



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

December 2012



**LOVING GOD,
MAY OUR HEARTS RESOUND
WITH THE PROPHETS' PROMISES
FULFILLED IN EMMANUEL,
GOD-WITH-US,
JESUS OUR LORD.**

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MARY'S LITTLE LAMB

Adrian Rogers

"And she brought forth her first born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.... For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord.' " Luke 2:7,11

A little lamb was born in Bethlehem. The great I AM was born a lamb. Most of us would never have heard of Bethlehem, a village south of Jerusalem, had not a little Lamb been born there. But His birth there was not accidental. It had been prophesied for centuries.

"But thou Bethlehem, Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

Did you know that for centuries Passover lambs were raised in Bethlehem? In those shepherds' fields outside Bethlehem, a very special breed of sacrificial lamb was raised and nurtured to be brought to Jerusalem at Passover to be slaughtered to cover the people's sins. How fitting that Mary's Lamb, God's perfect Lamb, the Lord Jesus, would be born there! And He was born in a stable. How fitting that a sacrificial Lamb would be born in a stable! This Lamb came to be the final Passover lamb, the one sacrificed for sin forever. Your destiny, my destiny, the destiny of the world was wrapped up in Mary's little Lamb.

He did not have His beginning that night in Bethlehem, however. Mary's Lamb is the Lord of heaven, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. He is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), prophesied centuries before His birth.

Exodus chapter 12 tells us that God's plan for redeeming His people Israel from Egypt was a plan wrapped up in a lamb. In stark contrast, the symbol of Egypt, worn on the crown and scepter of the Pharaohs, was a coiled serpent. In this battle we see a gentle Lamb and a venomous, hissing, poisonous serpent. Of all of Earth's creatures, the most gentle, meek, and defenseless is a lamb. It has no fangs, no claws, it cannot run, it cannot fight, and it can frighten nothing. A lamb seems to say, "Are you hungry? Eat me. Are you cold? Shear me." A lamb seems to present itself to the slaughter.

What a picture of the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of Bethlehem Who said, "No man taketh it (my life) from Me, but I lay it down..." (John 10:18). When brought before His accusers, he "opened not His mouth."

In Exodus God said, "Take the lamb's blood and put it on the doorposts and lintel of the house. My angel of judgment is coming through the land of Egypt, but when I see the blood, I will pass over you." Now, they could have put a perfect living lamb outside that door, but it would have done no good. Salvation does not come from the life of Christ but from the death of Christ. Salvation is not learning lessons from the life of Christ, but receiving life from the death of Christ. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," for the Bible says, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22)

What a wonderful Savior we have in Mary's Lamb, the Son of God born that first Christmas night!

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OVERVIEW FOR THE MONTH

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The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, which is celebrated on December 8. The first 24 days of December fall during the liturgical season known as Advent and are represented by the liturgical color purple. The remaining days of December mark the beginning of the Christmas season. The liturgical color changes to white or gold — a symbol of joy, purity and innocence.

December is filled with expectation and celebration. Preparation is the key word for the first 24 days of December. Everyone is getting ready for Christmas — shopping and decorating, baking and cleaning. Too often, however, we are so busy with the material preparations that we lose sight of the real reason for our activity.

Christmas is a Christian feast — and we must reclaim it as such! In the same way that a family eagerly prepares for a baby, so in Advent should we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. We should keep Advent as a season of waiting and longing, of conversion and of hope and keep our thoughts on the incredible love and humility of our God in taking on the flesh of the Virgin Mary. Let us not forget to prepare a peaceful place in our hearts wherein our Savior may come to dwell.

The best person we can turn to for help during Advent is Mary, Christ's and our Mother. She awaited the day of His birth with more eagerness than any other human being. Her preparation was complete in every respect. Let's crown our preparation and borrow something of Mary's prayerfulness, her purity and whole-hearted submission to God's will. ☐

FEASTS FOR DECEMBER

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

- 3 Francis Xavier, Memorial
- 6 Nicholas, Opt. Mem.
- 7 Ambrose, Memorial
- 8 Immaculate Conception, Solemnity
- 11 Damasus I, Opt. Mem.
- 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe (USA), Feast
- 13 Lucy, Memorial
- 14 John of the Cross, Memorial
- 21 Peter Canisius, Opt. Mem.
- 25 Christmas, Solemnity
- 26 Stephen, Feast
- 27 John, Feast
- 28 Holy Innocents, Feast
- 29 Thomas Becket, Opt. Mem.
- 30 Holy Family, Feast
- 31 Sylvester I, Opt. Mem.

The feast of St. Juan Diego (December 9) is superseded by the Sunday liturgy. ☐

OUR CENACLE CORNER

*Seeking a deeper relationship with
God through meditation of passages
from Holy Scriptures*

MARY, OUR BLESSED MOTHER

The Mother of God

- Genesis 3:15
- Isaiah 7:14
- Luke 1:43

Full of Grace Before Incarnation

- Luke 1:26-28

Mary's Total Obedience to God More Important than Her Motherhood

- Luke 11:27-28

Mary, Queen of Heaven

- Rev 12:1

Mary, Our Blessed Mother

- John 19:26-27
- Rev 12:17

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION DEFINED BY PIUS IX

By Pope John Paul II

Down the centuries, the conviction that Mary was preserved from every stain of sin from her conception, so that she is to be called all holy, gradually gained ground in the liturgy and theology. At the start of the 19th century, this development led to a petition drive for a dogmatic definition of the privilege of the Immaculate Conception.

