

MY IMMACULATE HEART WILL TRIUMPH

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Blessed John Paul II in his Encyclical: *Redemptoris Mater*, reflects on the "role of Mary in the mystery of Christ and on her active and exemplary presence in the life of the Church. For they are words which celebrate together the love of the Father, the mission of the Son, the gift of the Spirit, the role of the woman from whom the Redeemer was born, and our own divine filiation, in the mystery of the 'fullness of time' '" (RM, 1987). Is there anyone better than the Mother of God to teach us the kinds of disposition our hearts should have? We are all, men and women alike, called to have certain movements of the heart, an interior character or willingness to fulfill God's plan for our lives. Based mostly from Scripture, including a couple of figures from the Old Testament, we will look at her prayer life, her virtues, and her openness to the will of the Father; simply we will look at her. It might be easier for women to relate to the likeness of Mary than for men, however men could relate in terms of St. Louis de Montfort's teachings. He taught that we should all be her slaves. That we should allow ourselves to be led by her towards her Son, she is the fastest and most perfect way towards Jesus. She who always leads us to Jesus will never lead us astray.



We can deduce from Scripture, that the Blessed Virgin Mary was very prayerful, a daughter of the Father - in constant communion with Him. We know from the lives and stories of modern saints, that God usually manifests Himself to those who are more conformed to His will. This is not to say that He does not manifest Himself to each and every one of us, but we know there are those among us who, by His grace, are in greater union with Him. We should all strive to and desire to have the kind of communion with Him that is almost tangible, visible in our lives. The Church teaches us that the Blessed Virgin Mary was born without stain that she was preserved from sin from her conception and tradition tells us the Blessed Virgin Mary was to be consecrated for service in the temple. Therefore we can infer that she was well versed in Scripture and from a very young age was taught how to pray. Consequently, we can assume that she was in prayer at the time of the Annunciation and that her heart had been prepared throughout the years for such a great mystery. Prayer allowed her to ruminate all that must have been revealed to her, for she "kept all these things in her heart" (Bible, 2005).

Prayer is the way to acquire intimacy with God; it is how we come to recognize His will and how we gain the grace to respond to Him. We become what we contemplate, "all of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image..." (2005). Mary prayed at all times, with her whole heart and said yes to His plan...she became the Mother of God and the greatest example of how we should relate to God the Father and be open to the promptings of the Spirit.

We are invited to pray the same way Mary did, so as to obtain the same openness of heart and be able to say, "behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (2005). We should grow to desire the will of the Father in each one of our lives and like Mary to grasp, in awe, His divine providence. He has a plan for each one of us; we need only to let Him in. "The Word needed a human womb where it could be enfleshed! All the works of God need a heart, a womb, a human person to receive them, to assent to them, to say, 'Let it be done to me.' Grace needs to build upon nature, upon a human soil where it can be planted and nourished, where it can grow, develop and blossom (Mother Adela, 2008).

Jesus Himself tells us that we need and should persevere in prayer, "...he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence. We must be persistence and at the same time docile to accept the will of God. He will answer our prayers, "and I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (2005). Tertullian said, "Prayer is the one thing that can conquer God." In other words, be insistent, ask God for the graces you most need or for that special intention that lies deep in your heart. Know, however, that His timing is not our own and He will grant our petitions at the right time not necessarily when we want it most but certainly when we need it most.

We must also keep in mind that prayer is not just asking Him for things. Prayer is a relationship with God. He should be our best friend; He should be the one we turn to with every desire of our hearts. We should talk to Him and even more importantly be open to hear His voice, to see the works of His hands in Divine Providence in the small and great things that happen in our lives. He wants us to trust Him, to have total and complete confidence in Him and to know that He only wants what is best for us. "How much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (2005).

This is the kind of relationship Our Lady had with God the Father. She was in constant communion with Him and even more so when the Son of God dwelt in her womb. She was and is always in union with her Son. We can deduce she was with the women who followed Him during His public ministry and we know she was at the foot of the Cross - her life was and is Jesus and so should ours. He should be, needs to be the center of our lives.

