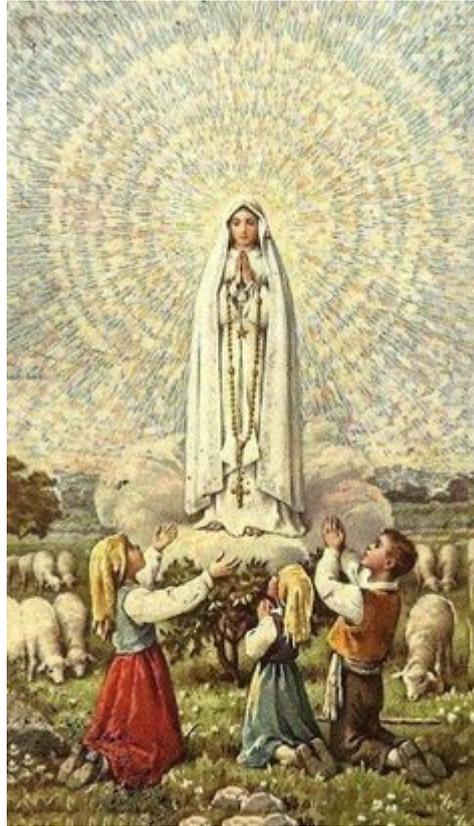


MAY



THE MONTH DEDICATED TO THE VIRGIN MARY

“During this adoration try to unite yourself in prayer with My mother.” Jesus told St. Faustina (*Diary*, 32)

In the month of May, we show our gratitude to mothers for all that they mean to us. For mothers who have gone to be with the Lord, we pray for their souls and thank God for their influence on our lives. The Catholic Church also gives special attention to Mary - Mother of God and Mother of the Church. The entire month is dedicated to her who considered herself the "servant of the Lord" (Lk 1: 38). Mary is the New Eve whom God had chosen for a singular role in the salvation of the Church. Because of her close relationship with Jesus as the woman without equal, she is to be our model and guide especially when it comes to obeying Our Lord.

Mary has appeared on earth countless times and advises us is to "pray and obey her Son Jesus." These two thoughts seem to have a special urgency in order to help us attain our ultimate salvation. Just like Mothers wanting the best for their children, Mary has a great interest in saving our souls. We would be wise to follow her advice.

In the above words of Jesus to St. Faustina, He advises her to unite herself with Mother Mary. There is perhaps no better way to do this than by praying the Hail Mary. Jesus gave His Blessed Mother all the dignity, greatness, and holiness necessary to make her His own most perfect mother - and to make her *our* loving Heavenly Mother. Just as children run to their mothers when in trouble, we can have that same unlimited confidence in Mary. Here are some examples for us to consider.

- St. Bernard and many others prayed and believed that it was never heard of at anytime or in any place that Mary refused to hear the prayers of her children on earth. Their confidence is reflected in the following prayer:

“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 with such confidence, I fly to you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you do I come sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen”