Around the middle of the century with the intention of accepting this request, Pope Pius IX after consulting the theologians, questioned the Bishops about the opportuneness and the possibility of such a definition, convoking as it were a "council in writing". The result was significant: the vast majority of the 604 Bishops gave a positive response to the question.

After such an extensive consultation which emphasized my venerable Predecessor's concern to express the Church's faith in the definition of the dogma, he set about preparing the document with equal care.

Blessed Virgin is free from every stain of sin.

The special commission of theologians set up by Pius IX to determine the revealed doctrine assigned the essential role to ecclesial practice. And this criterion influenced the formulation of the dogma, which preferred expressions taken from the Church's lived experience, from the faith and worship of the Christian people, to scholastic definitions.

Finally in 1854, with the Bull *Ineffabilis*, Pius IX solemnly proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception: "... We declare, pronounce and define that the doctrine which asserts that the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God, and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, was preserved free from every stain of original sin is a doctrine revealed by God and, for this reason, must be firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful" (DS 2803).

The proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception expresses the essential datum of faith. Pope Alexander VII, in the Bull *Sollicitudo* of 1661, spoke of the preservation of Mary's soul "in its creation and infusion into the body" (DS 2017). Pius IX's definition, however, prescind from all explanations about how the soul is infused into the body and attributes to the person of Mary, at the first moment of her conception, the fact of her being preserved from every stain of original sin.

The freedom "from every stain of original sin" entails as a positive consequence the total freedom from all sin as well as the proclamation of Mary's perfect holiness, a doctrine to which the dogmatic definition makes a fundamental

contribution. In fact, the negative formulation of the Marian privilege, which resulted from the earlier controversies about original sin that arose in the West, must always be complemented by the positive expression of Mary's holiness more explicitly stressed in the Eastern tradition.

Pius IX's definition refers only to the freedom from original sin and does not explicitly include the freedom from concupiscence. Nevertheless, Mary's complete preservation from every stain of sin also has as a consequence her freedom from concupiscence, a disordered tendency which, according to the Council of Trent, comes from sin and inclines to sin (DS 1515). 3. Granted "by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God", this preservation from original sin is an absolutely gratuitous divine favour, which Mary received at the first moment of her existence.

The dogmatic definition does not say that this singular privilege is unique, but let that be intuited. The affirmation of this uniqueness, however, is explicitly stated in the Encyclical *Fulgens corona* of 1953, where Pope Pius XII speaks of "the very singular privilege which was never granted to another person" (AAS 45 [1953], 580), thus excluding the possibility, maintained by some but without foundation, of attributing this privilege also to St Joseph.

The Virgin Mother received the singular grace of being immaculately conceived "in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race", that is, of his universal redeeming action.

The text of the dogmatic definition does not expressly declare that Mary was redeemed, but the same Bull *Ineffabilis* states elsewhere that "she was redeemed in the most sublime way". This is the extraordinary truth: Christ was the redeemer of his Mother and carried out his redemptive action in her "in the most perfect way" (*Fulgens corona*, AAS 45 [1953], 581), from the first moment of her existence. The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Church "admires and exalts in Mary the most excellent fruit of the Redemption" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 103).

Solemn definition serves the faith of God's People

This solemnly proclaimed doctrine is expressly termed a "doctrine revealed by God". Pope Pius IX adds that it must be "firmly and constantly believed by all the faithful". Consequently, whoever does not make this doctrine his own, or maintains an opinion contrary to it, "is shipwrecked in faith" and "separates himself from Catholic unity".

In proclaiming the truth of this dogma of the Immaculate Conception, my venerable Predecessor was conscious of exercising his power of infallible teaching as the universal Pastor of the Church, which several years later would be

solemnly defined at the First Vatican Council. Thus he put his infallible Magisterium into action as a service to the faith of God's People, and it is significant that he did so by defining Mary's privilege. □

OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

www.catholicculture.org

"Hear me and understand well, my son the least, that nothing should frighten or grieve you. Let not your heart be disturbed. Do not fear that sickness, nor any other sickness or anguish. Am I not here, who is your Mother? Are you not under my protection? Am I not your health? Are you not happily within my fold? What else do you wish? Do not grieve nor be disturbed by anything."

- Our Lady to Juan Diego

In the winter of 1531, a poor, 57-year-old Aztec Indian living five miles outside of Mexico City encountered a miraculous happening on his way to morning Mass. First



he heard strange music coming from Tepeyac Hill, and then he heard a woman's voice calling his name. Juan Diego climbed the hill and encountered a young woman, appearing to be of his own people in physical appearance and dress. The woman identified herself as the Virgin Mary, and told Juan Diego to ask the bishop of Mexico City to

build a church on the hill to assist in the conversion of the nation and be a source of consolation to the people.

