

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Headline: Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the oldest and most widespread practices in Christianity, especially within the Catholic Church. It is rooted in the belief that Mary has a unique role in God's plan of salvation as the mother of Jesus Christ.

Objective: To understand and appreciate the special place Mary has in our Catholic Faith. Worship (latria) is given to God alone. Honor (dulia) is given to the Saints. A special honor (hyperdulia) is given to Mary. Marian devotion involves seeing Mary as a model of faith, humility and obedience. She is the mother of Jesus and by extension, a spiritual mother to believers. She is an intercessor who prays for people before God, much as Christians may ask one another to pray for them. She is a guide who leads people closer to Christ, rather than replacing him. A common expression is "To Jesus through Mary"

Song Suggestion: On this day, O Beautiful Mother

Bible and Catechism Readings

Luke 1: 28-32, 38

And coming to her he said, "Hail favored one! The Lord is with you" But she was greatly troubled by what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall name him Jesus. Mary said, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it done until me according to your word."

John 2: 3-5

When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you."

John 19: 25-27

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdela. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

Catechism 967-969

By her complete adherence to the Father's will, to His Son's redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church's model of faith and charity. Thus, she is a preeminent and wholly unique member of the Church, indeed she is the exemplary realization of the Church. Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity, goes still further. In a wholly singular way, she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls. For this reason, she is a mother to us in the order of grace. This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation...Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.

Saint: St Louis de Monfort (1673-1716) was a French Catholic priest known for his deep love for the Virgin Mary and his spiritual writings. He wrote a famous guide called “True Devotion to Mary”. This book teaches people to give their lives entirely to Mary, trusting her to guide them to Jesus. He also wrote “Secret of the Rosary”, a book that encourages families to pray the rosary every day. Pope St John Paul loved St Louis’ writings and even took his personal motto “Totus Tuus” (which means “Totally Yours”).

Vignette: – Luke, a cradle Catholic, was never overly passionate about his faith growing up. He went to Catholic schools and to Mass on Sundays with his family. While away at college he made several protestant friends. In due course they had discussions about their faith, and in particular about how their beliefs were different than Catholic teachings. This was particularly so when it came to the Blessed virgin. They believe Mary is the earthly mother of Jesus, but that you should not be praying to her—prayer is to be directed to Jesus only. Luke began to reflect on the Catholic beliefs about Mary and it hit him how difficult it is to grasp the teachings about her—the Annunciation, the Assumption, that Mary was without sin, that she is the spiritual mother of the Church... If Luke came to you to seek guidance about these mysteries, how would you respond to him?

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. Have you ever prayed to Blessed Mary and made requests of her to help with something you were struggling with?
2. Did you feel you that Mary presented your prayers to Jesus which he in turn answered?
3. Do you feel confident, if confronted by someone questioning the role of Mary in the Catholic Church, that you would be able to express confidently why you believe?
4. Do you say the rosary regularly?
5. Do you attend Mass on the Holy days of Obligation, particularly those specific to Mary (The Solemnity of Mary (Jan 1), the Assumption (Aug 15) and the Immaculate Conception (Dec 8))

Resources:

“True devotion to Mary” Louis de Monfort

“Secret of the Rosary” Louis de Monfort

Action Plan:

1. Commit to say the rosary at least once per week and name a person specifically you are offering the rosary for
2. If you need a gentle push, come to Fathers team at 5:30 to say the rosary with your fellow fathers.
3. Spend an hour in the adoration chapel praying to Mary

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