



Journey to Our Lady

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<i>My Dear Friends</i>	1
<i>Will of the Father</i>	1
<i>Prayer</i>	2
<i>Living Waters For Our Time</i>	2
<i>My Body, My Choice</i>	3
<i>Bed of Roses</i>	3
<i>Prayer</i>	3
<i>Dear Angel</i>	4
<i>Mission, Impossible?</i>	4

My Dear Friends,

Love God and love one another—that is our calling and yet we are living through a period of division and animosity. As a result, our Lord’s two greatest commandments appear to be getting lost. How do we overcome these trying times? Let us look to Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother for answers.

The lives of Jesus and Mary show us why we must seek the kingdom of God first and all His righteousness. When we seek God first, the rest of our life falls into place; we understand our priorities and our purpose. How else can we maintain a peace of mind when it seems like our world is spiraling out of control?

Our God in Heaven knows what we need better than we know ourselves. “If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will He not much more provide for you, O you of little faith?” [Matthew 6:30]

Imagine how much better our lives would be if we would just rely on God more than we rely on ourselves. Of course, relying on God does not mean sit back and do nothing. We are here to follow His directions and to live according to His plan. Truly, there is much for us to do.

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me,” said the Lord [Matthew 25:35-36]. With God, there is not time for division and animosity, but there is time for great love. With Mary’s intercession, may Jesus help us move past our differences so that we can continue our journey.

Will of the Father

There is a passage in the Bible where it appears Jesus is snubbing His Mother, Mary, when she and some relatives wished to speak to Him. “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? ...Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother,” said Jesus [Matthew 12:48-50].

Truly not a snub of His Blessed Mother, but rather an assurance that we all can enter into a divine relationship with Jesus Christ our Savior so long as we do the will of our Father in Heaven. What is our Father’s will? To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves—these are the two greatest commandments.

To understand the will of God is to understand that God’s very being is love. The Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC #221] describes God as an external exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we are destined to share in that exchange. Mary certainly understood the will of God and the need for each of us to enter into this saving relationship by saying yes to His call. Like Mary, when we say yes, we open our hearts, minds, and souls to the Holy Trinity and our glorious transformation in this relationship begins.

Entering into this divine exchange of love, as Mary did, means devoting our ordinary, everyday lives to proclaiming the greatness of God—the greatness of Love—in what we say, in what we do, and in how we treat one another. In doing so, we live forever in the security of God’s love. “My love shall (See story, pg. 2) >

(Will of the Father, cont'd from pg. 1)

never fall away from you nor my covenant of peace be shaken,” says the Lord [Isaiah 54:10].

Mary lived in the security of that love, giving her a peace of mind for all of her life. How else could she have handled the great responsibilities and challenges that she faced as the Mother of our Savior? Mary leads us to her Son so that we can share in that same security. Without it, we tend to stray from our Lord’s teachings as we look for comfort and security in our lives. Oftentimes we compromise our beliefs and our faith in our pursuit to belong to the world. We forget that our belonging to this world is only temporary, and not eternal, therefore we should seek the kingdom of God first and all His righteousness, said our Lord.

Mary also understood that with this devotion to God comes sacrifice which Our Lady freely made. Any sacrifice done out of love, particularly the love of God, has a sweetness that is hard to describe. It is the sweetness of knowing that what we do is for a greater good that will last beyond our years—like a father and mother who sacrifice for their child so their child can have a better life.

To have life on earth better than what we have and to live a glorious life eternally, the Love of God—through the love of Mary—came into the world as Jesus Christ to show us the Way, the Truth, and the Life that leads to Heaven. True, we may face twists and turns that we cannot fathom which may compel us to abandon our faith in God and reject His will. Jesus and Mary show us that they held on tight to their faith and they never stopped loving even in their darkest hours.