Juan Diego obeyed the request, but the bishop was skeptical regarding the message, even though he perceived that Juan was a humble, and well-meaning Catholic. Juan reported the bishop's doubt to Our Lady at Tepeyac Hill, and she asked him to return to the bishop once again, bearing the same message. The bishop once again heard the story, and told Juan Diego to ask Our Lady for a sign that it was indeed herself that wished for the church to be built.

When he returned to the hill, Mary gave Juan Diego such a sign. Miraculously, roses appeared on the hill in the middle of winter, and Juan gathered them in his tilma, or cloak. Our Lady arranged the roses in his tilma with her own hands, and Juan returned to the bishop's presence. When Juan released the tilma, allowing the flowers to fall to the floor, it was revealed that a miraculous image of Our Lady had imprinted itself on his tilma (see above).

The bishop immediately fell to his knees, and came to believe in Juan Diego's message. A church was built on

the spot of the apparition, as Mary had requested, and eighth million people converted to Catholicism in a short period of time upon hearing of or viewing the miraculous image of Our Lady.

The tilma of Juan Diego has been the subject of much modern research. The tilma, woven out of coarse cactus fiber, should have disintegrated after 20 years, but although over 500 years have passed the tilma is still in perfect condition. The pupils of Mary in the picture reflect the Indians and clergy present at the time of the first revelation of the image. No paint was used, and chemical analysis has not been able to identify the color imprint. Additionally, studies have revealed that the stars on Mary's mantle match exactly what a Mexican would have seen in the sky in December of 1531. □

CHRISTMAS: THE LORD'S BIRTH

From the Congregation for the Clergy
www.clerus.org

The great solemnity that shows the world that the Word incarnate, the Savior of mankind, is finally born. God becoming truly man is an enormous event [...]. Something truly happens that goes beyond any evolutionary process: the fusion of man and God, the creature and the Creator. It is not the progression of another step in the evolutionary process, but the eruption of a personal action, founded on love, that from this point forward reveals to men new space and possibilities. (J Ratzinger in A Conversation with P Seewald: God and the World, 2001, p. 197).

Christmas says to us: alone we can't profoundly change the world to remedy it. Alone, we can make the world better or worse, but we can't save it. Christ came



therefore, because left to ourselves; we couldn't escape the 'mortal disease' that has enveloped us from the first moment of conception in our mother's womb. This gives us hope, true hope, and true Christian optimism: I can't do it but He is there! This is the mystery of grace synthesized in the human figure of God incarnate.

Christmas Eve and Christmas day are moments of contemplation. We consider, in many dimensions, the mystery of love that was incarnated for us. First of all, we contemplate the light and joy, without forgetting Jesus and Mary's sorrows and sufferings, and the many difficulties that had surrounded them: the cold, the uncomfortable place, the dangers..... It would be good to accompany these thoughts by reciting and meditating

slowly on the Holy Rosary, preferably in front of a crib. 'Blessed grotto of Bethlehem that testified to the wonders! Who, in this hour would not turn our hearts? Who would not prefer the opulent palace of the King?' (P. Guéranger, *L'Anno Liturgico*, Alba 1959 [orig. franc. 1841], I, p. 122).

Listen to the way that St. Bonaventura, the seraphic doctor, invites us to contemplate this scene in his 'Meditation on the life of Jesus Christ': 'You have also lingered, bent your knee, adored the Lord God, venerated His Mother and greeted Joseph, the holy old man, with reverence. Therefore, kiss the feet of the baby Jesus, who lies in the manger, and pray that the Holy Virgin will allow you to hold Him. Take Him between your arms, hold Him and see His lovable face, kiss it with reverence and rejoice with Him. You can do this because He has come to bring salvation to sinners and He has humbly conversed with them, finally giving Himself as food'. (cit in Guéranger, pp. 136-137)

Christmas also reminds us of the great mystery of God's people, of the Church acquired through Christ's blood, animated by the life giving Spirit, governed by the legitimate shepherds in communion with the successor of Peter. On this day in which the Word came to earth, assuming human nature, body, and soul, how can we not think about His Mystical Body that is animated by the Holy Spirit? 'For this reason, by no weak analogy, [the Church] is compared to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature inseparably united to Him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in the building up of the body' (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, n.8).

Holy Christmas also reminds us of the mystery of Mary as Mother of God, mother of the Incarnated Word, and mother of His mystical body, the Church. Christmas encourages us to contemplate Jesus together with Mary, reflecting on Jesus with 'His mother', as recounted many times in the Gospels. If our faith must be fully evangelical, it cannot neglect a sane and profound devotion to the Mother of God, as she shows us the easiest way to reach Jesus. □

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

From the Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy

Since the sixth century, on December 28, the Church has celebrated the memory of those children killed because of Herod's rage against Christ (cf. Mt 2:16-17). Liturgical tradition refers to them as the "Holy Innocents" and regards them as martyrs. Throughout the centuries Christian art, poetry and popular piety have enfolded the memory of the "tender flock of lambs"(125) with sentiments of tenderness and sympathy. These sentiments are also accompanied by a note of indignation against the violence with which they were taken from their mothers' arms and killed.

