of Mary our Mother, let us joyfully thank God for the gifts He has given our Mother and for her triumph. She is “one of our own.” And as our Mother who has walked the walk, she now wishes to lavishly pour the same graces of purity upon us. So, wherever we are in our walk with Christ, let us never forget that what will always keep us on the path to seeing the full glory of God, is purity of heart.

While humankind can only see the outer appearance, God is capable of looking at the very heart and core of an individual. That is where He places His emphasis. Our actions; 'what we do' matter a lot to God. Yet God also

Wherever we are in our walk with Christ, let us never forget that what will always keep us on the path to seeing the full glory of God, is purity of heart.

examines what we are doing in our hearts where only He can see. For example, Jesus magnified the commandment against adultery by saying, “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28). It's not just what we do in our hearts that He looks at, but also how close we are to Him in our hearts (Matthew 15:8-9). In order to have such a heart, we must have a repentant spirit. We need to go to God as King David did, entreating, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

Virgin Mary, pure in heart: in the life of the Church

The Blessed Virgin is a model of perfect purity and of self-surrender to God and neighbor. Mary's purity culminates in the definition of Mary as the Mother of God (Theotokos) by the Fathers of the Council of Ephesus (431) under the leadership of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, (d. 444). After this there is no longer any question of Mary's personal purity: “After the Council of Ephesus the cult of the people of God toward Mary wonderfully increased in veneration and love, in invocation and imitation, according to her own prophetic words: 'All generations shall call me blessed, because He Who is mighty has done great things for me' (LG 66).”

Anselm lived long before the formal definition of the dogma Immaculate Conception and he did not arrive at the point to embrace its

teaching, yet we can say that he did pave the way for its acceptance in the Church by setting forth the principle on which the teaching came to be based (as quoted by Pope Pius IX in his Encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus*: "On the Immaculate Conception"): It was fitting that Mary should possess more purity than anyone imaginable below God for she was to be the Mother of His Son Who was equal to the Father - thus He was to be Son both of the Father and of the Blessed Virgin. This was Anselm's greatest contribution to Mariology. As with all the great Marian teachings of the Church, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception talks about Jesus Christ, and our relationship with him. As the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it: "To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role".

St. Bonaventure considered it certain that, as God had preserved the Most Holy Virgin Mary from the violation of her virginal purity and integrity in conceiving and in childbirth, He would never have permitted her body to have been resolved into dust and ashes (St. Bonaventure, *De Nativitate B. Mariae Virginis, Sermo V.*) (n. 32).

A distinguished writer develops these words: "The Blessed Virgin . . . is the Mother of God: therefore, she is the purest and the most holy, so that under God a greater purity cannot be understood" (Cornelius a Lapide, Matt. 1. 16) (n. 12). Woman contemplates God according to the degree of his own purity. This is the common opinion of the Fathers. From ancient times the Madonna is called "the most pure." V. Lossky is entirely correct in seeing this ideal realized in the Madonna: "She represents

the peak of sanctity ... She is without sin under the universal dominion of sin ... Sin could never have existed in Her."

A portrait of Our Lady by name *Mater Admirabilis*, or "Admirable Mother," was bestowed by Pope Pius IX in 1846. Prior to that time it had been known as "The Madonna of the Lily," the symbol of a lily in the picture denotes her purity, and she gives herself to us with all her purity and power. There was also a group of pious young men who were the nucleus of a religious order which bore the name of *Monte Vergine*. The order was absorbed into the Benedictine Order, although the original members of *Monte Vergine* were permitted to continue wearing their white habits and the scapulars which they had adopted in respect to Our Lady's purity.

Many other feasts of Mary were celebrated in some dioceses and Religious Congregations from the 17th century to the reform of Vatican II. Some of these were: Motherhood of Mary (2nd Sunday of October); Purity of Mary (3rd Sunday of October).

A Pure Heart: Window to Spirituality

Being spiritual is for most of us going to temple, doing meditation, doing yoga and whatever form of worship we follow according to our inclination and religion. But all religion and all faith agree to the one basic truth.

→ A Pure Heart is a Source of Strength: When your heart is pure you get infinite strength to fight all odds of life and emerge as a victor to proclaim your victory.

"The Madonna of the Lily," the symbol of a lily in the picture denotes her purity, and she gives herself to us with all her purity and power.

→ Pure Heart: A pure heart has the tenacity to collect the broken pieces and mend it to become whole and strong.

→ Pure Heart Makes One Beautiful: When we have a pure heart it reflects on our appearance. How much make up you put on. How much you feign to be beautiful, how much fair your skin may be but a pure heart makes one truly beautiful.

→ Pure Heart is a Symbol of Integrity: When our heart is pure our action is sincere and we are filled with integrity in whatever we do. So our action reflects our goodness and we get back all the goodness of life by the law of cause and effect.

→ A Pure Heart Is A Source Of Motivation: A pure hearted person is a motivated person. Motivation wells up from this purity and his warmth motivates others to live life meaningfully.

→ A Pure Heart is a Spotless Mirror: A pure heart is a spotless mirror in which the reality is truly reflected in all its splendor and beauty. Our inner light shines through it clearly.

→ A Pure Heart is a Open Heart: When your heart is pure it is open like the window. Then all the feelings of positivity as well as negativity will come and go. Nothing will be stored.

Mary's Pure Heart; her silence and suffering

Yes, Mary was to suffer in her heart. Her compassion for her most beloved Son was the sword which was destined to pierce her motherly heart, as St. Simeon accurately foretold: and thy own soul a sword shall pierce (Lk. 2: 35).

Mary was silent during the Passion of Jesus when He was being unjustly accused. She said nothing to Pilate who was somewhat

inclined to set Him free, fully aware as she was of his innocence. She accompanied Him to the place of execution. She was with Him from the first moment He was nailed on the Cross: There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother (Jn. 19: 25). All this she did in order to complete the offering she had made of Him to God in the Temple.

The pure of heart do not consider suffering as a burden, but a gift poured before God out of sacrificial love. The love of mothers is so great that when their children are about to die and there is danger of losing them, they forget the injuries they may have received from them, and suffer unimaginable heartache. Mary had only one child the most admirable ever born. He was most lovable, for He had everything to make Him so. The final culmination of her purity on earth is her Assumption into heaven which is the great triumph of Mary over sin through her purity of heart! Victory is also ours and so is the glory that God wishes to give such souls who persevere in living a pure life.

Prayer to the Most Pure Heart of Mary

O heart most pure of the Blessed Virgin Mary, obtain for me from Jesus a pure and humble heart. Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation. Blessed Virgin, who didst keep in thy heart the precious treasure of the words of Jesus thy Son and, pondering over the sublime mysteries therein contained, couldst only live for God, how I am confounded by the coldness of my heart! Ah, dear Mother, obtain for me the grace of meditating always on the holy law of God and of seeking to follow thine example in the fervent practice of all the Christian virtues. Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation.

Mary the Peace Maker

Jenet O P

"Blessed are the Peacemakers for they shall be called children of God." Mt. 5:9

Introduction

The desire for peace lies deep within every human heart. "In every person the desire for peace is an essential aspiration which coincides in a certain way with the desire for a full, happy and successful human life," said Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI. Jesus is the 'Prince of peace' Is 5:9. He offers his peace in Jn 14:27, *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* Jesus illustrates in the beatitudes the type of happiness He wants us to share. The noun 'beatitude' refers to a state of great joy. Being blessed, or at least feeling blessed. Beatitudes teaches that happiness doesn't come from wealth, power, or importance. It's a supernatural gift from God by which our sins are forgiven, we are made holy, and our relationship with God is restored. In Mt 5:9 *"Blessed are the Peacemakers for they shall be called children of God,"* Jesus teaches us the way to become the children of God is to bring peace in this world. In order to understand this seventh beatitude the words 'peace', 'peacemaker' and 'the children of God' needs to be explained, because it can be misunderstood or become meaningless."