There will be days when we feel very much alone and abandoned, but we are not—not by God. Our Lord pours onto us the Holy Spirit which gives us the companionship and the ability to do whatever Our Lord tells us in every circumstance so that we can enter Heaven’s gate. Whether we choose to follow the will of our Father is up to our will—a gift freely given to us by God to freely use. Through the power of Mary’s intercession, may we choose to spread the love of God according to His will each day of our lives. #

Prayer

*Dearest Mother,
Help me
to accept God’s will
into my life.
Help me
to see that with God,
all things are possible.
Help me
to know God’s love
in every aspect
of my being.
Help me
to understand
the purpose of my
existence
according to God’s
plan.
With the help
of your intercession,
may I live
in union with
God the Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

Living Waters for Our Time

“The time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, ...will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths” [2 Timothy 4:3-4]. Certainly, we are seeing evidence today of St. Paul’s predictions as our society becomes more secular and as God is pushed out of the public square.

Attempting to satisfy desires and curiosity is an attempt to quench a thirst that will not go away. No matter how often we dip into the well the world has to offer, we will go away with just a temporary quelling of our needs and wants. Only when we drink of the Living Waters will we be truly satisfied.

“Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life,” said Jesus [John 4:14] Using water—something we cannot live without—to signify the Holy Spirit, our Lord tells us that we cannot truly and fully live without the Spirit of God.

In Baptism, water—the Holy Spirit—is poured onto us to wash away our original sin and to signify our birth into the divine life. Christ’s own baptism opened up the Heavens. The Spirit of God descended upon Him with a voice from Heaven saying: “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” [Matthew 3:16-17]; this is the divinity Our Lord wants for us. We can have Heaven on earth by allowing Our Lord to come into our lives by way of the Holy Spirit.

“No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit,” said Jesus [John 3:5]. The choice is ours. We can stop listening to the truth. We can continue to look for secular ways to fill our internal void or we can fill our void with Living Waters because what we are truly searching for only can be found in God. #



My Body, My Choice

When the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and power of the Most High overshadowed Mary, the Blessed Virgin conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of His body and blood, according to St. John Paul II. In essence, Mary became the first tabernacle, a living tabernacle, as we see in Mary's visitation with Elizabeth; Jesus allowed Himself to be adored by radiating His light through Mary.

In addition, let us contemplate Mary and Joseph finding young Jesus in the Temple. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" said Jesus [Luke 2:49]. We too find the Son of God in Church as we are called to believe He is present in His full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine, according to St. John Paul II. Let us also contemplate that as members of the Church, how we treat ourselves and one another as human beings directly reflects how we choose to treat the body of the Church and ultimately God.

Perhaps the yearning that we feel when we try to find something greater, something better than what we have is a hunger within ourselves. We can find our nourishment in Christ to satisfy our hungry heart, mind, and soul. The Eucharist is about Christ's eternal life within us which gives us the courage and energy to follow and to serve Him. We do a disservice to the Holy Eucharist if we do not allow its power to replenish our body and soul, strengthening our faith so that we can become more Christ-like in our daily lives.

When we receive the body and blood of Christ sacramentally in Holy Communion, we also accept Mary's call to trust and obey her Son without hesitation, thereby becoming living instruments of our Lord's presence of love, mercy, and peace, according to St. John Paul II. In addition, the Bible teaches us that through His Eucharistic promise, Christ gives us a way to live out of Him in the way He lives out of the Father. Let us ask ourselves: are we truly allowing the body and blood of Christ to enliven our bodies and souls so that the love of our Lord can radiate through us in our daily lives? May we choose to do so in memory of our Lord. #

A Bed of Roses

There is a saying: Life is not a bed of roses. However, when we explore the mysteries of the Rosary, we see a dichotomy, or perhaps a union of opposites, that is evident in a bed of roses—a garden of roses—as well as in life itself.

The rose blossoms give us the beauty of life and hope, while their thorns inject pain and suffering. Even with the thorns, we are drawn to the flowers' bloom. When we contemplate the mysteries of the Rosary, we see the pain and suffering endured by Jesus and Mary for us while still possessing the hope of the Resurrection and the promise of eternal life in paradise. Truly, Mary, in unity with her Son, reaches out to us in this garden—in life—to draw us close so that we may share in their divine hope and promise of salvation.