In our own times, children suffer innumerable forms of violence which threaten their lives, dignity and right to education. On this day, it is appropriate to recall the vast host of children not yet born who have been killed under the cover of laws permitting abortion, which is an abominable crime. Mindful of these specific problems, popular piety in many places has inspired acts of worship as well as displays of charity which provide assistance to pregnant mothers, encourage adoption and the promotion of the education of children.

As recorded in the gospel of Matthew, after the visit of the Magi, Herod, in rage and jealousy, slaughtered all the baby boys in Bethlehem and surrounding countryside in an attempt to destroy his perceived rival, the infant Messiah. These "innocents" are honored by the Church as martyrs.

In countries where our own innocents are daily being slaughtered by abortion, this feast day is a special time to remember the unborn, to pray for their cause, and perhaps to

picket or pray at facilities where unborn babies are killed through abortion.

This would be a good day to begin a Novena for the Unborn.

The collect for the Holy Innocents may be said just before the blessing of the evening meal, or at night prayers.

The ancient Coventry Carol is a mournful lullaby to the Holy Innocents.

Family observances of this feast day have traditionally included serving baby food (oatmeal or pureed fruits), especially to the youngest member of the family. Another custom is eating a light-colored pudding with a red strawberry or raspberry sauce as a reminder of the blood of the tiny infant martyrs. While some adults may find this rather gory, many children appreciate this symbolism without the squeamishness their parents may feel.

Parents may also want to begin a nightly blessing of their children. Simply trace the sign of the cross on their foreheads while saying "May God bless you in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit". □



THE HOLY FAMILY

Excerpted from Bread and the Word, A.M. Roguet

Marriage is too often conceived as the sacrament which unites a man and a woman to form a couple. In reality, marriage establishes a family, and its purpose is to increase the number of the elect, through the bodily and spiritual fecundity of the Christian spouses.

Every marriage intends children. Although Mary and Joseph were not united in a carnal way, their marriage is a true marriage: an indissoluble, exclusive union, wholly subordinated to the child. Mary and Joseph are united only in order to bring Jesus into the world, to protect and raise him. They have only one child, but he contains the whole of mankind, even as Isaac, an only child, fulfilled the promise made to Abraham of a countless progeny.

The purpose of every marriage is to establish a Christian family. The Holy Family observed the religious laws of Israel; it went in pilgrimage to Jerusalem every year with other Jewish families (Lk. 2:41). Jesus saddens and amazes his father and his mother because to their will and company he prefers "to be in his Father's house". Thus it may happen that God's will obliges the family to make disconcerting sacrifices. Yet every Christian family must live in harmony and in prayer, which are the pledges of joy and union.

"He remained obedient to them." Jesus was God. And through the fullness of grace Mary stood above Joseph. Nevertheless — if we except the event in the Temple — Joseph remained the head of the family; he took the initiative (as when the Holy Family fled to Egypt), and in Nazareth Jesus obeyed his parents. □



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Mary's Little Lamb

What a wonderful Savior we have in Mary's Lamb, the Son of God born that first Christmas night!

Jesus came as He did, born of a virgin, to be what He was, sinless. He was what He was, sinless, to do what He did, die for our sins. And He died for our sins so that He, being what He was, might make us what we were not: children of God! He was a special Lamb, a slain Lamb, a saving Lamb, "...Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7)

May I ask you a question? In this Christmas season, have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

*Mary had a little Lamb.
His fleece was white as snow.*

*Son of God from Heaven above,
for sinners here below.*

*Mary's Son, Eternal God, He — the
Great I Am,*

*With wool so white on Christmas night
became a little Lamb.*

*Mary had a little Lamb.
His fleece was white as snow.*

*That spotless Lamb was crucified
to pay the debt I owe.*

*Oh, spotless Lamb, with wool so white,
Thy crimson blood, I know,*

*Can take away my crimson sin,
and wash me white as snow.*

KNOWING OUR SAINTS

ST. PETER CANISIUS

www.americancatholic.org

The energetic life of Peter Canisius should demolish any stereotypes we may have of the life of a saint as dull or routine. Peter lived his 76 years at a pace which must be considered heroic, even in our time of rapid change. A man blessed with many talents, Peter is an excellent example of the scriptural man who develops his talents for the sake of the Lord's work.

He was one of the most important figures in the Catholic Reformation in Germany. His was such a key role that he has often been called the "second apostle of Germany" in that his life parallels the earlier work of Boniface (June 5).

Although Peter once accused himself of idleness in his youth, he could not have been idle too long, for at the age of 19 he received a master's degree from the university at Cologne. Soon afterwards he met Peter Faber, the first disciple of Ignatius Loyola, who influenced Peter so much that he joined the recently formed Society of Jesus.

At this early age Peter had already taken up a practice he continued throughout his life—a process of study, reflection, prayer and writing. After his ordination in 1546, he became widely known for his editions of the writings of St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. Leo the Great. Besides this reflective literary bent, Peter had a zeal for the apostolate. He could often be found visiting the sick or prisoners, even when his assigned duties in other areas were more than enough to keep most people fully occupied.

In 1547 Peter attended several sessions of the Council of Trent, whose decrees he was later assigned to implement. After a brief teaching assignment at the Jesuit college at Messina, Peter was entrusted with the mission to Germany—from that point on his life's work. He taught in several universities and was instrumental in

establishing many colleges and seminaries. He wrote a catechism that explained the Catholic faith in a way which common people could understand—a great need of that age.