"Peace" or "Shalom" in the Biblical term signifies an abundant or flourishing life. It was a common Jewish greeting. It expressed a desire that the one greeted will have all the righteousness and goodness God can give. The modern notion of peace is interior serenity. The Catechism explains, "Peace is not merely

the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries (CCC 2306). Christ does not say blessed are those "love peace", but b l e s s e d a r e " t h e



peacemakers". A peacemaker is someone who, by God's grace, imitates Jesus in bringing reconciliation to others by giving of themselves, always and everywhere. Those who do so are true sons of God and show us the way of true happiness. There is often a cost for peace, and peacemakers are often the ones who pay it. Christ bore a cross and so must be His disciples. Christ the Prince of Peace realized that to have true peace, there must, at times, be conflict. Blessed are the peacemakers who keep their conscience at peace with God and with their fellow men, following the example of our Saviour the Peacemaker. According to the words of the Lord, they shall be called the sons of God. The term 'children' bears the meaning "partaker of the character of." To be called "children of God" refers to someone who is God like, demonstrating God's character. Christ came to the world to reconcile people with God and people with one another, "children of God" participate in the same ministry.

The beatitudes were given by Jesus and teach us how to follow Him. Our blessed mother is the perfect follower of Christ, most perfect model of the beatitudes by the way she lived her life. In this (Mt 5: 9) beatitude Jesus teaches us the way to become the children of God is to

bring peace in this world. Mary brought 'the Prince of Peace', the peace of Christ in to this world. Peace must arrive at achieving reconciliation between oneself and God, between oneself and others and one must be reconciled with oneself. Mary received the peace of Christ within her and became the mediatrix of that peace, the Queen of Peace bringing reconciliation to others by giving of herself, always and everywhere. Therefore Mary is the peacemaker par excellence who lived the seventh beatitude Mt 5:9 in its totality, and is called the "Queen of Peace".

Mary the Peace Receiver

Mary is the Immaculate Conception, a person at peace with herself and with God. In the "Paradise" of Dante's Divine Comedy, one of the blessed souls says, *"in His will is our peace."* The Mother of God was a remarkable peace receiver because she understood so clearly that the interior tranquillity we know as peace is the result of surrendering our wills to God's. At the Annunciation Mary tells the angel, *"be it done unto me according to thy Word."* She received tranquillity in embracing God's will. Her obedience was risk-taking and persevering. She experienced uncertainty and insecurity on account of her obedience. She always believed that those who take risks in doing God's will, would not be abandoned but would always win favour and grace from God.

Luke 1:46-55 is entitled "Mary's Song of Praise." In the midst of Mary's life-changing news that she would give birth to the Messiah, she continued to praise God. Her doubts and fears didn't waver, but her songs of praise rang louder. Mary understood the power of her praise, and that it would sustain her through her

upcoming trials. Mary praises God for His faithfulness in her life, but also for all future generations. She kept an active praise on her lips to remain in peace. God's goodness and faithfulness is consistent and steadfast.

"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" John 15:4. Mary's key to keeping the peace is, she stayed attached to the vine. Despite Mary's fears, she trusted God's Word and guidance for her life Lk 1:29. In the midst of Mary's trials, she continued to praise God Lk 1:46-55. Mary trusted God in the unknown. Although Mary's path was unknown, she surrendered and trusted God moving forward. Mary's suffering drew her closer to God. She witnessed Jesus endure intense ridicule, opposition, and crucifixion. She was the last person with Jesus until his death on the cross. Staying attached to the vine, Mary stood still in all the circumstances. She received this supernatural gift of peace from God.

Mary the Mediatrix of Peace

Sinless from the moment of her own conception in her mother's womb, Mary has always been in a unique middle position between God, the all-holy Creator, and sinful human creatures. By her consent at the Annunciation, Mary united God and man literally in her womb as she conceived Christ who is true God and true Man. As the one Mother of Jesus, Mary is a unique mediatrix of Jesus, who is the source of all graces. Thus, in at least an indirect way, the Blessed Virgin is the mediatrix of all graces. Therefore, it is God Himself who made Our Lady to be a universal mediatrix, starting with her Immaculate

Conception, and continuing with the grace of her virginal conception of Christ.

Her mediation between man and the God-man Jesus was then seen at the wedding feast of Cana, proclaimed publicly by Christ on the Cross, and manifested at Pentecost. As St. Bernard taught, "It is God's will that we receive everything through Mary."

Luke 1 shows Mary's mediation in Christ's Incarnation at the Annunciation, through her "mediation" Jesus, the 'prince of peace' entered into this world to save the humanity. Our Blessed Mother presented Jesus, the 'prince of peace' to others in their searches: the shepherds, the Magi, the priest Simeon. Then at the Visitation, Mary's words mediating the peace and joy to John the Baptist and Elizabeth. In Luke's Gospel we learn of the remarkable power associated with Mary's voice, for as soon as Elizabeth heard the sound of Mary's voice "the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:41). Jn 2:1-11 teaches us about Mary's mediation at the wedding feast of Cana. The power of Mary's voice is also highlighted by John at the marriage at Cana. John tells us that Jesus' time to perform his first miracle had not yet arrived. The power of Mary's voice thus sounds again: "Do whatever He tells you," she said to the servants (2:4), and so Jesus obeyed and right then and there changed the jars of water into wine! Mary stood at the foot of the cross, sharing in our Lord's sufferings, and at that point He gave her to us as our Mother as our comforter. Finally, Mary was with the apostles at Pentecost. She who brought Jesus into this world was there for the birth of the Church. Acts 1 and 2 shows Mary's intercessory mediation of prayer in the descent of the Holy

Spirit at Pentecost. At the end of her life, Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven, the fulfilment of the promises of eternal life of body and soul given to all of the faithful.

Mary the Queen of Peace

It was in 1917, when World War I was raging, Pope Benedict XV added to the Litany of Loreto, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the title and invocation "Queen of Peace." This Pope of Peace desired that the Catholics of the world pray through Mary's intercession as Queen of Peace for an end to the devastating world war. Just eight days later, the Most Holy Virgin, Queen of Peace, appeared to the three shepherd children in Fatima to help save the world from terrible wars and persecutions wrought by mankind's sinfulness. The Queen of Peace is the one who wishes to serve, who wishes to serve the reconciliation and peace which Christ her Son brings to the world. A Marian feast day decreed by Pope Pius XII in 1954 in his Encyclical "Ad caeli reginam" to recognize and celebrate the blessed Virgin Mary as queen of the world, of angels and of heaven etc. Vatican II stated unequivocally that "Mary was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen of the universe...." (Lumen Gentium, 59). Our Lady of Peace, Mother of Peace, Queen of Peace or Our Lady Queen of Peace is a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Church. The royalty of Mary is a participation in the royal dignity of Jesus Christ. She is queen because she is the Mother of the Son of God and the Messianic King; and closely associated as the New Eve with Jesus' redemptive work; the perfect disciple of Christ; the most excellent member of the Church and because of her intercessory power.

Mary is Queen of Peace because of her work to do on earth in helping to establish the Kingdom of Peace. God willed that the Incarnation depended on her free consent. But her work is not finished by her Assumption into Heaven. She was not relegated to a seat of bliss, however glorious. By her assumption, Mary already shares in Christ's victory even over the last enemy, death (1 Cor 15:26), and with Christ, She works continually for the world's deliverance from sin. God has made her queen of heaven and earth, leader of his armies, keeper of his treasures, dispenser of his graces, worker of his wonders, restorer of the human race, mediatrix on behalf of men, destroyer of his enemies, and faithful associate in his great works and triumphs. Mary conquered the powers of evil from the first moment of conception. She was never under bondage to sin and always gave God's message her total consent. Mary has authority over the angels and the blessed in heaven. As a reward for her great humility, God gave her the power and the mission of assigning to saints the thrones made vacant by the apostate angels who fell away through pride.

