



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

MAY 2012

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FLYING TO MARY

THE MOTHER OF GOD IS A MOTHER OF MERCY TO US

By: Fr. Andrew Apostoli, CFR

Our Lady is absolutely unique among all God's creatures, because she stands in a special relationship to the Most Holy Trinity. She is the loving daughter of God the Father. She is the loving mother of God the Son. She is the loving spouse of God the Holy Spirit.

She is also our mother. Why? Because she gave birth to Jesus, who came to bring us the fullness of life. Since Mary joined with Jesus so intimately in his redemptive work, she is a mother bringing life to all of her children. She is the true Eve, or "mother of the living," being both the mother of the whole Church and, in a very personal way, a mother to each of us. Mary, our Mother of Mercy, shows us her compassionate love and prepares our hearts to receive the mercy of God. We can trust Mary to always answer our prayers, bringing them before her divine Son.

A Prayer with Wings. One of my favorite prayers is the Memorare, which has been used for hundreds of years by millions of people to seek the Blessed Mother's help. When Our Lady hears the first sentence of that beautiful prayer, do you think that she can ever turn a deaf ear? What confidence is shown in these words! What trust!

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of Virgins, my Mother! To you do I come; before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petition, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

And that is the way we should always approach the Mother of Mercy. Don't assume that your prayer hasn't been heard if nothing seems to happen right away. If you don't get an immediate answer to your prayer, you will not be the first one who had to keep knocking persistently. You may have to keep asking a number of times or seeking for a while! I have learned this myself from my own experience. It is also confirmed in the life stories of great saints.

One of them is Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She gave me my greatest earthly possession: a set of rosary beads I always carry with me. It is a simple rosary, made from little beads that grow in India. These beads are popularly called "Job's tears" because every bead looks like a little teardrop. This rosary is so precious to me because it was given to me by someone I knew would someday be a saint.

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OVERVIEW FOR THE MONTH

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The month of May is dedicated to The Blessed Virgin Mary. It is Mary's month and we all rejoice with the Queen of Heaven through the prayers of the Holy Liturgy and the Holy Rosary.

Two Marian liturgical celebrations are commemorated in May. When Ascension falls in May, the Saturday after the Ascension of Our Lord is traditionally celebrated as the Feast of Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles. The liturgy commemorates the period of time after the Ascension when the apostles were gathered in prayer with Mary and the women in the Upper Room. On May 31, in the United States, we celebrate the Commemoration of the Visitation. When Mary heard that her elderly relative, Elizabeth, was expecting a child, she hurried to help her. Mary's service brought Christ to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Pentecost, the birth of the Church, is also among the celebrations of May. The Church marks as her birthday the Descent of the Holy Spirit on Mary and the Apostles. At the 'birth' of the world, the Holy Spirit -- the Breath of God -- was the "mighty wind [that] swept over the waters" (Gen 1:2); at the birth of the Church He is present again "like the rush of a mighty wind" to recreate the world in the image of Christ through His Church (Acts 2:2). □

FEASTS FOR MAY

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of May are:

- 1 Joseph the Worker, Opt. Mem.
- 2 Athanasius, Memorial
- 3 Philip and James, Feast
- 10 St. Damien Joseph de Veuster, priest, Opt. Mem.
- 14 Matthias, Feast
- 15 Isidore the Farmer (USA), Opt. Mem.
- 18 John I, Opt. Mem.
- 20 Ascension, Solemnity
- 21 Christopher Magallanes and companions; Eugene de Mazenod (Canada), Opt. Mem.
- 22 Rita of Cascia, Opt. Mem.
- 25 Bede the Venerable; Gregory VII; Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, Opt. Mem.
- 26 Philip Neri, Memorial
- 27 Pentecost; Whitsunday, Sunday
- 31 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Feast □

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

ST. JOSEPH THE WORKER FEAST DAY – MAY 1

*Excerpted from Saints of the Roman Calendar
By Enzo Lodi*

"May Day" has long been dedicated to labor and the working man. It falls on the first day of the month that is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pope Pius XII expressed the hope that this feast would accentuate the dignity of labor and would bring a spiritual dimension to labor unions. It is eminently fitting that St. Joseph, a working man who became the foster-father of Christ and patron of the universal Church, should be honored on this day.

The texts of the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours provide a catechetical synthesis of the significance of human labor seen in the light of faith. The Opening Prayer states that God, the creator and ruler of the universe, has called men and women in every age to develop and use their talents for the good of others. The Office of Readings, taken from the document of the Second Vatican Council on the Church in the modern world, develops this idea. In every type of labor we are obeying the command of God given in Genesis 2:15 and repeated in the responsory for the Office of Readings. The responsory for the Canticle of Zechariah says that "St. Joseph faithfully practiced the carpenter's trade. He is a

shining example for all workers." Then, in the second part of the Opening Prayer, we ask that we may do the work that God has asked of us and come to the rewards he has promised. In the Prayer after Communion we ask: "May our lives manifest your love; may we rejoice forever in your peace."



The liturgy for this feast vindicates the right to work, and this is a message that needs to be heard and heeded in our modern society. In many of the documents issued by Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II, reference is made to the Christian spirit that should permeate one's work, after the example of St. Joseph. In addition to this, there is a special dignity and value to the work done in caring for the family. The Office of Readings contains an excerpt from the Vatican II document on the modern world: "Where men and women, in the course of gaining a livelihood for themselves and their families, offer appropriate service to society, they can be confident that

their personal efforts promote the work of the Creator, confer benefits on their fellowmen, and help to realize God's plan in history" (no. 34). □

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD MAY 20

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The Ascension of the Lord is a day of great celebration. Christ Jesus, victorious over every enemy, has ascended to heaven! He returns to the Father, taking with him as "captives" the hearts of those who love him. All power and authority in heaven and earth now belong to him. Can you imagine the joy of the whole heavenly court as they welcome Jesus home? Can you picture all of them bowing low, acknowledging him as their valiant King of Glory?

