



# *Journey to Our Lady*

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## *My Dear Friends,*

Another year and another Christmas is here. Time goes by so quickly these days, it is difficult to keep up with all we have to do! Do we even have time to ask ourselves: Are we truly prepared for the coming of our Lord?

As we get ready to celebrate the first coming of our Savior—the birth of baby Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem—with Mary, a humble handmaid, as His mother, how much time and energy do we actually spend on preparing for the true meaning and purpose of Christmas?

In our increasingly secular world, and with the hustle and bustle of our daily living, preparing for this celebration is usually consumed with shopping, traveling, cooking, and stressing. Do we overlook the fact that, in all humility, our Lord came into our world so that those seeking salvation could draw close to Him without fear just as the shepherds did as our Lord lay in a manger?

God so loves the world that He came down from heaven to raise us up. God’s greatest gift is His merciful love given to us through Jesus Christ, who came into this world to live and die for us, and He will come again, giving us the hope of everlasting life in the Kingdom of Heaven. With His merciful love, our Lord gives us everything we need for our salvation. Are we prepared? Are we ready?

To prepare for the coming of our Savior, who offers himself to us, let us offer up ourselves and everything we do each day of our lives as an act of love for God. To be true children of God, let us humble ourselves and become little—to decrease so that our Lord can increase in our lives. When Christ is formed in us, the mystery of Christmas is fulfilled in us, and may God bless us, everyone.

Let us continue our journey.

## *In the “Presents” of God*

*“Ever since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what [God] has made” [Romans 1:20].*

When we lift our sights toward Heaven, we begin to see God’s beauty here on earth. Whether it is in nature from the tiniest wild flower to the most majestic mountain or in the ordinary duties of our daily routine, our Lord gives us His gifts of love.

In nature’s wonders are reflections of God’s heavenly graces. “Look at the birds in the sky. They do not reap or sow,...yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more important than they?...If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown in the oven tomorrow, will He not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?” said Jesus [Matthew 6:26-30]. “...Seek first the Kingdom [of God] and His righteousness” [Matthew 6:33].

However, seeking God—sensing His presence and His gifts—is difficult especially when our lives are not centered on our Almighty Father and the sharing of His graces. We are easily distracted in the busyness of our days and do not realize that our Lord is reaching out to us. Let us consider the story of Martha and her sister Mary. Martha called on Jesus to have Mary help her with the serving instead of listening to Jesus speak. Jesus replied: “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need (See story, pg. 2)>

## *(The Presents, cont'd from pg. 1)*

of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her" [Luke 10:41-42].

When we put God first in our lives, everything else will fall into its proper place including our work and daily duties. St. Teresa of Avila once said: "Our Lord is moving among the pots and pans." In Martha's case, Martha saw her serving only as a chore and not as an opportunity to draw closer to God.

Mary our Blessed Mother shows us that there is no better place to be than in God's hands. Everything Mary did in her lifetime was for the love of God, whose merciful love filled Mary's heart. With that love, Mary is mother of our Savior and mother to us all. Full of grace, Mary's heart never hardened and as dispenser of God's graces, Mary shares all that she can to bring us closer to our Lord. Why else would Christ have been born in a stable with this humble handmaid as His mother? In all humility, our Lord came down from Heaven to walk, talk, eat and live among ordinary people so that we would not be afraid to welcome Him into our lives. How else can we learn to love our Lord as Mary loves Him—with all our hearts.

Opening our hearts to God, as Mary did, allows us to be filled with God's gifts of faith, hope, and love that will see us through all the days of our lives and help us to rise in holiness throughout our journey toward Heaven. And as we become more focused on our Lord's presence and offer up what we do in our day as acts of love for God, we recognize the gifts God gives to us to help us through each day. We realize our Lord "is not far away from any one of us. In Him we live and move and have our being" [Acts 17:27-28].