Just as there are many varieties and colors in a rose garden, Mary, the Mystical Rose, takes on many roles to help us reach our salvation in Christ as she shares in her Son's work of our redemption. Mary is our Mother, intercessor, comforter, helper as well as our life, our sweetness, and our hope.

The Mother of Hope shares the Lord's love with those in search of salvation so that we can flourish in the life God wants us to have—free from sin. Therefore, the Queen of the Rosary calls on us to amend our lives and ask pardon for our sins. Like a rose's thorns, sin injects pain and suffering into our lives and in our

Lord. Just as Mary shared in the suffering of Jesus' passion and crucifixion, Our Lady continues to share His pain caused by our offenses.

Life is like a bed of roses, filled with beauty and thorns. Despite the thorns, Mary wants us close to her for a deeper understanding and great glory of the Holy Trinity. With that, we gain knowledge of our Lord's love in order to share in the beauty that living in unity with the Holy Trinity can offer—eliminating those self-inflicted thorns. #



Prayer

*Heavenly Mother,
Please guide me
so that I may
obey our Lord
without hesitation.
Help me to follow
your example
in having full faith
and trust
in the living Word
of God.
With your intercession,
and by the power
of the Holy Spirit,
may I have the strength
to amend my life
and
ask pardon for my sins.
May my life conform
to the ways of our Lord
in order to be
a living instrument of
our Lord's presence
of
love, mercy, and peace.
Amen.*

Dear Angel,

How do I keep my priorities straight? How do I hold onto the goodness of God when the pressures of the world are pulling me away? Where do I find support in a world that is so divided?

Protect me as I seek God's graces. Be my companion on my journey to holiness. Please do not let me stray from the path our Lord has laid out for me. Help me to stay true to the mission our Lord has given me.

Stand by me as I pray for the intercession of our Blessed Mother and repent my sins so that I may share in the divine hope and promise of salvation. Amen.



Mission, Impossible?

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him...to be holy and without blemish before him." [Ephesians 1:3-4]

To be holy and without blemish—sounds impossible, doesn't it? Our call to be holy and clean without sin is impossible when we forget that "*for God, all things are possible*," [Matthew 19:26] including our holiness. Consider the Apostles—Christ sent them out and instructed them to take nothing for their journey to preach repentance. They were the first followers to represent Christ, to reflect Christ in what they said and did. Like us, they were ordinary and imperfect people.

The first Disciples of Christ were also open to the living Word penetrating their minds, hearts, and souls. They had everything they needed for their mission. They were not bogged down with extra baggage and distractions, as we oftentimes are; God gives us everything we need for our mission so long as we are willing to accept it. Our Lord never stops offering Himself and His grace that saves us, according to Pope Francis.

The grace that saves us is the grace of the Holy Spirit that leads us on the path of holiness. We cannot perform miracles, but we can perform acts of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness as our Lord did. God gives us the means to accomplish great and wonderful acts to better our world, but we have to turn to our Lord and ask for guidance and strength. To improve our world, we have to better ourselves by turning away from sinful behavior because sin does destroy life. Unfortunately, we also live in a time when sin appears to be losing its meaning. Our actions are rationalized. We may think we are trying to accomplish something good, but if we have to lie, mislead, manipulate, and cheat to reach a certain goal, what good are we accomplishing?

That is why our Lord calls on us to believe in the Gospel and repent. Yes, God is merciful. He does not want His children destroyed and He takes no pleasure in the death of sinners. He rather that we turn from our negative ways and set our sights on Heaven to live the lives God wants us to live. Repentance can do that for us—to help us start our lives anew with our Lord in the center to do with us as He wills.

Our Lord calls us to a holiness that starts and grows with small gestures, according to Pope Francis, by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves, whether in marriage, work, family, friendship, charity, etc. In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we can live a faith-filled life, thereby making a sincere gift of self to others and humanity in a mission that is indeed possible. #

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