Jesus, the man of sorrows acquainted with such grief; Jesus, beaten, scourged, and put to death; Jesus, mocked as a false prophet, ridiculed as a fake king, taunted as a powerless priest, has been vindicated! And now that he is enthroned, he seeks to share his victory with his people. He has brought with him into glory that same human nature that was humbled to death. And in so doing, he has raised up all of human nature and made it capable of intimate and eternal communion with God.

How should we honor this day? By lifting up our hearts and our voices. By proclaiming that the gates of heaven are open and that we can approach God confidently to receive all the grace we need. Jesus may have left us, but he will never stop caring for us. He is constantly pouring out his love and offering us abundant gifts that will build his church.

St. Augustine once said: "Our Lord ascends to heaven, let our hearts ascend with him." Scripture offers the same advice: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

So on this great and glorious day, let the Lord bring you into his throne room. Let your voice join with all the angels and saints in the praise, worship, and adoration that will go on for all eternity!

"O Jesus, slain for our sins, you are now King of kings and Lord of lords. We love you and adore you." □

PENTECOST SUNDAY MAY 27

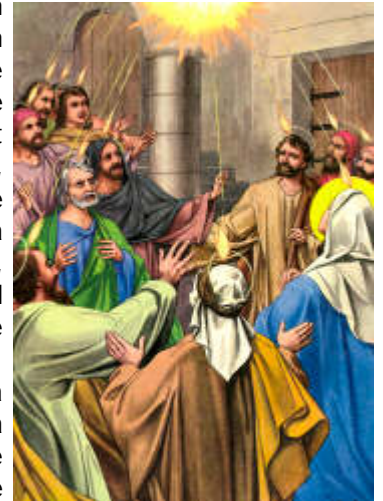
Excerpted from
The Church's Year of Grace, Pius Parsch

After Jesus had ascended to heaven from Mt. Olivet, the apostles and disciples returned to the Holy City. They remained together in the Upper Room or Cenacle, the place where Jesus had appeared to them and which may well be called the first Christian church. About a hundred and twenty persons were assembled there. They chose

Matthias as an apostle in place of the unhappy Judas; they prayed and waited for the Paraclete.

Ten days had passed, it was Sunday, the seventh Sunday after the resurrection. At about nine o'clock in the morning, as they were together praying fervently, the Holy Spirit descended upon them. Note how all the great theophanies in Christ's life occurred during the course of prayer. After His baptism, for instance, when Jesus was praying the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove; likewise, it was during prayer at night that the transfiguration took place on Tabor. Surely too it was while Mary was praying that Gabriel delivered his message, and the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. Pentecost followed precedent. The small community of Christians had prepared themselves through prayer for the coming of the Paraclete. The same is true at Mass today, every day; through prayer we ready our souls for the advent of the Spirit.

The descent upon the apostles was internal and invisible in nature although accompanied by certain visible phenomena. There came a mighty roar, like the onrush of a violent wind. It came suddenly, from heaven; but unlike storms that strike a structure from without, this one penetrated and filled the room where the disciples were gathered. Therefore it was not a natural wind, it was a miracle peculiar to the occasion. A second visible sign consisted in tongues of fire that descended upon each one present. These fiery tongues gave visible evidence that the Holy Spirit had descended upon them.



At Mass, particularly at holy Communion, the power of the Holy Spirit comes down upon us; fiery tongues will not be seen, but invisible tongues of fire will not be absent. There was still another external manifestation of the Holy Spirit; the apostles and disciples were enabled to speak various languages.

After the roar of the wind many of Jerusalem's pilgrims hurried to the Cenacle. Pentecost was one of the three festivals which obliged all Jews to be present in Jerusalem. Jews from distant lands, and Jewish converts from paganism too, attended these feasts. As a result, a colorful crowd speaking a variety of languages surrounded the house. Now the apostles, who so shortly before had hid in fear behind locked doors, came forth and courageously walked among the multitude speaking to each in his native tongue. It was indeed amazing! Galileans, and multilingual?

But the malicious too were present; they had the answer. Nothing marvelous at all! Those Galileans were simply drunk, and their drunken babble sounded like a foreign language! Peter showed no hesitation in answering the charge. None of their number, he said, were intoxicated; it was but nine o'clock in the morning, and at that hour men usually are sober. What the multitude saw was, in fact, the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: In those days (of the Messiah), God will pour forth His Spirit upon men and they will prophesy. . . . Then the apostle pointed his words more directly against the accusers: they had killed Jesus, had nailed Him to the Cross; but God had awakened Him and after His departure to heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit.

The pilgrims who had heard Peter give this first pentecostal sermon "were pierced to the heart and said: Brethren, what shall we do? But Peter said to them: Repent and be baptized; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Three thousand responded.

One final question: why the miracle of tongues? In answer, recall the story regarding the tower of Babel. Puffed up by pride, men attempted to build a tower that would touch the heavens. To punish their sin, God confused their speech. Sin causes confusion and division. Now Christ came to gather all men into His Church and thereby to unite them to Himself. This should result in creating but one family of nations again. To this blessed state the miracle of tongues points.

Yes, even we as individuals have a gift of tongues which all men can understand. It is the gift of love infused into us by the Holy Spirit. Love unites, love is a common language, by means of love we can speak to all nations.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of thy Faithful; and enkindle in them the fire of Thy love. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created, and thou shalt renew the face of the earth. □

**THE VISITATION OF
THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
MAY 31**

*Excerpted from
The Reed of God, Caryll Houselander*

And Mary rising up in those days went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda. [Lk. 1:39]

How lyrical that is, the opening sentence of St. Luke's description of the Visitation. We can feel the rush of warmth and kindness, the sudden urgency of love that sent that girl hurrying over the hills. "Those days" in which she rose on that impulse were the days in which Christ was being formed in her, the impulse was his impulse.