The Blessed Virgin Mary the fineness exemplar of prayer, however there are other examples in the Bible of virtue and faith. We can say they prefigure in the Our Lady in the Old Testament. Two figures of the Old Testament that we will look at are Esther and Judith.

Esther is the story of a Jewish woman, a prayerful woman who was willing to lose her life to save those of her people. She was more concerned for the wellbeing of her people than for herself. "Thus prepared, I will go to the king, contrary to the law. If I perish, I perish!" (2005). Esther interceded for her people. In a similar way, the Blessed Virgin Mary intercedes for us. Our Lady was more interested in the good of the people of God than her own good, when she said yes at the Annunciation. She knew well that the punishment for being with child before marriage was death by stoning and despite any fear she may have felt, she said yes. According to the law she would have been seen and judged as an adulteress "...If a man commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death..." (2005). However, she said yes because she knew this would mean the salvation of humanity. "Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him..." (2005).

Not by words, but by her actions the Blessed Virgin Mother shows us that one of the greatest desires and outlook of our hearts should be the good of the other. She being the supreme model also shows us that living by example is how we should teach others to live for the good of another. Each one of us should be willing to give our lives to save another, as she did. As we grow in union with the Lord the desire to bring souls to him should also grow in our hearts. Our thoughts, words and actions should be an example of virtue and therefore bring others to God. Judith was another great figure of the Old Testament, a widow who spent the years after her husband's death in prayer. She was a woman who was faithful to God and her husband until her death. We could say of her in the words of our Mother Foundress, "a generous heart, a heart allowing God to freely use their hearts to reveal His love..." (Mother Adela, 2008). Judith had the generosity of heart to tell the elders of her people that they needed to trust in the Lord and in His plans. Her words, grounded in a deep life of prayer, moved their hearts, for they said "all that you have said was spoken with good sense, and no one can gainsay your words. Not today only is your wisdom made evident, but from your earliest years all the people have recognized your prudence, which corresponds to the worthy dispositions of your heart" (2005). She walked into the camp of the enemy, killed their leader and saved her people.

As we have mentioned, the Blessed Mother was also a woman with a profound prayer life, like Judith, she too was a woman of great wisdom. She was a woman who could perceive the will of God and with blind faith carry it out. Like Judith she kills the enemy, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers..." (2005). Judith defended her people and Our Lady defends us. She is constantly interceding for our protection and salvation.

Our Lady wants our salvation, she wants us to mend our ways and follow Her Son. She desires only what is best for us and nothing less. Her Heart aches because Her Son's Heart aches with the atrocities of humanity, with the way His creation is destroyed and mistreated. She does not want Him to suffer and She does not want us to suffer so She mediates, intercedes so that we can be open to receive the graces we most need to fulfill His designs and in doing so console His Heart. Ultimately what we should desire for ourselves and others is eternal life...

The Catholic Catechism in number 2676 says, "Mary, in whom the Lord himself has just made his dwelling, is the daughter of Zion in person, the Ark of the Covenant, the place where the glory of God dwells. She is 'the dwelling of God [...] with men.'" Our hearts need to be like hers, they need to be a place "in whom the Lord

himself made his dwelling" this necessarily means our hearts have to be like hers. We should strive daily to make progress in obtaining her same virtues, make every effort to have her openness, her willingness, her availability, and her dispositions. How does one become the dwelling of the Lord? "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..." (2005). Faith, to have faith is the answer.

Jesus himself tells us many times that we need to have faith, faith in Him, in His designs and in the graces and gifts He has given and gives us. He says, "...if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (2005). He tells us nothing is impossible if we have faith, even if just a little faith. The Blessed Mother is the greatest example of faith. "Do whatever he tells you," she says to the servers at the Wedding at Cana for she knew He would perform a miracle. She did not beg Him; she simply had faith and trusted. This is precisely what she says to each and every one of us, "do whatever He tells you," she exhorts us to have faith and to trust in her Son. She knows beyond a doubt that He will do what is best for us whether we like it or not. We need only trust and respond in love and gratitude. Will He turn to us and say, "Where is your faith?" or will He say, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace?" (2005).

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