Mary holds a magnetic attraction to the Church. In fact, her very consecration to God from her youth when her peers indulged in so called culture of their times, Mary chose to be mesmerized with God and his Culture of saving humanity. This is very well explicated in her life: starting from accepting the Emmanuel in her womb, nurturing him when he was a child, accompanying him when he became a man. Her mission of loving God passionately did not halt at that. She further encouraged her divine son to fulfil God's will in his life, that is, the

saving of the humanity by giving up his dear life on the cross. Because of her special role in the life of Jesus, Catholics hold Mary, the Mother of God, in a special place in their hearts and give Mary a unique position in the pantheon of Catholic saints. Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ: Mary is called the Mother of the Church, because she's the Mother of Christ, and the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ.

Mary the Peace Maker Par excellence

There was no one whose life was modelled after that of Jesus as much as was Our Lady's. Being the co-operator with Him in our Redemption, She must be as like Him as possible. She was never at war with God, as the rest of men. From the very first moment of Her existence She was, by her Immaculate Conception, preserved from sin, which is the only thing that can rob the soul of peace. She was the fair, chaste moon riding serene in the heavens. If there is one mark of Mary's sanctity, it is her serenity of soul. She breathed forth peace like the flowers in her garden. For thirty-three years she took care of Jesus. That needed fortitude, in facing the enemies of His infancy, but especially in standing on Calvary to bear testimony to the world. Sorrows bore down in legions upon her, but they could never harm her peace of soul, for she was the Mother of the Prince of Peace; She was the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, whose fruit in the soul is essentially Peace. Mary had her work to do on earth in helping to establish the Kingdom of Peace. God willed that the Incarnation depended on her free consent. But her work is not finished by her Assumption into Heaven. She was not relegated to a seat of bliss, however glorious. Mothers never sit idle. She who brought into the

world the Prince of Peace, will not forget the world now.

We may think, since Mary received special graces from God, she would lead an extraordinary life. If so we have misunderstood her. She was a simple and ordinary woman just like any other women. She experienced poverty and pain in her life. This experience made her feel for the poor and the ordinary people. She was under great pressure and faced uncertainty in her life. She knew what oppression and alienation was, when she could not find a room in which to give birth to Jesus. She also underwent the pain of loneliness of the widow. Though Mary was highly favored by God, that grace did not take her away from the world. She continued to live in the obscure town going through suffering and struggle because her obedience. In a way such experience brought her closer to the suffering people, the oppressed, the rejected and the despised. In fact she shared her vision of God's option for the poor when she sang in her Magnificat, *"He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things"* (Lk 1, 52-53).

Mary not only reminds us of our destiny but while on earth, she also showed us the way to reach that destiny. The way she showed was one of faith and that enables us to say 'yes' to God's will in every stage of our life. God channelized Mary's ordinariness and empowered her with his grace. Her life is a great inspiration for us to look for God's presence in our life. If God's will becomes our way of life, then God; will work in the ordinary circumstances of our lives for our good and for his glory. Mary also set an example how to

stand by the suffering humanity. Surely suffering wait us when we do his will but we must persevere and achieve our destiny like Mary by receiving the peace of Christ in all circumstances and by becoming peacemakers always and everywhere.

Conclusion

Promotion of peace is an integral part of the Church's mission of continuing Christ's work of redemption on earth. In fact, the Church is, in Christ, a sacrament or sign and instrument of peace in the world and for the world, as St. John Paul II once said. The promotion of peace is an expression of our Christian faith in the love that God has for every human being. He invites everyone "to set aside every act of violence in thought, word and deed, whether against our neighbors or against God's creation." "The culture of fraternal encounter shatters the culture of conflict," he said, and it makes "every encounter a possibility and a gift of God's generous love.

Pope Francis exhorts us to become channel of peace. He said in his annual message for the World Day of Peace Jan. 1, 2020, "the world does not need more empty words, it needs committed, active peacemakers who do not exclude or manipulate, but are open to respectful dialogue. He adds "In fact, we cannot truly achieve peace without a convinced dialogue between men and women who seek the truth beyond ideologies and differing opinions." Peace also requires "ecological conversion," he said, which basically is "a new way of looking at life as we consider the generosity of the Creator who has given us the earth and called us to a share it in joy and moderation." The new encyclical of

contd.... on page 16

Lively Faith of Mary

Agnes SABS

“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled”. Luke 1:45

If Abraham is called the Father of Faith, as a staunch Christian I see Mary as the Mother of faith. She is the foundation of our Christian faith. She is an ember of Christian faith. At the very outset, I would like to stress on the firstness of Mary. She is the first Tabernacle, the New Ark of the Covenant, she becomes the First Christian and She is the first Disciple of Jesus.

Once God dwelled among human beings in the Ark of the Covenant but when the fullness of time had come (Galatians 4:4) God comes to dwell through a Blessed woman, Mary.

She is the first Christian in the sense she is a believer of Christ (2nd Corinthians 5:17). She accepts and believes in her Son Jesus, as God and Lord.

She is the first disciple of Jesus. Like a good Mother who is always there for her children, she is there with Christ from womb (Luke 1: 26-38) to tomb (Mathew 27: 59-60).

Mary's *Fiat* ('Let it be done' Luke 1:38) is not a one-time consent. She had too many 'YESes' to God. In the Annunciation of the Lord (Luke 1: 26-39) she converses with the Angel Gabriel and when she discerns and ponders (Luke 1: 29) over the words of God and learns that it is the will of God she accepts the deal. She knew saying 'Yes' to God would mean making sacrifices, it also meant giving up her wishes and surrendering everything to God.

Mary really had an unstable faith both in times of adversity and prosperity, in all ups and downs for she knew for God nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37) that is why in bad times

and good times she continues to say 'Yes' to God. She keeps her strong faith in God and hence she is able to face any events of life that's unfolding before her.

She said 'Yes' to God as a teenager girl. She must carry a child (Luke 1:27-34) before a wedlock with all the ignominy but when she knew that this was the plan of God she could not say 'NO!' it was okay for her to feel like a fool for the sake of God and for the salvation of humanity. She did not seek the approval of human beings but of GOD. All she wanted was to be right in the sight of God even if it meant bringing her own humiliation.

Like any mother she must have struggled to bring up Baby Jesus. She did everything to protect her child. We have the story of the Flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23) how in order to protect her Son she had to hurry off to strange land Egypt at night. But even in this she still had faith in God believing all that was happening was for good.

Her unwavering Faith in God keeps her going. She continues to say 'Yes' to the foreseen events that are unfolding before her. She loses her boy in Jerusalem temple (Luke 2: 47-52) at the age of 12. She must have been worried and blamed herself for not being attentive to the boy entrusted to her by God; such was the humility of this Blessed mother.

When people curse and rejected her Son by accusing that, Jesus is possessed and is demon Mother Mary did not retort or defend her right. She just bore everything silently and still keeping her eyes fixed on God.

When Jesus was crucified she did not question God but still had faith in God believing that all that was happening was God's will and God has a purpose for everything. Trusting completely on God's will she just accompanied her Son in His suffering silently.

Through her staunch faith in God Mary said 'Yes' to God thousand Years ago and her example still offers us today the strength to follow the will of God in our own lives. She remains epitome of faith in our lives and through her intercession we continue to strengthen our faith in God.