Many women, if they were expecting a child, would refuse to hurry over the hills on a visit of pure kindness. They would say they had a duty to themselves and to their unborn child which came before anything or anyone else.

The Mother of God considered no such thing. Elizabeth was going to have a child, too, and although Mary's own child was God, she could not forget Elizabeth's need -- almost incredible to us, but characteristic of her.

She greeted her cousin Elizabeth, and at the sound of her voice, John quickened in his mother's womb and leapt for joy.

I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly. [Jn. 10:10] Even before He was born His presence gave life.

With what piercing shouts of joy does this story of Christ



unfold! First the conception of a child in a child's heart, and then this first salutation, an infant leaping for joy in his mother's womb, knowing the hidden Christ and leaping into

life.

How did Elizabeth herself know what had happened to Our Lady? What made her realize that this little cousin who was so familiar to her was the mother of her God?

She knew it by the child within herself, by the quickening into life which was a leap of joy.

If we practice this contemplation taught and shown to us by Our Lady, we will find that our experience is like hers.

If Christ is growing in us, if we are at peace, recollected, because we know that however insignificant our life seems to be, from it He is forming Himself; if we go with eager wills, "in haste," to wherever our circumstances compel us, because we believe that He desires to be in that place, we shall find that we are driven more and more to act on the impulse of His love.

And the answer we shall get from others to those impulses will be an awakening into life, or the leap into joy of the already wakened life within them. □

KNOWING OUR SAINTS

SAINT RITA OF CASCIA FEAST DAY – MAY 22

*Excerpted from
Heavenly Friends, Rosalie Marie Levy*

Rita's childhood was one of happiness to her parents. To satisfy her desire of a life of union with God by prayer, her parents fitted up a little room in their home as an oratory, where she spent all her spare moments. At the age of twelve, however, she desired to consecrate herself to God in the religious state. Pious though her parents were, their tearful pleadings to postpone her noble purpose prevailed on Rita, and they gave her in marriage, at the age of eighteen, to an impulsive, irascible young man, who was well fitted to try the patience and virtue of the holy girl. Two sons were born to them, each inheriting their father's quarrelsome temperament.

Rita continued her accustomed devotions, and her sanctity and prayers finally won her husband's heart so that he willingly consented that she continue her acts of devotion.

Eighteen years had elapsed since her marriage, when her husband was murdered by an old enemy; both of her sons died shortly after. Rita's former desire to consecrate herself to God again took possession of her. Three times she sought admittance among the Augustinian Nuns in Cascia, but her request was refused each time, and she returned to her home in Rocca Porrena. God Himself, however, supported her cause. One night as Rita was praying earnestly in her humble home she heard herself called by name, while someone knocked at the door. In a miraculous way she was conducted to the monastic enclosure, no entrance having been opened. Astonished at the miracle, the Nuns received Rita, and soon enrolled her among their number.

St. Rita's hidden, simple life in religion was distinguished by obedience and charity; she performed many extreme penances. After hearing a sermon on the Passion of Christ she returned to her cell; kneeling before her crucifix, she implored: "Let me, my Jesus share in Thy suffering, at least of one of Thy thorns". Her prayer was answered. Suddenly one of the thorns detached and fastened itself in her forehead so deeply that she could not remove it. The wound became worse, and gangrene set in. Because of the foul odor emanating from the wound, she was



denied the companionship of the other Sisters, and this for fifteen years.

Miraculous power was soon recognized in Rita. When Pope Nicholas IV proclaimed a jubilee at Rome, Rita desired to attend. Permission was granted on condition that her wound would be healed. This came about only for the duration of the trip. Upon her return to the monastery the wound from the thorn reappeared, and remained until her death.

As St. Rita was dying, she requested a relative to bring her a rose from her old home at Rocca Porrena. Although it was not the season for roses, the relative went and found a rose in full bloom. For this reason roses are blessed in the Saint's honor.

After St. Rita's death, in 1457, her face became beautifully radiant, while the odor from her wound was as fragrant as that of the roses she loved so much. The sweet odor spread through the convent and into the church, where it has continued ever since. Her body has remained incorrupt to this day; the face is beautiful and well preserved.

When St. Rita died the lowly cell was aglow with heavenly light, while the great bell of the monastery rang of itself. A relative with a paralyzed arm, upon touching the sacred remains, was cured. A carpenter, who had known the Saint, offered to make the coffin. Immediately he recovered the use of his long stiffened hands.

As one of the solemn acts of his jubilee, Pope Leo XIII canonized St. Rita on the Feast of the Ascension, May 24, 1900. □

Purity

"... I am always pleased on prayers with true meaning that only your heart can tell".

*Jesus of Nazareth, Your Divine Master
12012003*

Bible Reading

"... Interpretation of My Words (Holy Scriptures) not guided by My Spirit is evil, unholy. Seek guidance from My Spirit as you pray and read My words."

*Jesus of Nazareth, Your Divine Teacher
07092003*

GOD TOUCHED ME

GETTING TO KNOW MY MOTHER MARY'S WORK IS SOMETIMES HIDDEN, BUT SHE'S NO ABSENTEE PARENT

The Author has asked to remain anonymous.

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A loving mother nurtures and cares for her children in countless ways, many of them hidden and unnoticed. And sometimes, it's not until those children reach maturity that they begin to appreciate her and understand what she has done for them. In my relationship with Mary, I was one of those late bloomers.