- To love and trust Mary is to be at peace within ourselves and to look forward to being with her in heaven.
- A staunch Protestant, Dr. Hugh Lammer, had strong prejudices against the Catholic Church. One day he found an explanation of the Hail Mary and was intrigued by what he read. He was so impressed with it that he began to say it daily. Eventually he became a Catholic, a holy priest, and professor of Catholic Theology in Breslau.
- A priest was called to the bedside of a man who was dying in despair because of his sins. He obstinately refused the invitation of the priest to hear his confession. Gently the priest invited him to say a Hail Mary. Through a miracle of God's grace, the man made a sincere confession and died a holy death.
- In England, a priest was asked to see a Protestant lady who was gravely ill. She wanted to become a Catholic. Asked if she knew anything about the Catholic Church, she gave a negative response. All she could remember was that when she was a small child she had learned from a little Catholic neighbor girl the Hail Mary, which she said every night. She was baptized and before dying had the joy of seeing her husband and children baptized.
- A priest friend of mine grew up in Canada next to a family that only spoke Polish. As a young boy he was friendly with their children and they often invited him to various meals. Eventually they taught him how to pray the Our Father and Hail Mary in Polish. He was very proud of this feat. Many years passed and one day the father became gravely ill and was dying. The family could not find a Polish priest in this rural area, so they called upon their neighbour priest friend who lived in the next town. He came to administer the sacraments of anointing, but realized the man only understood Polish. He loved this old man as if he was his own father and tried several times to tell him why he was there, but received no response as he remained seemingly unconscious. Silently praying he recalled his boyhood friendship with this entire family and how they prayed together. Not able to receive any acknowledgement from the dying father, it finally dawned on him and he said out loud, "Zdrowasz Mar- yjo!" Which in Polish means, "Hail Mary." The dying man immediately regained consciousness, made his confession, received the last rights, and peacefully went to his reward.
- In her book entitled *Revelations*, St. Gertrude writes that when we thank God for the graces He has given to anyone, we also get a share of those particular graces. What graces, then, do we not receive when we say the Hail Mary while thanking God for all the graces lavished upon His Blessed Mother? Gratefully we pray with Saint. Faustina:

“O Mary, my Mother and my Lady, I offer You my soul, my body, my life and my death, and all that will follow it. I place everything in Your hands. O my Mother, cover my soul with Your virginal mantle and grant me the grace of purity of heart, soul and body. Defend me with Your power against all enemies, and especially against those who hide their malice behind the mask of virtue. O lovely lily! You are for me a mirror, O my Mother! – (Diary, 79)

Courtesy of Brother Leonard Konopka, MIC, on the staff of the Marian Seminary in Washington, D.C. He also provides spiritual direction, retreats, and seminars.



Do you pray the Rosary every day?

Saint Faustina did. She wrote:

... [One time] I saw many demons. One of these tried to vex me; taking the form of a cat, he kept throwing himself onto my bed and on my feet, and he was quite heavy, as if [weighing] a ton.

I kept praying the rosary all the while, and toward dawn these beings vanished, and I was able to get some sleep. (412)

Saint Faustina experienced first hand the power of the Rosary over Satan. In fact, the Blessed Mother often appeared to St. Faustina herself, speaking words of encouragement and asking for prayer and reparation.

One time, the Blessed Mother came to her and said, *“My daughter, at God’s command I am to be, in a special and exclusive way your Mother; but I desire that you, too, in a special way, be My child”* (1414).

Saint Faustina said that when the Blessed Mother came to her, she appeared “inconceivably beautiful” (1414). Only about 15 years before St. Faustina was receiving these visions from Jesus and Mary, the Blessed Mother appeared to the three shepherd children in Fatima, instructing them to pray the Rosary daily to obtain peace for the world. There are many similarities between what Our Lady told the shepherd children and what she said to St. Faustina.

Our Lady told the children, *“Pray, pray much, and sacrifice for sinners, for many souls go to hell because there is no one to sacrifice and pray for them.”* Saint Faustina filled her *Diary* with commentary about the necessity of sacrificing for souls.



As a beloved daughter of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Faustina naturally prayed the Rosary every day. She mentions the Rosary several times in her *Diary*. Once while she was praying the Rosary, she had a vision of the Blessed Sacrament in a ciborium.

During this vision, Jesus told her, **“These hosts have been received by souls converted through your prayer and suffering”** (709).

Another time, St. Faustina’s guardian angel came to her and told her to pray for the dying, so she immediately started saying the Rosary (see 314).

In her *Diary*, St. Faustina mostly writes about the Rosary in passing. But that’s because praying the Rosary was as integral to her prayer life as breathing — she simply didn’t think to write much about it.

Now, it takes time and effort to commit to praying the Rosary every day. But don’t be afraid to pray it in the car or in segments throughout the day. Once you learn to make praying the Rosary a daily habit, you won’t ever regret dedicating yourself to this prayer. There’s almost no better way to bring God’s grace, mercy, and peace into our world.

By Marc Massery