We can precise the lively faith of Mary in the words of St. Alphonsus Liguori:

"The most holy Virgin had more faith than all men and Angels. She saw her Son in the crib of Bethlehem, and believed Him the Creator of the world. She saw Him fly from Herod, yet believed Him the King of Kings. She saw Him born and believed Him eternal, She saw Him poor and in need of food, and believed Him the Lord of the Universe. She saw Him lying on straw, and believed Him omnipotent. She observed that He did not speak, and she believed Him infinite wisdom. She heard Him weep, and believed Him the joy of Paradise. In final, she saw, Him in death, despised and crucified, and although faith wavered in others, Mary remained firm in the belief that He was God."

contd.... from page 14

Pope Francis "Fratelli Tutti" is ultimately a call to a peace that can only be achieved in co-operation with the world and with each other. It is a call to a "culture of encounter" with our brothers and sisters (No. 30). ... Pope Francis makes clear that undistorted religious practice aids in the creation of a more peaceful world. Peacemakers are people "who have learned the art of peace and practice it, they know that there is no reconciliation without the gift of one's life, and that peace must be sought always and in every case". Those who do this, he said, are true children of God and show us the way of true happiness. The Church engages in the battle for peace through prayer since prayer opens the heart not only to a deep relationship with God, but also to an encounter with others marked by respect, understanding, esteem,

and love. Prayer instills in us the conviction and courage to be peacemakers, to live the Beatitude of Jesus: "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.*"

Mary is present in the Church as the Mother of Christ, and at the same time as that Mother whom Christ, in the mystery of the Redemption, gave to humanity in the person of the Apostle John. Thus, in her new motherhood in the Spirit, Mary embraces each and every one in the Church, and leads each and every one through the Church to Christ. In this sense, Mary is the peacemaker par excellence and called the 'Queen of Peace'. "*Blessed are the peacemakers;*" "*Blessed art Thou among women.*"

Mary, the Merciful Mother

Melody FCC

“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt 5:7)

“Mercy” as a word seems to be very familiar with all of us. We often utter “O Lord have mercy” or in our helplessness, we say, “please have mercy on me/us.” What does it mean to us? Once, the son of a widow was caught in a crime. The judgment was passed for his death. His mother in her utter helplessness stood up and pleaded with the judge. She said “Sir, please have mercy on my son.” But the reply of the judge was ‘your son doesn’t deserve mercy.’ She replied, “yes, he doesn’t deserve that’s why I am requesting you to have mercy.” This incident vividly shows that mercy is sought in a situation when we don’t deserve. On the consoling note, the Bible shows a God who is full of mercy. Exodus 34:6 tells us that, “God is rich in mercy and slow in anger.” The word “mercy” occurs 246 times in the Bible.

God takes time to punish us if He does at all. The extended time is to exercise his mercy. Mercy is the greatest thing in God. It dominates everything. Time and again the Israelites went astray from Yahweh despite His mercy and forgiveness. Yet His mercy was always with them. In his mercy, God holds back His justified wrath. St. John Paul II said, “in deeds and in words, the Lord revealed His mercy from the very beginning of the people which He chose for Himself, in spite of their sins committed.” “Be merciful, just as your heavenly Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36) is the continual invitation of God for His people.

This merciful God continues to show his mercy to humanity in different ways. Because of His mercy, He sent his only begotten son into

the world for the salvation of mankind. Mother Mary is one of the sources through which God reveals His mercy. Pope Francis says, “after the sin of Adam and Eve, God did not wish to leave humanity in throes of Evil. So he turned His gaze to Mary, who is holy and Immaculate in love (Eph 1:4), choosing her to be the Mother of Man’s redeemer. When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 3). In many occasions of her apparitions, Mother Mary too revealed herself as a merciful mother.



God’s Mercy meets Human Misery

The Latin word for mercy, *misericordia*, is derived from two words, “poor” and “heart.” As such, *misericordia* is where the merciful heart of God meets the misery of man. Where does this happen? In Jesus, in His crucified love, He receives all the human misery, pouring out His merciful love on the world. The cross is like a great yellow ribbon; a hope, a visible sign of God’s love for us. The brokenness of the world of today can be healed by this mercy. This merciful love can put back the broken pieces, making the person whole again. If we look into our lives carefully we can see what God has done for us in His mercy. God’s mercy has

The cross is like a great yellow ribbon; a hope, a visible sign of God’s love for us. The brokenness of the world of today can be healed by this mercy.

made us new at various moments. If we are here today, it is because of the mercy of God. Sometimes, we think it is because of our own merits with a faulty assumption that “I am a good person, a good Christian, I am a religious...” But, we are not called to sing our praises, but to recognize God’s work in our lives and in our becoming.

If God’s mercy is fulfilled in our lives, or crucified love is made possible, it is because of the consent Mother Mary gave to God’s divine plan. This act of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the time of annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross. With her “yes” to the angel Gabriel’s greetings, great things happened for humanity. God’s mercy was made possible again after the fall of humanity at the garden of Eden. Mary as human also obtained God’s mercy in a particular and exceptional way. So, she had the deepest knowledge of God’s mercy or its mystery. She knew how great is mercy in its profound sense of the term. Thus, “Magnificat” (Lk 1:46-55) which she sang at the house of Elizabeth is the song of mercy which sprang from her heart. Thus, she does not keep this “mercy” to herself but she shares with everyone who approaches her.

Mercy finds Occasions

“Mercy” makes us sharper in finding occasions to help, which are plentiful. It is not that we wait for an opportunity but find the opportunity. Occasions wait for us all the time. Being mindful to the needs of others, we will be able to utilize occasions to extend a helping hand. Self-love draws a veil before our eyes preventing us from seeing the needs of others. “Mercy” means service, longing and having to

Being mindful to the needs of others, we will be able to utilize occasions to extend a helping hand.

serve others. It is also sympathy or compassion and its result is service. In this connection, we can think of Mother Mary who had a highly developed ability to detect or sense the needs of others even when unexpressed. We have many popular prayers that speak of Mary as Mother of Mercy. For example, “Hail holy Queen, Mother of mercy” ... and, later: “turn, then, your eyes of mercy towards us.” In another prayer, the *Memorare*, we have “To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful, O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions but in your mercy, hear and answer me.”

We have rightly called, “Mary the Merciful” because during her sojourn on earth she performed tremendous works of mercy for us all. Experiencing God’s mercy for herself, she shared with others. The wedding at Cana is a case in which we can highly represent her whole life. To come to the aid of those who need is the essence of Mother Mary. At times words play the role in mercy. Words have the power to help others. When she noticed that they have no more wine or when the wine was running short, she was eager to preserve them from embarrassment on their wedding day. She brought their needs to her son just with simple words “they have no more wine.” Her merciful heart can’t but extend help within her capacity.

“To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful, O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions but in your mercy, hear and answer me.”

All that she could do was to tell her Son Jesus that they have no more wine. Though Jesus said that his time had not yet come he could not retain himself but his merciful heart burst forth when His mother's heart acted with mercy. Thus, the jars of water turned into wine. In haste, Mother Mary went to meet her cousin Elizabeth to render help. Her feeling of compassion and love was put into action without delay.

Mercy Cares

Taken up to heaven she does not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continues to bring us gifts of eternal salvation. With her maternal care, she continues to show favours to her children. She knows the journey on this earth is surrounded by temptations, dangers, pains, sorrows, difficulties, etc. Until we are led into the happiness of our true home where Jesus had gone to prepare a place. Jesus said, "In my Father's house there are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" (John 14: 2). In our limitation to understand God, He reveals himself, as He did to Moses in the burning bush when He proclaimed, "I am who I am," (Ex 3:14). He is "A God merciful and gracious, slow in anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6). So too Mary reveals herself as a mother of Mercy. In the lives of the saints, we hear Mary referred to as "Mother of Mercy." Once, St. Maria Faustina Kowalska had a vision of the Blessed Mother. Mary said to Sr. Faustina: "I am not only the Queen of Heaven, but also the Mother of Mercy, and your Mother." (*Diary of St. Faustina*, 330). During World War II, Jesus spoke to St. Faustina about His divine mercy and called upon her to become the Apostle of Mercy. In her Diary St. Faustina

made it clear the important role of Mary as the Mother of Mercy in our salvation. She wrote, "In the evening, I saw the Mother of God with Her breast bared and pierced with a sword. She was shedding bitter tears and shielding us against God's terrible punishment. God wants to inflict a terrible punishment on us, but He cannot because the Mother of God is shielding us. Horrible fear seized my soul. I kept praying incessantly for Poland, for my dear Poland, which is so lacking in gratitude for the Mother of God. If it were not for the Mother of God, all our efforts would be of little use..." (Notebook II, 686).