I grew up in a Catholic family and attended a Catholic grade school, but for much of my life, I didn't know Jesus' mother very well. Of course, I learned about her and was taught to esteem her and pray to her. My best friend and I used to hold our own private May crownings -- even when it wasn't May! We would make a circle of flowers and place it on a small statue of Mary. Then, after processing through the house, we reverently placed the statue on an altar we had built in my friend's bedroom closet.

By the time I was ten or eleven, though, any confidence I felt in praying to Mary had given way to an unhealthy fear of the Lord. Thinking about all the things I did wrong, I became scared of God and worried that I might not get into heaven. I did not understand who Jesus was, except from Christmas carols, and the Holy Ghost was just a name recited in prayers.

In my teen years, Vatican II was taking place, but I do not remember much discussion about it or what it meant for me personally. My focus was school, dating, and being with friends. My spiritual life consisted of going to Mass and Confession, as I had been instructed. I was content with that.

Are You Listening? When I was twenty, I married my high school sweetheart. We came from very different backgrounds -- I from a close-knit family, and he from a loosely connected, bickering one. His parents, divorced since he was very young, lived far apart and paid him little attention. There were danger signals, but I was head over heels in love. This man was everything to me. He loved me, too, especially since I gave him the attention and time he did not get growing up.

After I became pregnant, though, I saw a different side of my husband: He was jealous. He couldn't share me -- not even with our child. He needed constant attention. When he didn't get it, he became verbally abusive. Over the next few years, our marriage slowly fell apart.

I believe my husband became unfaithful long before I was aware of it. When I finally realized there was another woman, I was devastated. Despite our difficulties, I had

depended on his strength and his love -- and I loved him still! Now what would I do?

I needed help. But with my family a thousand miles away, I turned to the mother I had prayed to as a girl. Using the rosary, which was the only kind of prayer I really knew, I begged Mary to help me. I prayed two or three rosaries a day, but the more I pleaded, the more my marriage fell apart. It seemed that Mary was not listening.

Mad at Mary. Then one day, my daughter's first grade teacher called, concerned because my little girl was crying every day in class. I was shocked. At home, I was the one who was upset and cried all the time. My daughter always responded so lovingly that I had no idea her little heart was breaking, too.

Something changed in me at that point. I stopped crying. I put aside my grief and started becoming a strong mother. I also stopped praying to Mary. A cold spot filled the place in my heart where she had been. I could not forgive her for not hearing my cries and putting my marriage back together.

I did consult our parish priest, who told me to accept that the marriage was over and to move on. So I did. I was a changed person. I got a job, saved money, and moved near my family to begin a new life. I became more involved at church and volunteered to teach CCD. Through this, I began to understand that God the Father was not the scary figure I had thought. In fact, he loved me and was helping me to start over! But I was still angry at Mary.

Over the next decade, I thrived. My first marriage was annulled, and I remarried. I went back to school, became more active at church, volunteered with the Girl Scouts, and advanced in my job. My creative gifts blossomed, and I began painting and drawing. But despite this personal and professional growth, I still had a spiritual emptiness that I did not understand. And that old cold spot for Mary still remained.

My Spirit Rejoices! God knew my spiritual longings, and he guided me to the charismatic prayer group that formed in my parish in 1990. It was here that I began to understand who Jesus really is and to acknowledge him as my Lord and Savior. I learned how the Holy Spirit works in our lives and was baptized in the Spirit. In the process, I let go of all the pain from my first marriage and learned how blessed it is to forgive.

I had changed again! And this time, I felt truly alive -- on fire for the Lord!

Something else happened as I met Jesus: My anger toward his mother vanished. I found Mary again and felt her especially close, especially as I prayed her Magnificat. "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior" (Luke 1:46-47).

Mary's words described the stirrings I was feeling. Even today, they renew my spirit and evoke my wonder at all that God has done for me.

With greater maturity, I realized, too, that Mary had not abandoned me in my time of need. She had been interceding for me in that background way that mothers sometimes have -- as at Cana, when she entrusted the newlyweds' need to Jesus by telling the servants: "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). Mary, knowing what I needed, had helped me find my way out of the darkness of a bad marriage into the light of her Son.

Today, Mary is my role model, my inspiration on how to live as a woman of faith. I marvel as I consider her steadfast trust and openness to God in the face of constant challenges and testing. Would Joseph reject her? Where could she safely have her baby? What did it mean that her heart would be pierced (Luke 2:35)? What about losing Jesus in Jerusalem? What about seeing him threatened after he began his earthly ministry? And Calvary -- what agony to see her Son crucified!

In her sorrows, as in her joys, even when she could not see the light, Mary never wavered from the stance she declared at the Annunciation: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

I want to be like this woman of faith, my mother. How blessed I am to have discovered her with me -- loving, guiding, interceding, and magnifying the Lord for all he has done and will do for his people! ☐

***If you have any personal articles
or God's miracle in your life you want to share
with the devotees, we may be reached at
the following e-mail addresses
and phone numbers:
eablp@aol.com and/or ladipatsee@gmail.com
(702) 274-4315 and/or (213) 364-8235***

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Flying to Mary

A Saint's "Flying Novena." At the time I first met Mother Teresa, I was teaching a group of her sisters in the South Bronx. I will never forget Mother Teresa's words to me as she put the beads in my hands. She thanked me for teaching her sisters and said, "You know that the Blessed Mother is everywhere bringing people to her Son." Then she shared a great secret of the Missionaries of Charity. She told me that when the sisters needed something in a hurry, they prayed the "flying novena." This flying novena consists of saying the Memorare nine times in a row. Compared to traveling long distances by ground transportation, flying gets you there a whole lot faster and more directly. Mother Teresa knew full well the power of Our Lady's intercession with

her divine Son. Trying to pray on our own is like using ground transportation; seeking Our Lady's intercession is the spiritual equivalent of flying.