A sense of peace takes over within us in good days and bad. We are able to say, "Ok Lord, let it be done to me according to Your Word." Let us remember, our Lord did not come into this world to hide, but to share the way, the truth and life that leads to Heaven. Therefore, let us not hide God's presence in our lives or bury His graces. This Christmas season let us remember to give thanks with all our love and to share our Lord's gifts of merciful love—for peace on earth and good will to one and all. #

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### ***Prayer***

*Holy Mary,  
Mother of God,  
Help me to see  
our Lord's  
heavenly graces  
in my life.  
As I ponder in my heart,  
as you did,  
may I embrace  
God's presence  
and  
may His presence  
be the center of my life  
each and every day.  
Help me  
to be humble and small  
so that  
Christ can form  
in my soul  
fulfilling  
the mystery of  
Christmas in me.  
Amen.*

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## ***Path of Renewal***

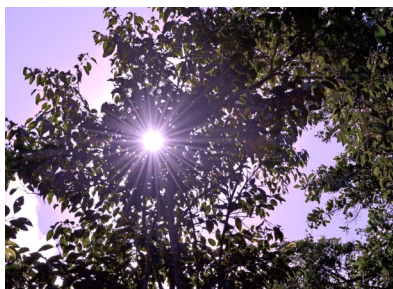
According to a reading from the second letter of St. Peter, "we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells...therefore...be eager to be found without spot or blemish before Him, at peace." [Peter 3:13-14]

In this time of waiting, let us consider ways of renewing our commitment to God. Oftentimes, earthly wants and demands distract us from our true purpose in life. That purpose is to: Love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. "This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" [Matthew 22:37-39].

When we focus our attention on God and believe He is with us at all times, our hearts, minds, and souls can be renewed and united in God's love! As we work to maintain our Lord's presence in us, we find ourselves avoiding the paths in life that are displeasing to God. We avoid sin. Instead we choose the path that leads to loving our Lord through our neighbors because what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, we do for our Lord.

Granted, this path likely will be difficult because we need to shake off our old wants and desires as well as temptations that cause us to doubt God's existence and His love for us. It is in God's merciful love that we are renewed.

Mary, our Blessed Mother, can help us on the path of renewal. Perfectly united with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Mary is our guide to redemption. Named the Morning Star, Mary's light directs us to the light of the world, the Son of God, who will come again. Only through our Lord's redemption can our sins be thoroughly washed away so we can be pure of heart, mind, and soul, clearing the way to Heaven's gate and eternal life in loving unity with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. #



## Pearl of Great Price

Life is a precious gift from God that needs to be handled with great care, otherwise it can easily be shattered by sin. When God gives us this gift, we have a choice: We can follow God's way so that life can grow more beautiful and radiate God's love upon everyone and everything in our lives—or not.

God knows that taking care of this gift is not easy, especially when left to our own resources. That is why the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us. What an incredible act of love—to be born, to grow, to work, to live and to die to show us the way, the truth, and life that lead us to God's heavenly kingdom.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that He has and buys it" [Matthew 13:45-46]. Are we searching for that great pearl? Are we willing to give up our own way of life to follow God's way to obtain this great pearl—to reach the Kingdom of Heaven? In other words, are we willing to dedicate our life and love to God?

We may think that our Lord's way to reach the Kingdom of Heaven is too difficult, but let us think again. If we open our hearts, minds, and souls, we can be filled with the presence of God in our life, work, marriage, singleness, and in the most ordinary ways. Every chore, every duty, everything we do in the presence of God can become an act of love for God.

With the presence of God, our faith becomes more alive and more active. Our hope in the eternal strengthens as we experience the greatness of God. Material wealth becomes less important. Envy, jealousy, anger, resentment are no longer forces in our lives. Instead, we find that our acts of love, thanksgiving, sacrifices, offerings become continuous as we no longer live for ourselves; we live for God. We decrease as our Lord increases within us, and as our Lord increases, we are raised higher and higher in holiness, drawing us closer to Heaven. We discover that the pearl is well worth the search and its great price. #

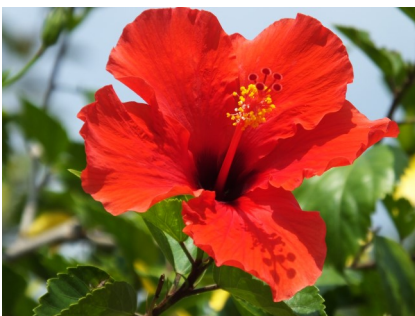
## Something to Ponder

To ponder is to think or consider especially quietly, soberly, and deeply. Do we give ourselves time to ponder, to think, to pray in order to keep our priorities straight? Do we first seek the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness?

We may think we do not have enough time or energy to focus on God and to do His will, but let us ponder on how we actually spend our time. More likely than not, we are able to find the time to do what we most desire even if it means making sacrifices. The question we should ask ourselves is: What do we desire most? Do we only desire what is tangible and provides instant gratification? Or are we constantly searching for something better, but we are not quite sure what that something is?