Blessed Virgin Mary said to St. Brigid of Sweden, "I am the Queen of heaven and the mother of mercy: I am the joy of the joy and the door through which sinners are brought to God." (Rev 1:6 c.10). It reminds us of what she said to St. Juan Diego in Guadalupe, "Am I not here, I who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the folds of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else that you need?" From this revelation, we understand that our mother willingly comes to the aid of her children in their needs. As a mother senses the needs of her suckling child or feels the pain of the child's fall, flu, or surgery, Mother Mary senses the needs of her children on earth. The artists' pictorial representation of Mary wearing a huge mantle that shelters many people beneath its folds, especially those rejected by the society depicts her merciful love. For Mother Mary, mercy is bigger than anything else.

Mercy Understands

Pope John Paul II referred to Mary as "Mother of Mercy" in his 1980 encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*: God has given us a mother for a

reason. At the foot of the cross, Jesus entrusted His mother to the beloved disciple, St. John, thus, "Here is your Mother," and he said to Mary, "Here is your son" (Jn 19:27). On many occasions, we might have observed how mothers instinctively protect the lives of other children besides their own. So, Mary becomes the mother of all humanity who protects us. Mary was able to stand firm at the foot of the cross as a merciful mother with a strong love. Merciful love is capable of withstanding the cross; capable of withstanding difficulties and challenges. During Jesus' journey to Calvary Jesus just exchanged a look with His mother. Such an exchange of look meant a lot to each other. It communicated everything. Mother communicated her whole strength, her whole support with an understanding heart. The look of His mother strengthened him to continue His journey which was the journey of culmination, the completion of His mission, the salvation of mankind.

Mercy Forgives

With her heart full of compassion she stood beneath the cross of her Son who bled to death. In her mercy and compassion, she forgave those who hurt her by hurting her dear Son. With mercy, she forgave and accepted those who crucified her Son. She who had welcomed the shepherds and Magi in her family forgave those disciples who rejected and denied Jesus at the time of the crucifixion. Not only that, she continued to show mercy by being with the apostles who were in their distress when Jesus left them. Her motherly

presence was their strength and courage.

It is to the Mother of God and Mother of men that the entire body of the faithful pours forth instant supplications. She, who aided the Church in the beginning, may now be exalted as she is above all the angels and saints. As she continues to intercede before her son in the fellowship of all the angels and saints, until all families of people, whether they are honoured with the title of Christian or whether they still do not know the Savior, may happily be gathered together in peace and harmony into one people of God, for the glory of the Most Holy and undivided Trinity.

When the hands and feet are in action the heart needs to remain in a loving attitude. Yet this combination needs patient training until it becomes part and parcel of our lives. Then the amount of the quality of mercy that is in our system can be measured. Possessing a loving attitude is the guiding principle of our practice of mercy. Jesus found his mother behind the scene preparing for miracles. Following the example of Mary, we are called to intervene when we see human needs. She showed that following Jesus is not with passivity but taking initiative for good.

Mother Mary desires to see that each one of us grow up as her children redeemed by the precious blood of her son: growing up in faith, growing up in charity. If we draw close to her, she will teach us how to be more matured in our following Christ. Let us ask ourselves a few questions: When do we come to the Mother of mercy: For what intention do we ask Mary's help? Is it to help the life of Jesus grow in us? Is it so that we can become more Christ-like? Like Mother Mary, do we show God's mercy with our fellow beings?

Merciful love is capable of withstanding the cross; capable of withstanding difficulties and challenges.

Mary - A Woman of Nazareth

Alex smm

Article contd... from last issue

Mary - Woman of Family

In the Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) by the Holy Father John Paul II on the role of the Christian families in the modern world, the Pope defines family as "the community of persons (n.18)." Everyone in the family must primarily respect the dignity of each other and keep in mind the goal, that is, to love. The Pope states that women in the family have their rights and role (n.22) and equal responsibility.

Joseph, Mary and Jesus together form a model family and Mary is part of this family in Nazareth. She fulfills her role as a woman in the family. As an ordinary woman of Nazareth, Mary would have fulfilled her role of wife and mother.⁹ She might have taught her son Jesus and played the role of the educator. As a wife, Mary cooperated with Joseph her spouse to care for the child Jesus and to protect the child.

Her parental care is outstanding when she as the mother of the neonatal, took the child and fled to Egypt. Her sacrifice as a woman while she was in Egypt as refugee, though not mentioned in any literature, is unforgettable. Her anxiety and worry for the child Jesus who was lost in Jerusalem is clear from the scriptures. Albeit the journey was tiresome, she, along with Joseph, searched for three days.

As a faithful Jewish mother, Mary took the boy Jesus to Jerusalem on different occasions to fulfil their duty as a practicing Jew. She taught Jesus religion and faith coupled with her own lived-out examples, her own pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Naturally like any other woman, Mary went to meet Jesus during his public ministry. As it is possible only for mothers, Mary accompanied her Son till the cross and participated in her son's passion and suffering.

⁹ Pope John Paul II, Letter to women, n. 2. *Thank you, women who are mothers!* You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God's own smile upon the newborn child, the one who guides your child's first steps, who helps it to grow, and who is the anchor as the child makes its way along the journey of life.

Thank you, women who are wives! You irrevocably join your future to that of your husbands, in a relationship of mutual giving, at the service of love and life.

Thank you, women who are daughters and women who are sisters! Into the heart of the family, and then of all society, you bring the richness of your sensitivity, your intuitiveness, your generosity and fidelity.

Thank you, women who work! You are present and active in every area of life-social, economic, cultural, artistic and political. In this way you make an indispensable contribution to the growth of a culture which unites reason and feeling, to a model of life ever open to the sense of "mystery", to the establishment of economic and political structures ever more worthy of humanity.

Thank you, consecrated women! Following the example of the greatest of women, the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, you open yourselves with obedience and fidelity to the gift of God's love. You help the Church and all mankind to experience a "spousal" relationship to God, one which magnificently expresses the fellowship which God wishes to establish with his creatures.

Thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.

She collected all her courage to stand at the foot of the cross and later to hold her own son's lifeless body. As a woman she did all her duty in the family of Nazareth. "The Church sees in Mary the highest expression of the "feminine genius" and she finds in Mary a source of constant inspiration. Mary called herself the "handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38). Through obedience to the Word of God she accepted her lofty yet not easy vocation as wife and mother in the family of Nazareth. Putting herself at God's service, she also put herself at the service of others: a service of love".¹⁰

Mary had two vocations: to be a mother and to remain a virgin. Like her, it is also the vocation of every woman of every age to be a mother and virgin. Virginity and motherhood are the two important dimensions in the female personality. They do not exclude each other but they mutually complement each other. It is the privilege of every woman to become a mother and remain virgin. Mary was a virgin-mother. In her, the virginity and motherhood found their full meaning. Motherhood implies from the beginning a special openness to the new person: and this is precisely the woman's "part". In this openness, in conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman "discovers herself through a sincere gift of self"¹¹. Every woman is to have this openness to participate in the creative work of God. It is the openness for the newness of life. For the celibate women, their motherhood takes the form of the spiritual motherhood. Virginity is the undivided unity in oneself and in relation to God and family. It is

being faithful and steadfast in one's vocation to be a lay person or a consecrated religious. Virginity is the symbol and expression of one's dedication of one's vocation. Mary's motherly virginity and virginal motherhood, depending upon one's state of life, must endow women to imitate her.

Mary a Model Woman

The role models that women of our age are exposed to are related to fashion, career, relationship, dating and marriage. But they are not exposed to the models who will guide their future as wives, mothers and daughters, etc. Often they are detrimental to moral and Christian motherhood. Mary is the all-time role model for women of every age and culture. She is the perfect woman who gives her own life-examples to love and sacrifice. The growth is not in imitating the male roles but in keeping honoring their own dignity and duty as woman. Women must recognize the unique value of femininity and their role in the world. Pope John Paul II says "A constant impulse has come from the icon of Mary, the 'ideal woman', ... but also [from] the courage of women martyrs who faced the cruelest torments with astounding fortitude, the witness of women exemplary for their radical commitment to the ascetic life, the daily dedication of countless wives and mothers in that 'domestic Church' that is the family and the charisms of the many women mystics who have also contributed to the growth of theological understanding, offering the Church invaluable guidance in grasping fully God's plan for women."¹²

¹⁰ Letter of Pope John Paul II to women, 1995, n 10.