Mother Teresa then related an incident she was involved with that clearly showed the effectiveness of the flying novena. She said that the Missionaries of Charity had a convent in East Berlin, which was then under Communist control. The superior there had become quite ill. Mother Teresa said to me, Father, I had to remove her and send her back to India. I had to replace her. But because East Berlin was in a very difficult situation, especially dealing with the Communists, not just any sister could handle the situation. I had to bring in a capable sister from India. This meant I needed a visa, but a government official was telling us we would have to wait six months to process this visa. So I gathered the sisters together, and we started to pray the "flying novena" -- nine Memorares in a row! When we got to the eighth Memorare, the phone rang. It was a government official telling us again that we would have to wait six months for the visa.

The sisters kept praying. When they finished the ninth Memorare, Mother Teresa spoke to Our Lady more informally. "Mary, we just got done thanking you for obtaining this favor for us, but you didn't, so we are going to ask you again." And she immediately started another nine Memorares. She got to the eighth Memorare the second time through, and the phone rang again. It was another government official, informing her that she could have the visa immediately!

Isn't that the faith that moves mountains? In her time of need, where did Mother Teresa go? To the intercession of the Mother of Mercy: "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided"

Mary is truly a mother who hears the pleas of all her children. When we cry out in prayer to Mary, her motherly ear -- her motherly heart -- is always listening. ☐

Fr. Andrew Apostoli, CFR, a member of the community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, has been active in teaching, preaching retreats and parish missions, and giving spiritual direction. He has produced several television series and written numerous books. This article is adapted from *Following Mary to Jesus: Our Lady as Mother, Teacher, and Advocate*.

MEDITATION AND COMMENTARY

BLESSED IS SHE WHO BELIEVED TREASURING THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST WITH MARY

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Men may work from sun to sun," says the old proverb, "but a woman's work is never done." Has there ever been a woman who lived out these words more than the Virgin Mary?

She has been working for her family for the past two thousand years -- and her work is still unfinished. In fact, she won't stop or take a day off until she sees her son, Jesus, come in glory and bring all his brothers and sisters home to be with him. Good mother that she is, Mary will take advantage of every opportunity to help us see Jesus more clearly, to overcome our hardships, and to grow in love for one another. And why shouldn't she? She wants to see her whole family peaceful, united, and happy.

In addition to being our mother, Mary is also our model. God, who is grace, chose to fill this woman with his grace and turn her life into a reflection of his own holiness and love. As a result, Mary has become attractive to every generation, moving countless millions of people to imitate her attitude and approach to life. The purity, love, and obedience that she demonstrated speak deeply to our hearts because they embody the very essence of the holiness that we all long for.

Clearly, Mary is held in such honor, not because of her education, her place in society, or her wealth. Mary has been honored for centuries because of the way she carried Christ -- both for those nine months in her womb and for a lifetime in her heart.

Treasuring and Pondering. Because she was surrounded by and immersed in God's wondrous grace, Mary's pregnancy was unlike any other woman's in the world. After all, it began in a rather strange way -- in a meeting with the archangel Gabriel and an overshadowing by the Holy Spirit. Then, Mary saw how God opened the eyes of her fiancé, Joseph, with a dream and convinced him to accept her and her new baby. Later, she heard her cousin Elizabeth proclaim that she was blessed above all women and that her baby, John, had leapt in her womb. Considering all these wondrous happenings, how many

times during her pregnancy do you think Mary turned her thoughts inward, reached down with her hands, and felt the baby Jesus moving inside of her?

Throughout her pregnancy -- and even more so after Jesus was born -- Mary absorbed everything that was happening in her and around her. With her intellect, she was learning more and more about the ways of God. With her imagination she was wondering how this could be possible. She was storing up in her memory every unique experience, even as her conscience was telling her that it was all good. And this moved her emotions to love God all the more and to rejoice in his power and love. In all these ways, Mary "treasured and pondered" God's work in her life (Luke 2:19).

While Mary was pondering with her own human mind, the Holy Spirit was also at work in her heart, filling her with the secret wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 2:7). Through the Spirit, Mary began to grasp God's plan on a more profound level than she had previously known. She was lifted up to the presence of God, and her experiences filled her with joy and confidence.

All of these sound so beautiful, but it would be a mistake to think that Mary's walk with God was effortless. Mary chose to ponder the things of God because they had touched her deeply. Some of them even perplexed and troubled her (Luke 2:35,48). If Mary had stopped listening to God and pondering his words, she ran the same risk of growing distant

from him that we all run when we put aside our relationship with the Lord for a time. Every day, Mary had to turn to God and say, "I want more of you."

When Mary was enlightened by the Holy Spirit -- as on the day of the Annunciation, or when she and Elizabeth met -- she made sure to remember what had happened so that later on she could ponder what she had seen and heard. As Mary stored up these things in her heart, she grew in wisdom and understanding, and as a result, she was able to embrace future events -- such as the wedding feast at Cana or even at Calvary -- even more deeply.

Blessed Because She Believed. When Mary arrived at her home, Elizabeth exclaimed, "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord" (Luke 1:45). Mary's faith allowed her to accept God's proposal unconditionally. She didn't have to understand everything nor have all of the details spelled out. She simply accepted God and trusted him. Her heart was like a clean tablet, ready for the Spirit

*... when your heart is open and
pure, I dwell.*

*Many say LORD to Me
but their works are far
and their hearts closed.*

*I do not even hesitate to call them
HYPOCRITES.*

*My children, remember
I read not your lips but your
hearts".*

*-- Jesus of Nazareth
Your Loving and Merciful God*

to write his plans on it (2 Corinthians 3:3). This is the kind of faith God wants to give to each one of us. This is the posture he wants us to have whenever we come before him in prayer.