Renowned as a popular preacher, Peter packed churches with those eager to hear his eloquent proclamation of the gospel. He had great diplomatic ability, often serving as a reconciler between disputing factions. In his letters (filling eight volumes) one finds words of wisdom and counsel to people in all walks of life. At times he wrote unprecedented letters of criticism to leaders of the Church—yet always in the context of a loving, sympathetic concern.

At 70 Peter suffered a paralytic seizure, but he continued to preach and write with the aid of a secretary until his death in his hometown (Nijmegen, Netherlands) on December 21, 1597.

Comment:

Peter's untiring efforts are an apt example for those involved in the renewal of the Church or the growth of moral consciousness in business or government. He is regarded as one of the creators

of the Catholic press, and can easily be a model for the Christian author or journalist. Teachers can see in his life a passion for the transmission of truth. Whether we have much to give, as Peter Canisius did, or whether we have only a little to give, as did the poor widow in the Gospel (see Luke 21:1-4), the important thing is to give our all. It is in this way that Peter is so exemplary for Christians in an age of rapid change when we are called to be in the world but not of the world.

Quote:

When asked if he felt overworked, Peter replied, "If you have too much to do, with God's help you will find time to do it all." □



MEDITATION AND COMMENTARY

NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!" (Psalm 98:4)

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Today is a day of exuberant joy and gladness, a day where the yearning and anticipation of centuries is fulfilled. "The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations" (Psalm 98:2). So let the children of God rejoice! Rejoice, Adam and Eve! See how God's ancient promise to you has come to fulfillment. This child's birth signals the end of your exile and a new hope for all your offspring. Mercy replaces judgment. Your disobedience is covered by the humble obedience of a faithful Son. Rejoice, Abraham, you who trusted in your Creator and loved him more than you loved his creatures. He has come! The Father has provided the Lamb for the sacrifice, and no other sacrifice will ever be needed again.

Rejoice, Joseph, son of Jacob! Your faithfulness to God amid danger and slavery enabled you to save a nation. Today the Savior of all nations is born! You fed a people with food from the earth; he will feed them with food from heaven.

Rejoice, Moses, deliverer from bondage! Through you, the people of Israel beheld God's glory and wept over their folly. Through the new Deliverer, grace and truth will overcome the condemnation of the law.

Rejoice, King David! In your youth, you showed no fear and slew a mighty enemy because you believed God's power was greater than your weakness. See the tiny infant who will grow up to confound the world's wisdom, expose the proud, and overturn the powers of darkness. Rejoice, John, son of Elizabeth! You prophesied that the true light was coming into the world. Rejoice that you saw his day and witnessed his obedience to everything the

Father commanded. We honor you for preparing the way for his coming.

Rejoice, Mary, mother of our Savior! Through your humble obedience, "the Word became flesh" and came to live among us (John 1:14). Your yes to the Father opened the floodgates of grace for all your brothers and sisters. You brought forth our Savior and our Lord. Thank you! Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son ... the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being. (Hebrews 1:1-3)

Jesus Christ, the holy Son of God, took on human flesh so that he might manifest the love of his Father to a people condemned, a people who once lived without hope or recourse in the world. You and I are part of that people. Because of our sin, we were separated from the love of God. This is a critical issue. How deeply has this realization sunk in? The degree to which we grasp the desperation of our state before Jesus came is the degree to which we will value his Incarnation.

Close your eyes and picture the Lord Jesus before you now. His hands are outstretched, beckoning: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne" (Revelation 3:20-21).

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GOD TOUCHED ME

GOD'S WORK IN US

He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

- Philippians 1:6

By Rowena Ramos

It was the beginning of March 2012 and I just came back from my company's corporate offices in Sacramento, I started to feel a pain in my lower left abdomen -- pain that I have never experienced before. So I made an appointment with my doctor. Thus, began a series of tests that consisted of an MRI/CatScan, ultrasound, and a liver biopsy. During this waiting period, I visited Mother Mary at our parish Church, St. Paul the Apostle and offered prayers, though in my heart, I knew there was something wrong. These tests took approximately three to four weeks until finally, it was time for my doctor's diagnosis. He said I had Pancreatic Cancer and Cirrhosis of the liver. I was numb and had no emotions -- no anger, no sadness -- nothing. I remember my whole life flashed before me. My thoughts were directly focused on the kids and my husband. My mom was with me when the diagnosis was given and of course, she did not take the news well. This was the worst news that I have ever received; and what was almost as tough, was delivering this news to my husband, JJ. It was one of the hardest things that I had to do. I felt anxious but I knew that I had to be strong for us and our family. I, then remembered there was a healing Mass the following day and really felt in my heart that this was for me. I truly believed that God wanted me there. So I attended the healing mass the following night and this was when I first felt God touched me through the Holy Spirit. I felt that God was communicating with me to let me know that everything was going to be okay and that He was going to take care of me. I went home feeling so renewed and with such an uplifting experience. And it was then that with the help of my girlfriends, we started the devotion to our Mother Mary doing our weekly rosary prayers. This devotion is still ongoing at my parents' house.