¹¹ *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 18.

¹² Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 27.

Mary as wife and mother lived an exemplary life. Married women should look at Mary's commitment and imbibe them in their life. It is an important mission given to married women to teach their children and to bear witness to their family as spouses. Pope Paul VI, at the conclusion of Vatican II, addressed a few notable words to women: Wives, mothers of families, the first educators of the human race in the intimacy of the family circle, pass on to your sons and your daughters the traditions of your fathers at the same time that you prepare them for an unsearchable future. Always remember that by her children a mother belongs to that future which perhaps she will not see.

Mary is the model for the Church that worships Christ. In the second part of the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (n. 16-23), Mary is presented as the perfect model for believers. She is the model because she is the mother who listens, virgin in prayer, woman of faith, and virgin who offers. Mary is the one who listened to the Word of God, accepted it and put into practice. She believed what she heard and meditated on the Divine Word and lived it faithfully. Every believing woman is to imitate Mary in listening, reading and proclaiming the Word of God in the family and in the work environment. Mary obeyed with faith and completely surrendered her life to the will of God. By her faith and obedience Jesus was formed in her womb and salvation was brought to the world. Taking Mary as a model, women must show their profound faith in God and the Church. As Mary bore Christ and brought him forth, nurtured and gave growth to her Son, women must bring their children to the church, bring up their children in the holy faith and be

the cause for the growth of the Church.

Mary is the woman of prayer. She praised God through her joyful hymn "Magnificat." She prayed for the material needs and interceded for the people at the wedding at Cana. She gathered the apostles and the other disciples and believers around her and prayed constantly with them. It is the characteristics of women to pray and worship God. Generally, women have more faith and express it. Women need to imitate Mary by praising and worshipping God. They are to pray like Mary for the material goods and needs of themselves and of their family. As Mary took the boy child to the temple, women must accompany their children to church and pray with their children. As Mary gathered the community around her to pray, so must the women pray in the family or in the community. They must gather all to pray and be an example.

Mary is the virgin in offering. She offered herself to the salvific plan of God. When she bore her son, she offered him in the temple. When Jesus had to undergo passion and death, she offered her son to the Father and was willing to sacrifice her own son for the salvation of the world. Mary is an example for sacrifice. Women in general sacrifice and forego many things for the good of the family. Virgin in offering sets an example for women how they could offer everything to God and submit gracefully to the divine plan.

Mary is the teacher of all the children of God. Women are the educators of the family. Their duty is to teach their children faith and discipline. After being the mother, their next primary duty is to educate the children. Women are to teach the faith and holiness to their children. Mothers have played an important role

in forming the lives of the saints and contributed to their holiness. All women are to strive to imitate Mary in the path to holiness.

Mary is a woman of faith. At the Annunciation, Mary showed her deep faith and highest simplicity and unreserved or unconditional obedience. She believed in the words of the angel that “nothing will be impossible for God (Lk 1, 37) and she confessed and submitted herself completely to God as his 'bondslave' ¹³ (Lk 1, 38). It shows her close relationship with God. Mary's faith in God is exalted by Elizabeth by saying “and blessed is she who believed”¹⁴ that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord” (Lk 1, 45). In the scripture, the Word of God is seldom addressed directly to the women and women too believed and acted positively upon them (for example, Hagar - Gen 16; Deborah - Judges 4; Mary - Lk 1; Anna Lk 1,36ff). Mary is the *Porta Fidei* (door of faith). Mary is the symbol of Christian faith and embodiment of faith. Her faith is not a passive faith, but active and dynamic one. She had her own struggles and challenges in living her faith- her virgin conception which is the out of box reality, Jesus' own question 'don't you know that I have to be in my father's house? Jesus' words regarding Mary's visit during his public ministry 'who are my mother and brothers?' or 'woman, what do I have with you? My hour has not come.' These words would have challenged Mary of Nazareth. But Mary remained faithful to her Son till the very end at Golgotha. It is for this reason

the women of our own times can emulate Mary in their life and imitate her faith.

A Sorrowful Woman

Mary suffered due to her mission as the Mother of God (*Teotokos*). She suffered the misunderstanding of Joseph due to her virginal conception. She underwent the pain of becoming a fugitive in Egypt and being away from her own country and her own people. She made great sacrifices and took risks. In ten months, Mary walked the distance from Nazareth to Jerusalem twice, when she visited Elizabeth and as she came with Joseph to register as per the decree. The words of the old man in the Jerusalem temple pierced her heart and learning about the turbulent future of her first-born child. She suffered the loss of her only son when Jesus was lost in the temple in Jerusalem. The harsh words of Jesus in Jerusalem temple and during her visit to Jesus in his public ministry would have tortured her inner self throughout her life. She must have undergone unspeakable sorrows looking at her own son being ridiculed, insulted, making him carry the cross and nailing him to the cross in public view. No woman would have had the courage to accept it. The most painful experience of losing one's son while she is still alive is unbearable. Mary suffered silently and patiently. She is like any woman of today who suffers for one's own son. Her suffering is part of her motherhood which every woman suffers. Maternity per se contains innumerable sufferings and sacrifices. Mary as a woman

¹³ The Greek word *δούλη* is the feminine form of 'slave.' Mary identifies herself as bondmaid twice by her own mouth (Lk 1,38.48).

¹⁴ Luke uses the verb *πιστεύω* (to believe) while describing the character of Mary. The literal translation of the Greek participle (*πιστεύουσα*) is 'she, the believing one.' Technically the Greek participle functions also as a 'noun.'

bore them and stood steadfast in these moments setting an example for generations to come. Her song which says 'all generations will call me blessed' upholds that Mary is blessed because she underwent all the sufferings silently and won God's favor through them. She is the model for all the women who suffer due to their family.

Mary a Joyful Woman

Mary is not only the *mater dolorosa*, but she is also a woman of joy. Mary's canticle (Lk 1,46ff) expresses her joy and happiness in glorifying God. She praises and exalts God's grandeur. She sings from her inner most being of herself: soul (my soul glorifies the Lord). Soul is the seat and center of the inner life of the person from where the feelings, thinking, emotions, desires come. Her happiness and joy come from the fact that she recognizes God's mighty deeds in her life, his mercy, his goodness, etc. The Lord is the cause of her joy. Mary made others happy. She pleased God by her consent and she made Elizabeth and the child in her womb happy. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greetings the child in her womb leaped for joy (Lk 1,41.44). In her happiness, Mary did not forget God. She was mindful that it is her duty to speak well of God in the form of praise, thanksgiving and extoling. Biblical women praised God for his graciousness, for giving victory, for the deliverance, for the favors received, etc. Moses' sister Miriam praised, danced and sang with musical instrument (Ex 14), Hannah's praise (1 Sam 2). Mary imitates these biblical figures and joyfully praises God. In the medieval period, literature and art

depicted seven joys of Mary: Annunciation, Nativity of Jesus, Adoration of the magi, resurrection of Jesus, ascension of Jesus, the Pentecost, and her own coronation. There are many occasions for Mary to be happy and to rejoice in the Lord. When the angel Gabriel came to Mary, she was greeted with the words of joy: rejoice the favored one, the Lord is with you. You are favored among women (Lk 1,28). Mary is an example for every woman to praise and thank God. Women are to place God at the center (soul) of their lives and praise God continuously.