The Fathers of the Church loved to compare Mary's faithful response to Eve's lack of faith. Where Eve accepted the serpent's words and brought disobedience and death into the world, Mary accepted God's words and gave birth to the holy and obedient Savior of the world. When she was tempted, Eve lost her clarity and her faith. As a result, she chose the path of self-glory and self-gratification. Mary, on the other hand, held fast to the Lord in times of temptation and so resisted the appeal of selfish gain that had ensnared Eve. Mary certainly was tempted, but she didn't yield. Instead, she abandoned herself to God and received his strength and encouragement.

Pointing to the countless generations that would come after the first disciples, Jesus once told Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (John 20:29). What is amazing is that these words -- which are forever applicable to those of us who have not seen -- were initially applicable to Mary. She was the first human being who believed in Jesus before she had seen him.

Treading Difficult Paths. Mary's faith was not a one-time issue. It was a daily walk just like ours, through pleasant fields and dangerous pits alike. Just think: Her life was probably just as filled with temptation as ours is. Imagine the satisfaction that Satan would have had if he could cause the Mother of God to sin.

Temptation doesn't just come directly from the devil, either. Mary surely felt the pain of gossip as her townsfolk speculated on the cause of her surprise pregnancy. She must have been hurt as well when Jesus -- only twelve years old -- rebuked her at the Temple (Luke 2:48-50). Then, on Good Friday, as a sword of grief pierced her heart, Mary must have been tempted to lash out in anger and hatred against those who had tortured and killed her son. But in each situation, she didn't give in. The words from Scripture that applied to Jesus -- that he was tempted like us in every way but never sinned -- also speak in a special way about Mary, his mother (Hebrews 4:15).

Like Mary, we too have been created to be a spiritual house, a dwelling place for the Lord. Mary became this temple as she yielded in faith to the Holy Spirit, giving God the freedom to do whatever he wanted to do in her life. Now, we can do the same thing. We can give ourselves over to God on a daily basis and yield ourselves to whatever he wants to do in us. Imagine how comforting it is to know that as we try to surrender to God every day, Mary is right there with us, interceding for us, asking God to fill us with the same kind of grace that he placed in her.

Mary and the Rosary. We know that the goal of the Christian life is to fix our eyes on Jesus and to live every day in a way that makes us more and more like him. Who knew Jesus better, who watched him more closely, who pondered his words more intently than Mary? No one.

As we pray the rosary, we have a chance to join Mary in contemplating and celebrating the mysteries of Christ. Mary's constant prayer for us and with us is that we would grow closer to Jesus. Through the witness of her life and the intercession she now makes for us, Mary wants to teach us how to carry Jesus in our hearts each day. She wants to show us how to give ourselves over to Jesus with ever-increasing faith. Nothing pleases her more than when we experience intimacy with Jesus. These lofty goals shouldn't surprise us. After all, Mary is our mother. □

REMINDERS

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- You are enjoined to practice Eucharistic Adoration at least an hour a week. Let us render God adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition. Kindly check with your respective parishes for schedules. Some churches are open 24-hours for Eucharistic Adoration.
- Pray at least one rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary daily.
- Pray the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy at 3:00 PM and at 9:00 PM daily.
- Pray the Angelus at 6:00 PM daily.
- Pray the Pro-Life Scriptural Rosary [www.rosaryoftheunborn.com] to make reparation for the crime of abortion.
- During May, encourage your children to show special devotion to the Blessed Mother. Daily recitation of the Rosary is one way of doing so; keeping fresh flowers before the painting of the Mother and Child in your home may be another. The Litany to the Blessed Virgin may be recited in addition. Instruct your children about the many benefits which can be derived from a wholesome devotion to Our Lady.
- Think of ways to make reparation to Mary for the sins committed against Jesus and Mary. A very good one is to join the **First Saturday devotion**; another is the **2000 Hail Mary devotion**.
- If you have any personal articles or God's miracle in your life you want to share with the devotees, we will gladly add it on those months when the article is relevant. Please submit your article by the second week of the present month so that it can be included in the next month's release. Write what's in your mind and heart and not worry about grammar, syntax, spelling or style. Our guardian angels in heaven and on earth will help us edit the article. □

HOW TO PREPARE FOR PENTECOST WISDOM FROM THE SAINTS ON YIELDING TO THE SPIRIT

*Reprinted with Permission
The Word Among Us*

There are four simple steps that will help us yield to the Spirit and sense his working in our lives. As you can probably guess, we didn't come up with these steps on our own.

Men and women have been following them for centuries, testing them out, refining them, and sharing their experiences with later generations. So let's listen in on their advice, and see if it can help us as well.

1. Quiet Your Heart. It is important that we spend a certain time everyday disconnected from devices such as cell phones, TV's, computers, radio stations, so that we can reconnect with the Lord. Let us listen to the Saints' advice:

In order to hear the voice of God, one has to have silence in one's soul and to keep silence; not a gloomy silence, but an interior silence; that is to say, recollection in God. -- St. Faustina Kowalska

Cast away your troublesome cares, put aside your wearisome distractions. Give yourself a little leisure to converse with God, and take your rest awhile in him. Enter into the secret chamber of your heart; leave everything outside but God . . . and when you have shut the door, then truly seek him. -- St. Anselm

Prayer grows from an ear, mind, and tongue that have lived in silence with God, for in the silence of the heart God speaks. -- Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

2. Form Your Mind. What good is quieting our hearts if we don't have anything to focus our attention on? So on your quiet time with God, focus on the truths of God like liturgical readings of the day, life of a saint, articles/books of good spiritual guide, sing hymns of God and His love, or anything that teaches you about life in the kingdom of God. Now, what do the saints have to say:

