

DEVOTION TO OUR LADY

REV. JAVIER DEL CASTILLO

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, of the Holy Spirit. Amen. My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

As we begin the month of May, we want to pray about our devotion to Our Lady, our devotion to Mary. And if we look at what the word *devotion* itself means we can get a better idea of what we ought to do with respect to Mary. St. Thomas Aquinas says, "Devotion is derived from devotee, the Latin word *devolvere* means to vow themselves to God, so as to subject themselves to him." And he continues explaining that, "In the ancient world, among the heathens, among the pagans, a devotee was one who vowed to his idols to suffer death for the safety of his army," as Livy points out in one of his books. And he concludes, "Hence devotion is apparently nothing else but the will to give oneself readily to things concerning the service of God." So that's what the word devotion means. And- and when we want to have devotion to Our Lady, what it means is that we want to be totally dedicated, totally put at the service of Mary.

It reminds us a little bit of St. John Paul II's motto for his papacy and maybe even for- before he was when he was a bishop, *totus tuus*, all yours, which means *I am all yours*, part of the Mary, we are completely, entirely Mary's. We are all hers, which means every single aspect of our lives is to be dedicated to God through the intercession of Mary, you know, and if we entrust ourselves to her, because we are hers- her children, she will protect us, she will protect her own, and she will lead us to Christ. She protects her children. Just look at how she protected Jesus. When Jesus was lost in the temple, you know, you can witness in the Gospel of Luke the unleashing of a force of nature which is a mother who has lost her child. I mean, that's a very, very powerful thing to- to watch, you know. And- and I would say, especially for three days, she must have been going crazy. You don't- you just- you know, you don't mess with that. And that's how, you know, we can imagine Mary reacts when we are lost to sin, you know. And when we are lost from God to our vices, she is completely putting all her five senses and more, all her energies, all her power, everything she can do in order to bring us back to God.

If we are all hers she will react that way. Really a beautiful image of Mary being our mother and we being completely entrusted to her so that she can then present us to Christ, so that we can be Christ, or look like Christ. Because really, like Origen says, "Mary only has one son, God only has one son, that's Jesus." And insofar as we look like him or, you know, we- we are him, and when I say look like him, I mean on the inside, in our soul, and we have been configured to Christ in our baptism, so we do look like and we have the traits of Jesus Christ in our very soul with the indelible character that comes to us through baptism and

confirmation and- and- but that image actually is- is more refined as time goes on as we- as we get more graces, as we approach the Eucharist, as we get fed, as it grows, as it develops. And- and also as we struggle, as we struggle to be docile to the motions of the Holy Spirit whose great solemnity we will also celebrate soon, fifty days after- after Easter.

And so when we devote ourselves to Mary, we end up looking like her son, and we have this family air. I don't know if you've ever met people from the same family, maybe you don't know the whole family but you recognize that they belong to the family, you know, and there's a kinship or a familiarity there or a family air, there's something typical of the way they- they smile or the way they walk or the way they laugh that you say, well, that's clearly, you know, kind of I know where they got that from, they got it from the parents, you know. Well, the same thing happens in the spiritual life, when we turn to Mary and we allow her to engender us as her children, one, we know Mary, right, we know her, but most importantly, I think we are known by Mary- she knows us, she knows us and we know her. And- and that knowledge, that knowledge of persons, we're not just talking about theoretical knowledge, it's not about knowing about Mary, it's knowing Mary which is very different, requires a relationship, requires, you know, time spent with her, time thinking like her, feeling like her. We end up feeling like she feels, we end up acting- reacting like she would react because we are her children and children always imitate their parents.

St. Josemaria had a great insight on- in a get-together sometime ago in the 70s. Somebody asked him about the role of Mary in the Eucharist because she wasn't there, at least according to the Gospels, she wasn't present at the Last Supper. And yet that, you know, there must have been some role that she played in the Eucharist. And St. Josemaria immediately, just immediately, without saying anything further, just said this kind of an insight. He said, "But listen, the blood of Christ is the blood of Mary." And especially, I would say, because there was no human father in Christ. So, the blood of Christ is the blood of Mary, you know, kind of an interesting insight that when we go to Communion, we are very close to Mary- Mary's heart and Mary's love. And it's all one, really, consumed in Christ's love.