Conclusion

We know that Mary is both an ordinary as well as a glorious woman. She is a Jew as well as the Mother of God. From her normal and ordinary life, we learn lessons to be simple people of God. Her womanhood gives courage to the women of our times: the strength and power of women is not just in imitating men and taking their roles and places, but it is in living their special call to be the woman, created in the image of God. Empowerment of women not only consists of being equal to men and having equal rights and opportunity in everything, it consists of recognizing that women are made different from men and it is special and specific to them. The gender equality should not neglect feminine personality traits which gives them special identity. Mary lived as a dignified woman of her times without compromising her individuality and identity as a woman. Let Mary, the woman of her time, be the inspiration for the women of our times.

Mary Our Guide

Fr. Stephan

Article contd... from last issue

Opinion of the Church Fathers on Mary as a Guide and the Dogmas

St. Justin Martyr, the early Church's first great apologist, describes Mary as the "obedient virgin" through whom humanity receives its Saviour, in contrast to Eve, the "disobedient virgin," who brought death to the human race. St. Irenaeus established Mary as the New Eve who participates with Jesus Christ in the work of salvation, becoming through her obedience the "cause of salvation for herself and the whole human race." For St. Ambrose, Eve is called mother of the human race, but Mary is called Mother of salvation. St. Jerome summarized the patristic understanding of the New Eve as "*death through Eve, life through Mary.*"

The Second Vatican Council attests to this tremendous flourishing of Marian devotion from the early Church onward:

From the earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honoured under the title of Mother of God, whose protection the faithful take refuge together in prayer in all their perils and needs. Accordingly, following the Council of Ephesus, there was a remarkable growth in the cult of the People of God towards Mary, in veneration and love, in invocation and imitation, according to her own prophetic words: "all generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me (Luke 1:48) (Lumen Gentium, No. 66).

There has been no other besides her Son, the Mother of Jesus and the rightful doctrine

and devotion granted to her from the Scripture and the early Church, and further developed throughout the ages, has borne fruit in a proper respect for a person, a proper respect for the unique dignity of woman, and a new cultivation of all that is good in western civilization.

Mary Guides the Church

The early Church Fathers articulated the primary theological role of the Blessed Virgin as the "New Eve." Eve, the original "mother of the living," had played an instrumental though secondary role in the sin of Adam which resulted in the tragic fall of humanity from God's grace. However, Mary, as the new Mother of the living, played an instrumental though secondary role to Jesus, the New Adam, in redeeming and restoring the life of grace to the human family.

Marian Dogmas

The Marian dogmas and doctrines indeed reveal precisely who Mary is and what she does in God's plan of salvation for all nations and peoples. We will look at four of the central Catholic doctrinal truths regarding the Blessed Virgin Mary which have all been defined by the Church as "dogmas": *The Mother of God*, the *Perpetual Virginity*, the *Immaculate Conception*, and the *Assumption*.

The Mother of God: Mary's role as the Mother

Mary, as the new Mother of the living, played an instrumental though secondary role to Jesus, the New Adam, in redeeming and restoring the life of grace to the human family.

of God is revealed in the Sacred Scripture. At the Annunciation, the Angel Gabriel declares to Mary: "Behold, you shall conceive in your womb and shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.... shall be called Son of God" (Lk1:31, 35). In tradition, we find Mary's Divine Motherhood attested to in the Apostles' Creed. The Council of Ephesus solemnly declared the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother of God or "*Theotokos*" (literally the "God-bearer"). The council approved the teaching of St. Cyril of Alexandria who against the errors of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople declared:

If anyone does not confess that the Emmanuel (Christ) in truth is God and that on this account the Holy Virgin is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) in as much as she gave birth to the Word of God made flesh...let him be anathema.

The Nature of Motherhood: To have an accurate understanding of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of God, we must first have a clear understanding of the nature of motherhood itself. Therefore, St. Paul also witnesses to the Divine Maternity when he states in his letter to the Galatians: "When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). The truth of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Divine Motherhood and its corresponding dignity are found in these words of the Second Vatican Council:

"She is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace, she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth" (*Lumen Gentium*, No.53).

The Immaculate Conception: By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Magisterium had settled all principal objections, and petitions and formulated the papal definition of the Immaculate Conception. After consulting with the bishops of the world and establishing a theological commission to study the question, Bl. Pius IX decided to proclaim the doctrine as a solemn dogma on December 8, 1854. The papal document *Ineffabilis Deus* in 1854 proclaims as follows:

"We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which holds that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her conception, was preserved immune from all stain of sin, by a singular grace and privilege of the Omnipotent God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was revealed by God and must be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful".

The Assumption: The words of Vatican II well attest to the unique event of Mary's glorious Assumption as a proper earthly end to the one who, in all her dogmas, reflects a person of perfect obedience to God's will and of intimate and singular union with her Son, Our Lord:

Finally, the Immaculate Virgin preserved from all stain of original sin, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of Lords (Rev 19:16) and conqueror of sin and death (*Lumen Gentium*, No. 59).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* underscores how Our Lady's Assumption also serves as an "eschatological sign" for the Church. Pope Benedict XVI applies the dogma

of Mary's Assumption to her role as Spiritual Mother of all humanity when he says:

Mary was taken up body and soul into Heaven: there is even room in God for the body. Heaven is no longer a very remote sphere unknown to us. We have a mother in Heaven. And the mother of God, the Mother of the Son of God, is our Mother. He himself has said so. He made her our Mother when he said to the disciple and to all of us: "Behold, your Mother!" We have a Mother in Heaven. Heaven is open, Heaven has a heart.

Mary Guides as a Mother of all Peoples

Our Lord Says: "Behold, your Mother." He does not passively invite us to accept Mary as Mother; rather, he states the theological fact the Mary is the newly God-given Mother of each beloved disciple. Our remaining question then should not so much be, "Is Mary our Mother?" but more appropriately, "How do we properly behold his Mother, who is now *our Mother*?" Mary, in giving birth to Jesus, truly communicated to us the supernatural life of grace that allows us to become children of God. As explained by Pope St. Pius X in his famous Marian encyclical, *Ad diem illum*:

"Is not Mary the Mother of Christ? She is therefore our Mother also. He acquired a body composed like that of other men, but as Saviour of our race. He had a kind of spiritual and mystical body, which is the society of those who believe in Christ. Consequently, Mary bearing in her own womb the Saviour, may be said to have borne also those whose life was contained in the life of the Saviour. All of us, therefore have come forth from the womb of Mary as a body united to its head. Hence, in a spiritual and mystical sense, we are called

children of Mary, and she is the Mother of us all".

Mary - A Woman Guide like No Other

The Scriptures and the tradition of the Church offer some insight into the most significant moments in the life of the Blessed Virgin. She had materialized the providential bond and love between God and human being in a perfect form or manner that is the incarnation of God as a human person. By looking at the stories of the Immaculate Conception and Annunciation, we see a woman "full of grace" (Luke 1:28) who with unwavering faith and infinite love accepted God's word in her life. The birth, the childhood, and the so-called hidden life of Jesus of Nazareth demonstrate how humbly the Lord of all creation succumbed to the earthly laws of growth. They also show us the quiet humility of her who became the mother of the Son of God, who gave birth to Him, bathed Him and fed Him. It is she who taught and guided Him to walk, talk, pray, and love His friends and foes alike. Mary's presence by the Cross and during the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is a symbol of her spiritual motherhood of the entire Church community – that is of each and every one of us. Her Assumption and Coronation induce us to think of the ultimate goal of our life – eternal life in God's loving embrace.

Mary: A Guide to Listening

What gave rise to Mary's act of going to visit her relative Elizabeth? A word of God's Angel, 'Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son.' Mary knew how to listen to

Mary's presence by the Cross and during the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is a symbol of her spiritual motherhood of the entire Church community.

God attentively and presented her acceptance and availability to God. However, Mary listens to the events, interprets the events and pays attention to the reality of her life, does not stop abruptly rather goes after until grasping its meaning. Her kinswoman Elizabeth, who is already elderly, is expecting a child: this is the event. She understood that 'with God nothing will be impossible'. Thus she has witnessed the advantage of listening to God. Hence she guides us to listen to God who speaks to us through various ways, realities, people and events because the Lord is at the door of our life and knocks in many ways by putting signs on our path. Therefore, Mary is a guide to attentive listening to God and to the events of life.