Anyone who thirsts for God eagerly studies and meditates on the inspired Word, knowing that there he is certain to find the one for whom he thirsts. - St. Bernard of Clairvaux

My God, how great you are, how wonderful in all your works! Teach me your will that I may begin and end all my actions for your greater glory. Speak to me, O my God, and let me know your will, for I am ready to fulfill every one of your commands. - St. John Neumann

God will speak to you by such inspirations, such interior lights, such manifestations of his goodness, such sweet touches in your heart, such tokens of forgiveness, such experience of peace, such hopes of heaven, such rejoicings within you, such sweetness of his grace, such loving and close embraces -- in a word, by many voices of

love -- that he will be well understood by those whom he loves, and who seek for nothing but him alone. -- St. Alphonsus Liguori

3. Write It Down. Keep a journal of your times of prayer. Write down whatever you think may be coming from the Holy Spirit even if it sounds silly, write it down. It may be just a feeling of love, a new insight into a Scripture passage, an idea about how to care for a friend, a situation of forgiveness and repentance, anything. This will help keep them fresh in your mind. And the saints' advice are:

Write down the vision; Make it plain upon tablets . . . For the vision is a witness for the appointed time, a testimony to the end; it will not dis-appoint. If it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late. -- The Prophet Habakkuk (2:2-3)

I shall meditate as I have been accustomed, in the little Italian church on Twelfth Street . . . and I shall rest happy in the presence of Christ on the altar, and then I shall come home and I shall write . . . and try to catch some of these things that happen to bring me nearer to God, to catch them and put them down on paper. -- Dorothy Day

The good thoughts which God gives you in prayer are relics. Gather them carefully together in order to translate them into acts and you will gladden the heart of God. -- St. Vincent de Paul

4. Keep It Fresh. Try to find two or three opportunities each day when you can stop for a moment, quiet your heart and sense the Holy Spirit's presence. Recall what you wrote down in your prayer journal earlier in the day. Do a quick review of the day so far and repent if something pricks your conscience or thank the Holy Spirit for helping you in a situation you faced. Get in the habit of listening. Develop a sensitive heart. And the saints say:

One way of recalling the mind easily during prayer and of keeping it more tranquil is not to let your mind race during the day, but to hold it close to the presence of God. Being in the habit of coming back to him from time to time, you will find it easy to remain peaceful during your prayer time, or at least to bring your mind back from distraction. -- Brother Lawrence

I will abandon myself fully to the Holy Spirit, allowing myself to be led wher-ever and whenever the Spirit wants, accompanying the Spirit, for my part, with effective and strong resolutions and serious discernment . . . The Holy Spirit descends upon us with great gentleness, never with a racket. -- St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

Aspire to God with short but frequent outpourings of the heart; admire his bounty; invoke his aid; cast yourself in spirit at the foot of the cross; adore his goodness; treat with him of your salvation; give him your whole soul a thousand times in the day. -- St. Francis de Sales

THANK YOU

... A SMALL AND SIMPLE PHRASE THAT COMES FROM A GRATEFUL HEART!

PSALM 106:2

FOR PRAYERS HEARD AND PETITIONS GRANTED

Thank you, Eternal Father, for Your Will that transformed our sorrow into joy, our tears of anguish into tears of thanksgiving. Our physical and spiritual recreation, through Your Healing Hands, kept us enclosed and revived in our hope for renewed lives as we look up to the heavens praising You, in Jesus' most Holy Name, through the intercession of Mary, our Blessed Mother, and of the angels and saints.

MOMMY ANDRING ANTONIO CELEBRATED HER 99TH BIRTHDAY!

FROM NONIE

Text sent on her way home from UCLA:

Oncologist said pathology test results are very good. No cancer anywhere. No further treatment. Thank God! I go onward for recovery. Am enjoying the care and attention I am getting from Guen and Chad. Might get used to it.

FROM VICTOR

As we serve God in our own little ways, impression of this service becomes glaring only when our generosity encompasses those times when we are asked to share our treasure for the propagation of our faith.

*Thank you ALL very much for supporting our
DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY celebration!*



2000 Hail Mary Devotion

The Spiritual Army of God the Father and the 2000 Hail Mary Group of Northern California acknowledge with thanks our generous May sponsors of the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion. We are grateful that we have merited their partnership and support in providing a venue of spirituality and fellowship for the devotees of our Blessed Mother. The devotion continues to be a constant success.

Las Vegas, Nevada

Evelyn & Robert Pua

Los Angeles, California

Nonie Alapag | Tessie Almero | Rose Ong
Gleyce Rosario | Marilyn Saraza | Aida Terashima

Our Coordinator in the Philippines

Letty Rollan – Metro Manila

A PRAYER FOR MOTHERS

Loving God,

As a mother gives life and nourishment to her children,

So you watch over your Church.

Bless these women,

That they may be strengthened as Christian mothers.

Let the example of their faith and love shine forth.

Grant that we, their sons and daughters,

May honor them always

With a spirit of profound respect.

Grant this through Christ our lord.

Amen.

FINAL JOURNEY OF A DEVOTEE - A FAREWELL NOTE

By V. Araneta

It was almost six and a half years ago when I first met Celerina Pablico. A face of a non-believer, behest with questions on practically everything about the teachings of the Church and the sacrament of reconciliation, to name a few. As she struggled with her faith then, I was certain that this lady will be back into God's fold in not so distant time. Yes, within four weeks of our initial meeting, God taught her the true meaning of complete abandonment!