In the gospel- the Gospel of Mark, we have a passage that we are very familiar with and that is when Mary and Jesus' brethren came, meaning his relatives, they were standing outside and they sent to him, calling him. And the Gospel of Mark says, "Now a crowd was sitting about him and they said to him, 'Behold, your mother and your brethren are outside seeking you.' And he answered and said to them, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking around on those who were sitting about him he said, 'Behold, my mother and my brethren, for whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.'"

Now, I mentioned before that when we are somebody's child, obviously a child of our parents, we are all children, we end up looking like them- we're reacting like them, we're laughing like them, we're walking like them. But here, when we're talking about Mary being our mother, we're talking not about physical-physical motherhood, or physical childhood, as much as spiritual. She is engendering us in the Spirit. And so, when we talk about love like hers, we're talking about looking like her or acquiring her traits in the spiritual realm which means doing the will of God. This is precisely how we're going to look like her on the

inside, for whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother, doing the will of God. That's what- what it's all about. Now, I would like to say that it's not just about doing, you know, fulfilling it externally, you know. I mean, that's obviously a good thing but it's not- it's not what I'm talking about here. It's not what I think what Jesus is talking about. We're talking about a little deeper than just simply, you know, the- the external fulfillment of the law, or the rule or whatever. It's not about that.

Look at what Aristotle, the great pagan philosopher, says about someone who performs just actions, meaning just acts, like acts of justice. He's talking about the virtue of- of justice and he says- well, how do you get this virtue of justice, or who's- who's the virtuous person, who's the just person? And he writes this, bear with me in this quote- "It is our contention," meaning Aristotle's- "that people may perform just acts without actually being just men. As in the case of people who do what has been laid down by the laws, but do so either involuntarily or through ignorance or for an ulterior motive and not for the sake of performing just acts." Now think about that- if we do the will of God just out of ignorance, just because then my neighbor is doing it so that's why I go- I go to Church because, you know, my neighbor goes to Church or whatever. Or, I do this because I was taught that way since I was a child or I grew up that way, tradition, you know, whatever it is, that I- that I do in my family. Well, if I don't understand what I'm doing, then I don't really become virtuous. And what- what Aristotle is talking about here is that the person who actually becomes just is the person who originates, who designs, let's say, the action, who understands why he or she is acting, you know. So- otherwise we are just kind of externally imitating things and that's not really what we're talking about.

He says about these persons that just kind of do it externally, involuntarily, or out of ignorance or for some other motive, "Such persons are not just men despite the fact that they act the way they should and perform all the actions which are more- which a morally good man ought to perform." Kind of interesting- you actually do the right thing but not really want to do it or know why you're doing it or you're doing it for some other purpose and it just doesn't count, it doesn't work. When Our Lord says, "For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother," he is talking about this deeper way of acting, that Aristotle says that a just man, the way he acts, you know, the way the just man acts, that's the way- that's what he's talking about. We have to think, act, react, feel like Mary, judge like Mary, you know. This is how we acquire this similarity, this kinship, this familiarity, this similarity that we- that we have, this family heir, it's going to happen when we get into the life of Jesus, as Mary got into the life of Jesus.