It took a few days to soak in this entire life changing event. I asked myself then, "Do I want to share it with others this soon? Who was I going to tell? What was I going to say?" I didn't know where to begin. And then one morning, I woke up and thought of calling a dear friend, Marilyn. I'm not quite sure why I called her first to share my news. Maybe because I knew that she went through something similar and that she was very spiritual and religious, and could offer me some advice, especially prayers since I know that she belonged to a devotional group. It was as if I was drawn to her for all these reasons. She told me she would offer my name for prayers and invited me to join her prayer group in

Los Angeles. She also told me about 1st Saturday devotion and the 2000 Hail Mary devotion every 3rd Saturday of the month. So I took her up on her offer and attended the 2000 Hail Mary prayer devotion with my parents. My first impression was that it was nice and the people were very welcoming. I remember my mom sharing my story with the group and asking for prayers. We then moved into the Chapel to start the Rosary. It was very powerful. It was this afternoon that I received my first message from Mother Mary and met the Son Helper, a locutionist from Los Angeles, who at the time did not realize what an impact he had made in our lives. I have never experienced anything like this but I came with an open heart and mind. Mother Mary told me that I have been busy and preoccupied as the Lord has been trying to call me and bring my attention to several things that I have either ignored or was too busy to recognize. And to pray, pray, pray! The locutionist then helped interpret and discuss the message that I had received. He also told me that the cancer was not in my pancreas and it was somewhere else, which I then, mentioned -- the liver. (Sure enough, a few days later, the doctor confirmed that it was a misdiagnosis -- it is bile duct/biliary Cholangiocarcinoma as the pancreas was unmarked via the scans.) It was also that same afternoon, when Marilyn shared with me that the locutionist wanted me to meet with him on the 1st Friday in May at the Sacred Room, located at his home. Of course at the time, I didn't know what this meant but Marilyn said that this invitation to the Sacred Room was a rare event.

A few weeks passed and our first meeting for pray-over came. JJ and I were looking forward to the meeting without really knowing what to expect. The locutionist and his wife were very welcoming. We exchanged stories, got to know each other and then we went to pray in the Sacred Room. Then came the Lord's first message for me. He told me that He would be with me every step of the way on my long journey. He further said He has chosen me to pray for others who also suffer and for the souls in purgatory. He has been listening to me as I talked and prayed to Him daily. He affirmed that Mother Mary will always whisper in His ear her intercession for me; to continue to pray; and to surrender myself completely to Him. At that time, I was uncertain of what these all meant. How do I surrender myself completely to him? Wow, God chose ME!!! After which Mother Mary's message came to let me know that

she would wait for us in her Church and that the water would help in my journey; and that she loved me. Prior to praying, JJ and I mentioned that we were going to make a trip out to Our Lady of Lourdes in France. So she was referencing our trip to Lourdes! This was amazing!

That weekend, we made our trip to Our Lady of Lourdes in France. I was not feeling good on our departure day and JJ was not sure if I would be able to handle the flight. Fortunately, we both survived the flight and arrived safely at our destination. At the miraculous place in Lourdes, I had the strength and energy to enjoy our trip and did not feel tired at all. We took a bath in the Holy Water of Lourdes twice. It was such an amazing feeling and experience. JJ and I truly felt the Holy Spirit with us during our time there. We also celebrated our 8th year Wedding anniversary. The time in Lourdes was for us as a couple and to become closer to God and Mother Mary. I really felt rejuvenated. This was the turning point for me. On our way home, I was telling JJ that I wanted to get back into the swing of things, my daily grind of taking care of the kids, bringing them to school, and going back to work. This is what God meant when He said to "surrender to Him." Really trust in Him and to live my life. I told myself that I would slowly get acclimated with my daily routine. Prior to our trip, my actions contradicted my words. Although I said that I would be okay, I was not acting okay. After the trip, I really felt good. The Holy Spirit had really touched me. Upon arrival in the U.S., my parents were at the airport to pick us up. They were surprised to see how well I looked. They recognized the change that I felt within myself!

We attended the 2000 Hail Mary's devotion the next 3rd Saturday and another message came from Mother Mary telling me to feel the presence of God's spirit in my heart and to remember Jesus as He offered His own heart to God when I ask for Mother Mary's intercession. Prior to this message, I had placed a petition for her intercession. Mother Mary truly loves me and is always listening to me. I was in awe!

Receiving these messages and walking through this journey have really strengthened my faith and I truly believe that I would be fine because I have God and Mother Mary by my side. As days and weeks passed, I could feel my relationship with Jesus growing in my heart and it is a wonderful feeling! It made me feel complete and He was giving me the strength as I continued my chemotherapy and routine CT scans.

I thought the visit to the Sacred Room was only a one-time event, I was asked by God our Father to return every 1st Friday of each month for the next six months. JJ and I had to do whatever it took to make sure that we made it back each month. On our second 1st Friday which was in June, the message from Jesus acknowledged the strength that I was gaining and this is the kind of strength He wanted me to have in my

relationship with Him. Jesus wanted me to feel His presence throughout my journey and that at the last 1st Friday, I would feel the love and compassion from God. He really knew what my thoughts were and what I felt in my heart. So powerful!