She was told by the Lord that healing will come and that rejoicing was set on Christmas day of 2005 – and we all rejoiced with her. I have seen the epitome of happiness when I saw her picture at one of our Christmas parties, dancing her heart away with friends.

That time I was so thankful to God that He had once again manifested His healing love to one of His new clients -- a woman who once was a non-believer.

Several years had passed and my prayer room became Celerina's sanctuary in times of her personal pain and anguish. As always, our ever loving God opened His arms and wrapped them around her in the solitude of His words and messages; in the comfort of His Divine refuge and place of sanctuary which the Lord intimately calls the Sacred Room.

Vividly, in my mind, I recall that fateful Saturday of February 25, 2012 – Celerina, at the Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master – had her final session of prayer and healing in which she intimately responded to God's message saying that she feels her life will soon end. I honestly could not believe that life was slowly withering away on this sorrowing woman who had God as her last recourse. But I knew that Celerina's last expression of love would always be for her God, for her son, her grandchildren, her relatives and friends. For me, too, that expression of love I will miss; the hug and laughter I gave for her comfort and the smile, the kiss of thankfulness, and the I love you's that she gave in return.

Our dear Celerina entered the light of eternal realm, that place our Lord has prepared for her, the place where there will be no more pain and no more tears to trouble her heart. This Divine Abode is where Celerina meets her God where she can now vividly reconcile His words with His Divine Face.

Our farewell to a true mother and a true friend. Till we meet again -- in the sanctity of His Divine Place, a place of serenity, a place where your soul will languish in eternal peace.

Good journey Celerina and Godspeed.

" . . . You do not get closer to the Father by the mere mentioning of My name but by the institutions I have introduced, the Commandments, sacraments and My Passion and your hearts of sincere. These are the pathways to My Father's Heart".

*Jesus of Nazareth,
Your Divine Teacher
03152005*

" . . . I am your Mother Mary. When you become closer to God, the relationship becomes strong only when you always want to be with Him. This is only strengthened through your frequent visitation to the Eucharist. The gift of God is His own presence, in the person of my son Jesus, in the unity of all mankind through the Eucharist.

As you pray, offer and open your hearts to God without reservation. Remember that the love of God for His creation is beyond human intellect. Nothing is withheld, it's an outpouring of love for mankind. Remember God loves to call your attention. Sometimes He needs to knock at the door of your heart with a loud call, a very loud call.

Pray my beads everyday and meditate on each bead as you see the door opens before God's throne through the words of His Son's birth, passion, death and resurrection for the salvation of man.

I thank you my children for listening to my call."

*- Mary, Your Lady of the Rosary
04282012*

DEVOTION SCHEDULE



THE SPIRITUAL ARMY OF GOD THE FATHER

cordially invites you to the following devotions:

IN LOS ANGELES:

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

THE CONVENT OF THE SISTER DISCIPLES OF THE DIVINE MASTER | 501 N. BEAUDRY AVENUE | LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA |
(213) 250-7962

HOLY MASS STARTS AT 8:30 A.M. | 1ST SATURDAY DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS FOLLOW.

DEVOTION TO GOD THE FATHER

EVERY 1ST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

THE MONASTERY OF THE ANGELS | 1977 CARMEN AVENUE ON GOWER | LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA | (323) 466-2186

11:20 A.M. - ROSARY TO THE FATHER | 11:50 A.M. - HOLY MASS

1:00 P.M. - EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

CONFESSION ONGOING FROM 11:20 A.M. TO 11:45 P.M.

2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION – MAY 19, 2012

AT THE CONVENT OF THE SISTER DISCIPLES OF THE DIVINE MASTER | STARTING AT 8:30 A.M.

PLEASE CALL MRS. NORY JOSE AT (310) 367-6557 IF YOU WISH TO BECOME A SPONSOR
OF THE 2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION.

IN LAS VEGAS:

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS START AT 1:00 P.M. | A CENACLE FOLLOWS.

DEVOTION TO GOD THE FATHER

2:00 TO 3:30 P.M.

AT THE CENACLE HOUSE IN THE ENCLAVE | 8455 WEST SAHARA AVENUE #172, | LAS VEGAS, NV 89117.

PLEASE CALL EVELYN AT (702) 274-4315 FOR ENTRY TO THE ENCLAVE OR FOR MORE INFORMATION.

2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION – MAY 12, 2012

PLEASE CALL (702) 255-9616 OR (702) 274-4315 FOR

DATES AND VENUES FOR THE COMING MONTHS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION OR IF YOU WISH TO SPONSOR THE DEVOTION.

IN LAUGHLIN, NEVADA:

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC CHURCH | 3055 EL MIRAGE WAY

HOLY MASS STARTS AT 8:00 A.M. DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS FOLLOW.

IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA:

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION

PLEASE CALL (650) 766-2071 FOR DATES AND VENUES FOR THE COMING MONTHS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION.

FOR SACRAMENTO:

PLEASE CALL PRECY RIETA (916) 564-3733 | CARING STURGILL (916) 897-3194 | MARIA ROSARIO (916) 230-7756.

IN SAN DIEGO

ROSARY TO THE FATHER

MONDAY – SATURDAY AFTER THE 8:00 A.M. MASS [LOOK FOR IRIS HAJ]

ST. MARY'S CHURCH | 1160 S. BROADWAY | ESCONDIDO, CA 92025

IN THE PHILIPPINES

2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION - METRO MANILA AREA

LETTY ROLLAN HAS ORGANIZED THE 2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION IN VARIOUS AREAS OF METRO MANILA
THROUGH THE MEMBERS OF THE "MOTHER BUTLER."

PLEASE TEXT MOBILE @ (011 +63 +2) 916- 384-9300 AND/OR | LANDLINE 939-4677 TO FIND THE VENUE CLOSEST TO YOU.