Mary: A Guide to Cana and Calvary (decision-making)

Although Mary naturally stayed in the background during Christ's public life, God did arrange that his miraculous phase began at Cana at her request and that it be finished at Calvary as she stood beneath the cross. Mary knew and was very conscious that she was the handmaid of the Lord. Nevertheless, she was attentive to the events and the reality at the wedding. Thus she took courage to swim against the tide because she entrusted herself totally to the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us. On Calvary, Mary, who accepted Christ at the Annunciation on His terms as the Lamb to be slain surrenders her mother's rights lovingly and willingly though heart-broken, that her lamb

She guides us to listen to God who speaks to us through various ways, realities, people and events because the Lord is at the door of our life and knocks in many ways by putting signs on our path.

may die to remove the sins of the world. Hence we are guided to express our gratitude and thankfulness to priests for bringing Christ's real presence through the Eucharist and making us worthy to participate in his symbolic passion, death and resurrection. We often tend to let others decide for us or run away from reality but Mary's visit to Elizabeth even in her difficult situation proved powerful and courageous. Today she guides us to show how we need to discern the will of God by completely trusting in His providence that He would strengthen and stand by us at every step that we take towards him through Mary.

Mary: A Guide for consecration to Jesus through Mary

Marian consecration is not simply an added devotion or prayer, but rather, a new Marian way of life, a crowning of devotion to Our Lady that invites her and her powerful intercession into every aspect of the Christian's life. St. Louis de Montfort was the one who explained thoroughly the spiritual method "to Jesus through Mary" and shaped it into a definite mode of spiritual life. He does not propose some special or "extra prayers," but rather, a devotion which essentially consists of one single act which, under various formulas and conditions, we apply to our whole life, both interior and exterior. This devotion leads to a permanent disposition of living and acting habitually in dependence on our Blessed Mother; it embraces one's entire life, not just one's prayer times or specific religious acts.

Mary: A Guide to Holiness

Mary's role of Maternal Mediation with and under Jesus Christ, the one Mediator, has three fundamental aspects in the order of grace that

leads to holiness. First, Mary uniquely participated with Jesus Christ in reconciling God and man through the Redemption. For this mediatory role she has been called “Co-redemptrix” (meaning a secondary and subordinate participation in Jesus' Redemption of the world). Secondly, Mary gave birth to Jesus, source of all grace, and she distributes all the graces merited by Jesus on Calvary to the family that is all of humanity. This role of Mary as the person responsible for the distribution of graces is referred to as “Mediatrice of all graces.” Thirdly, her role of bringing the petitions and needs of the human family to the throne of Christ the King is her role as maternal “Advocate.”

Conclusion

The more we know of the extraordinary prerogatives of the Mother of God, the more we will love this Mother as our own. The more we will love this Mother, the more we will go to her with true confidence and hope in the midst of

our daily needs: in the face of our numerous domestic and national situations which cause us anxiety and worry in the presence of world concerns of plague and pandemic. Above all these, Mary lived the beatitudes of Jesus as none other. Therefore she kept her family as an example, model and holy for all of us to follow. Let us seek the intercession, as she is that woman who rejoiced in the presence of God who treasured everything in her heart, and who let herself be pierced by the sword. Mary is the saint among the saints, blessed above all others. She teaches us the way of holiness and she walks ever at our side. She does not let us remain fallen and at times she takes us into her arms without judging us. Our conversation with her consoles, frees and sanctifies us. Mary our Mother does not need a flood of words. She does not need us to tell her what is happening in our lives. All we need to do is whisper, time and time again: “Hail Mary” She will guide us to the living stream and salvation.

JOKES

How do you make Holy Water?

You take some regular water and boil the devil out of it.

Who was the smartest man in the Bible?

Abraham. He knew a Lot.

Which Bible character had no parents?

Joshua, son of Nun (Joshua 1:1).

What's the best way to study the Bible?

You Luke into it.

COVID and its Impact

Judith D'Souza

**'5 MEMBERS OF A FAMILY DIE OF COVID'
'23 DIE IN A HOSPITAL DUE TO LACK OF
OXYGEN SUPPLY'...**

These are the spine chilling headlines we get to see in the newspapers and other media.

At times we wonder when will this end?

What is life going to be after this?

The invisible virus which invaded the world more than a year ago has impacted every segment of life like health, employment, economy, education, food, security, religion - almost everything we know and depend on. Social life has come to a standstill as a lockdown was the only means feasible to control the spread of the pandemic. But the drastic measures taken resulted in multiple adverse effects - loss of livelihood being the biggest. All poor, homeless, and hungry citizens faced untold misery.

Working from home for the professionals and online schooling for the students became the new routine.

Towards the end of 2020 and in early 2021 there was some relief. We thought it was all over and life was going to be normal again. But the invisible monster came back and this time with an even bigger BANG. It hit us harder this time and didn't spare anybody - the old, the young, the middle aged, and the sole bread winners of many families. Even the religious - priests, bishops, and heads of institutions succumbed to it. The list is endless.

Some children lost both their parents. With the medical care system coming to a near collapse, lakhs of precious lives were lost. It is

heartbreaking to see the immediate family neither being able to be with their sick or dying loved ones nor give them a respectful burial or cremation. The lockdown which followed resulted in a large number of families struggling to make both ends meet. It has had a devastating impact on the marginalized. Not all low-income families could set up their children to receive online education, either because they could not afford a smart phone or there was poor connectivity at home. These children dropped out of school and the result - an increase in the number of child labourers nationwide.

In the midst of this misery, the services rendered by the healthcare workers is commendable. Doctors, nurses, the hospital staff, front line workers have toiled selflessly at the risk of their own lives. Many of them were eventually victims of the pandemic.

Sanitation workers too need a special mention. They were the unsung heroes. There were many others who took this crisis as a challenge or an opportunity to serve society. They were ordinary people who did some extraordinary work. They took the initiative to supply groceries and meals to the needy, personal protection kits to the caretakers and more than that, arrange for a decent funeral to the deceased irrespective of their caste or religion, giving great comfort to bereaved families. They were the true Angels sent by God!

With churches being closed due to the COVID protocol, we find solace in online masses and spiritual communion for the past

several months. Thanks to the several channels on the YouTube, for bringing our Church into our homes.

We do not know how much longer we have to endure this. The virus is mutating so rapidly day by day. The major variants have been christened with Greek letters - and we are already at Delta. Hopefully, the list will not continue till Omega! God save us!

Fortunately, vaccines have brought a ray of hope. Thanks to the ceaseless efforts of the research scientists.

We believe that every cloud has a silver lining. The world is under renovation. This too shall pass. Let us not give up hope and wait to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Till then stay home, stay safe!

JOKES

"Karl came out of the exam hall very sad. When asked he said, 'I didn't know the past tense of THINK. I THOUGHT and THOUGHT and finally wrote THUNK!

Why did Adam and Eve do math every day? They were told to be fruitful and multiply.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I want to subscribe/give a gift subscription for year/s to

Name :

Address :

Pincode :

CURRENT SUBSCRIPTION RATES

1 Copy	Rs. 35/-
1 Year (4 Issues)	Rs. 125/-
2 Years (8 Issues)	Rs. 250/-
3 Years (12 Issues)	Rs. 375/-

I am sending Rs./- by M. O. on / Bank Draft No. Date

(D.D. Should be drawn in favour of the **Director, Montfort Marian Centre,**

Maria Bhavan, Bangalore - 560 029)

Montfortian Activities in India

True Dedication to Mary

Secret of the Rosary

Secret of Mary

Montfort Pilgrimages

Montfort Publications

Marian Retreats

Marian Studies

Montfort Marian Spirituality

Montfort Lay Associates

Lenten Retreats

To Jesus Through Mary

Youth Programmes

Legion of Mary Animation



Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (1 Pet 5:7).

Pope Francis