July came around. At this point, I was always anxiously awaiting 1st Fridays and looking forward to hearing from Jesus. I felt a sense of completion and happiness hearing His words. JJ felt the same way. We both felt good going to the Sacred Room. My message this time was reiterating the previous 1st Friday message, that I would feel the power of my God and to offer myself to Him and to continue offering prayers for the souls in purgatory. Then another message from Mother Mary stating to continue our devotion to her as she intercedes for me. She wanted me to extend my hand to people who I feel in my heart would come to her devotion. And to extend not only to believers but also to unbelievers for their hearts would be opened by words of sincerity coming from a person who has felt the loving hand of Mother Mary's Son and the power of the Eternal Father. What a beautiful message! She was acknowledging the rosary that we have been doing every Friday since April. I thought, how was I going to do this? Extend to others? Who was I supposed to reach out to? I was advised to approach "lukewarm" souls. I felt happy that Mother Mary was delighted about her devotion.

As Mother Mary said, feel God's presence in your heart with each passing day and month, I really did feel His presence with me and His Love. It is such an amazing feeling! August rolled around and what Mother Mary stated to me was about to happen once more when JJ and I were back at the Sacred Room. Jesus' message to me was so powerful and I was just overwhelmed with tears. As I write this article, I can still remember how I felt at that very moment. Jesus was giving me an extension of life! And to take with me my children, family, and everyone who I am going to touch as we face Him -- always. How loving and merciful Jesus is. Now, I constantly think of ways how I could do more to be closer to God and bring others closer to Him. I feel this is one of my missions.

As September approached, I realize that my visits to the Sacred Room are almost to an end and I feel I will miss hearing the Words of Jesus but I know that He will continue speaking to me in my heart and be with me always. Jesus reminded me on my last 1st Friday to prepare words that I am going to share in His name. He asked that I clean my mind and heart before I face Him on that last day, meaning to go to confession. And another reminder to make others closer to him as I go through this "journey of spiritual cleansing". Wow, this is the first time that Jesus has mentioned these words of the journey that I am taking. But I was still trying to figure out how I was going to do all of these? The locutionist's wife advised me to pray to Jesus to guide me and He will tell me in my heart.

So October finally arrived -- the last 1st Friday that Jesus has mentioned. I could not help but feel excited to hear His words, at the same time feeling sad since this was my last physical visit to the Sacred Room. Jesus tells me that my "journey of spiritual cleansing" continues and that the path that I will take will be a thorny one and not a bed of roses. He further said to use my heart and love for Him as I continue my journey. And I will feel His presence and see the light that will illumine my path. He also references JJ who will be the person I will cling to and who will be by my side. He reiterated the message to spread His words. Jesus tells me how merciful He is and that the love and strength of my faith will give me the door to his Sacred Heart. And the last message that I will never forget -- "Healing my daughter, I will consider." Such a beautiful message that brought warmth and contentment to my heart. The healing part is always something that I have prayed for along with my family -- and Jesus addressed this very prayer. He truly is present in our lives today and loves each and every one of us unconditionally.

That month of October, JJ and I attended Marriage Enrichment held at our parish at St Paul the Apostle Church. It was such a wonderful weekend that JJ and I got to share with one another and with God. We really felt His presence the entire weekend and something amazing happened at the end as we closed it with a Mass with our families in attendance. JJ shared with the congregation about my condition and our journey, and I believe with what the weekend brought for all the couples there, we truly touched everyone in the room in one way or another. I have become more involved with the Church and Father Tom, one of the priests that I have shared about my journey, has supported me. He celebrated the Mass that day and in the middle of the Mass, Father Tom began to speak. After a few words, I realized he was talking about me and how much of an inspiration I have been, I stood up and he asked the whole congregation to extend their right hand over me to give a blessing. That moment was so powerful and overwhelming. We could feel the Holy Spirit with us. One of my friends who shared the weekend with us said she wished she took a picture because she described that moment as if we were in a bubble and I was in the center of it and surrounding me was everyone's hands extended over me. It was truly a blessed moment. This is when it all clicked in my mind and heart. This is what Jesus was telling me about bringing others closer to Him

and to spread His words. It all made sense now. JJ and I felt joy, peace and on a high from our weekend experience. It was the best feeling ever and I wished that this feeling would not end! I felt compelled to continue sharing. What a gift to have!

So as I walk in this "journey of spiritual cleansing" along with JJ and my family, I take each day at a time and am thankful for every day the Lord has given me and for His blessings. Jesus is truly merciful and loving. I feel His presence with me each day and this, along with my family, keeps me going. My faith and love for God is at its strongest. It can only grow from here. Since my last visit in the Sacred Room, I have experienced different ways that I have evangelized to my family, friends, and others I have crossed paths with and will continue to meet. I truly feel happy doing all these for God. Jesus' messages become clearer and clearer with each passing day and I am very happy to know that I am pleasing Jesus. He chose me for a reason. He is using me as an instrument of His love and graces to touch others and to bring them closer to Him. But it doesn't stop here. I continuously seek more ways to please our Lord because I want to do more for Him. I understand this is my mission and purpose along with my resolve to continue praying for others who are suffering and for the souls in purgatory. I know my Lord is pleased with my mission and the only way to offer myself to Him is to invite my God to dwell in my heart as I traverse in this journey of spiritual cleansing. □



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Meditation and Commentary

This is the one who was born on this day so many years ago. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He is worthy of our lives. Can you give him your love today? Can you rejoice in the new life he has poured into you? The Savior has come to you!