Perhaps our thoughts are clouded by our fears, anxieties, and worries which tend to overwhelm us and lead us to despair, causing us to look for the quick fix that provides only temporary relief. Let us look to Mary who lived a life of faith, hope, and love. Our Lady never despaired; instead Mary pondered all things in her heart which was—and is—dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

Certainly, Mary had good reason to be fearful in her lifetime, but fear never severed her unity with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Where would we be if fear stopped Mary from being the mother of our Savior?



Like Mary, God wants us to put ourselves in His hands because He knows our needs better than we know ourselves and He will answer those needs. So let our hearts not be troubled. Let our hearts have faith in the Holy Trinity. With faith there is hope, with hope there is love. With faith, hope and love, we have the strong foundation to live life the way God wants us to live it because with God, nothing is impossible. That is something to ponder. #

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### Prayer

*Heavenly Mother,  
With faith, hope, and love  
in your heart,  
you gave birth to  
Jesus Christ our Savior.  
With faith, hope, and love  
in your heart,  
you dispense  
the grace of God.  
Help me to seek first  
the Kingdom of God  
and  
all its righteousness.  
May I be filled  
with the grace  
of the Holy Spirit  
to strengthen my will  
and  
reinforce my resolve  
to sin no more  
and to offer up  
all that I do  
as an act of  
faith, hope, and love  
each and every day.  
Amen*

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## Dear Angel,

Help me to find God's treasures in my life. I cannot see them on my own. The distractions of the world cloud my view. Protect me as I detach myself from earthly treasures that "moth and decay destroy, and thieves break in and steal" [Matthew 6:19].

Help me to store up treasures in Heaven because where my treasure is, so will be my heart. Our Blessed Mother's heart belonged to God. In her heart, Mary pondered all things without anger or despair. With God's grace, Mary's heart is open to us all to draw us closer to our Lord. Like Mary, may my heart be with God always.



## Gift of Grace

"Give thanks to the Lord, invoke His name; make known among nations His deeds. Sing to Him, sing His praises, proclaim all His wondrous deeds. Glory in His holy name; rejoice, O hearts that seek the Lord" [1 Chronicles 16:8-10].

To see God working in our lives is difficult at times, especially when we are under stress. We do not always understand why events happen as they do, which begs the question: "Does God know best?" Instead of singing God's praises, oftentimes we find ourselves doubting God's love, as we cry out "Why God why?!" when life goes awry.

During those times of great strain and stress we need to hold on tight to God and be thankful for His gift of Heavenly graces because in that divine unity, we can respond to life's difficulties with faith, hope, and love. Otherwise, we are prone to live in utter darkness. Let us look to Mary our Blessed Mother for help.

Mary is the one human being who was perfectly united with the Holy Trinity in her earthly lifetime. Mary's soul proclaimed the greatness of God and rejoiced in God, our Savior throughout her entire life, regardless of her circumstances. Even in her darkest hours, Mary did not turn away from God's faith-filled light.

Just as faith led Mary to the temple of Jerusalem after she and Joseph could not find young Jesus for three days, faith led Mary to her Son's crucifixion on the cross in Calvary. Without her faith—without the grace of God—Mary could have believed her Son was gone forever. While we may not always see our Savior in our lives, especially in our darkest moments, Christ is everywhere faith lives.

Instead of closing her heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit—by the grace of God—our Lady kept her faith-filled heart opened wide to be our mother who guides us through our dark and difficult days. Through Mary's heart, the light of faith, hope, and love—Jesus Christ—shines on all who seek salvation. Therefore, let our hearts not be troubled by the challenges we face. Like Mary, let our hearts be filled with God's grace.

With faith, hope, and love, we can meet any challenge, any trial, and any tragedy without hardening our hearts. If we let Him, our Lord embraces us in our losses, our triumphs, our sorrows, and our joys and shows us the way that leads to His heavenly Kingdom. In other words, God saves us each and every day. In turn, we become the conduit for God's tender mercy in our world that so desperately needs it.

Truly, on those days when we cannot see the Lord's way, let us step back and make an earnest plea. Our Blessed Mother will surely intercede and help us find God's graces—all that we need. So let us be thankful in good days and bad, and let us praise God for all that we have.

## Journey to Our Lady

is published five times a year to help readers develop a closer relationship to Mary our Blessed Mother.

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