"My Jesus, my Savior, I love you! Thank you for coming into the world and into my heart. I rejoice that I have been blessed to see your glory in my life. On this special day, let me speak of the joy of your coming to everyone I meet!" □

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RECOMMENDED

- 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.
- 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**.
- For the feast of the Immaculate Conception create a Mary candle. Use a beautiful white candle and decorate it with symbols of Christ, such as a Chi Rho, or attach a picture or figure of the infant Jesus to the base of a large pillar candle. Place the candle in a holder, and then cover with a mantle, made of beautiful white cloth or lace (symbolizing Mary's soul without stain), perhaps with a blue ribbon tie. This mantle symbolizes Our Lady, who carried the baby Jesus under her heart until He was born. The candle, which represents Christ, the Light of the world, remains covered all through Advent, until the veil is removed to reveal the newborn Child. [www.catholicculture.org]
- Make a sacrifice, say a prayer or visit the Blessed Sacrament for an end to abortion in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe.
- Say a prayer to St. Lucy for those who are physically and spiritually blind.
- Pray the Nine-Day Christmas Novena – December 16-24 [Prayer available at www.catholicculture.org]
- Say a prayer dedicating your family to the Holy Family. Also pray for all families and for our country to uphold the sanctity of the marriage bond which is under attack. □

UPCOMING EVENTS

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2012

10:00 AM TO 4:00 PM

QUIET CANNON 901 VIA SAN CLEMENTE

MONTEBELLO, CALIFORNIA 90640

ATTIRE: FORMAL

EXCURSION TO CARMEL, CA

JANUARY 19-21, 2013



INFANT JESUS FEAST DAY

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 2012

CARMEL MISSION BASILICA

3080 RIO ROAD, CARMEL, CA 93923

THANK YOU

... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!

Psalm 106:2

THANK YOU LETTERS

Dear Spiritual Army of God the Father,

My father will begin one month of radiation therapy today. He met the doctor yesterday, and really liked him. Several times, the doctor used the word "miracle" with reference to my father's condition. He has malignant skin cancer tumors on his face. One is near his left eye. The other has affected the nerve on the right side of his face, and runs from high on his cheek bone to below the earlobe. The promise is to stop the bleeding. It is not likely that the open ulcer will be closed. Any and all will have some element of miracle, as so far has been the case.

So my brother attributes the miracles to your prayers. I hope my brother joins in some way, perhaps at least once to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy with me. Thank you for the years of prayer, encouragement and guidance so far. Please pray about the coming month treatment. I am thankful for the thoughtful, joyful, well-informed doctor, the miracles and acknowledgment of miracles. I will step up prayer for our groups, and prayers of thanks, as well as those for my father's good treatment. - Joyce



Happy Thanksgiving Day! Today, I thank God that He has allowed our paths to cross. - Evelyn



I thank God that after I took the long path and have not responded sooner, I am now in His path, making my journey easier. I am at peace now even in the midst of great turmoil. - Cora

2000 HAIL MARY DEVOTION

The Spiritual Army of God the Father acknowledges with thanks our generous December 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

Cora Agudo | Betty Ayasao

Los Angeles, California

Nonie Alapag | Tessie Almero

Victor, Alice & April Araneta

Dorothy Ikeri | Alice Ng | Marlyn Saraza



... I am your Mother Mary. As you pray my beads offer those prayers to all the lukewarm souls. These souls are doubtful and their love for God has never been in their hearts. They believe and want to believe that their faith is strong but their actions, words and thoughts are far from God's works.

Pray that these souls are taken back to the right path before they are completely snatched by Satan himself. The merciful heart of God awaits them in every drop of my Son's precious blood. My children devotion must be strengthened by good action and good heart before the eyes of God.

Thank you my children for listening to my call.

- Mary, Your Lady of Grace

111712

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 | (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 | (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 – December 8, 2012

at the Convent of the Sister Disciples of the Divine Master | starting at 8:30 a.m.
Please see Victor if you wish to become a Sponsor of the 2000 Hail Mary Devotion.

In Las Vegas:

1st Saturday Devotion

at The Cenacle House in The Enclave, 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, Las Vegas, NV 89117 at 1:00 P.M.
Cenacle will be at 10:00 A.M. before the devotional prayers
Please call Evelyn at (702)274-4315 for entry to The Enclave or for more information.

Devotion to God the Father

Every 1st Sunday of the month at 2:00-3:30 P.M.

at The Cenacle House in The Enclave, 8455 West Sahara Avenue #172, Las Vegas, NV 89117

2000 Hail Mary Devotion – December 8, 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 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 call her U.S. Vonage phone (510) 779-6652, text her at Manila #916-384-9300, and/or call her Manila landline 939-4677. Mention Mila Lumba's name to be recognized