Look at- look at what Pope John Paul II says about Mary being a model of contemplation of the face of Jesus. This is how she looked like Jesus, right. Mary looked like Jesus on the inside and Jesus looked like Mary on the outside because, of course, he didn't have a human father so he must have looked a lot like his mother. Here's what John Paul II says in his work on the Holy Rosary shortly before he died: "The contemplation of Christ has an incomparable model in Mary. In a unique way, the face of the Son belongs to Mary. It was in her womb that Christ was formed, receiving from her a human resemblance which points to an even greater spiritual closeness. No one has ever devoted himself to the contemplation of the face of Christ as faithfully as Mary. The eyes of our heart already turned to him at the Annunciation when she

conceived him by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the months that followed, she began to sense his presence and to picture his features. When at last she gave birth to him in Bethlehem, her eyes were able to gaze tenderly on the face of her son as she wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laying him- laid him in a manger. Thereafter, Mary's gaze, ever filled with adoration and wonder, would never leave him. At times it would be a questioning look as in the episode of the finding in the temple. 'Son, why have you treated us so?' It would always be a penetrating gaze, one capable of deeply understanding Jesus even to the point of perceiving his hidden feelings and anticipating his decisions as at Cana. At other times, it would be a look of sorrow, especially beneath the Cross where her vision would still be that of a mother giving birth, for Mary not only shared the Passion and death of her son, she also received the new son given to her in the Beloved Disciple. On the morning of Easter, hers would be a gaze radiant with the joy of the Resurrection. And finally, on the day of Pentecost, a gaze of fire with the outpouring of the Spirit."

Really beautiful words of John Paul II who teaches us how Mary contemplated the life of Christ throughout her earthly life and throughout Our Lord's stay here on Earth. The more we meditate the more we will resemble what we meditate. This is like- it's kind of like in a mirror, when we look- when we look in the mirror, well, actually, maybe it's unlike what we do when we look in the mirror, let's say we're- we're- we're not really good looking, you know, and if we look in the mirror, we just get depressed because we can- we can't look better, you know, I don't know. But that doesn't happen in the spiritual life. Actually, in the spiritual life, when we look at Christ who is the most, you know, seemly person, who's the most beautiful being ever, perfect God and perfect man, we become like Him. We actually are transformed like him.

It's really more like, when we watch a movie- when we watch a movie- have you ever seen kids watch a movie? They start imitating the characters in the movie and they start repeating the lines. There's a, like a medic, you know, there's an imitation there, a medic reflection. And we'll be talking about that later on as well, but St. Paul tells us that the more we look at Christ, the more we resemble him. Or, the more we look at the Spirit, the more- the more we- the more we look at the Lord, the more we are transformed into his very image. He says this to the Corinthians in his famous passage, he says, talking about the Jews, who- who still contemplate the Old Testament. He says, "But their minds were darkened for to this day when the Old Testament is read to them, the self- same veil remains not lifted to disclose the Christ in whom it is made void." He's talking about the veil- he's making an analogy with the veil that Moses wore when he went up to the mountain to pray, says that- that there's a kind of veil because they still don't know Christ.

And then he continues, "Yes, down to this very day when Moses has read the veil covers their hearts, but when they turn in repentance to God, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. But we all with faces unveiled, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into his very image from glory to glory as through the spirit of the Lord." Here is the- the analogy with the mirror... "the more we look at the Lord, as in a mirror, we will be transformed into his very image." This is extraordinary, this is amazing! And that's exactly what we want to do with the life of Christ, that's what Mary did. And when we are devoted to Mary we will do what she did, which means we will contemplate Jesus' life just like John Paul II describes here in this passage, or we will-

we will get into the scenes of the gospel as St. Josemaria used to say, and play it as- as in a movie, play it back in our mind as in a movie because we know it so well.

What else will we get when we act like Mary and contemplate the face of Christ? We will have great unity with Christ, great unity with Christ. A lot of people say that sometimes from, you know, a Protestant influence or Lutheran influence that if you pray to Mary, or if you turn to Mary, that you're really taking away from what is due to Christ. But we know that our devotion to Mary is not worship of Mary, our devotion to Mary is really a veneration, but not a worship. We only worship God as we know, but we do venerate the saints because they have been transformed into the image of Christ and so there is something special about them, and especially, I would say Mary, and that's why there's a kind of great intensity in our veneration of Mary. And when we contemplate, for instance, when we pray the Rosary in this month, in the month of May, traditionally is the month where there's many people who pray the Rosary, dedicated to Mary. We will celebrate Mother's Day, and I would say in a special way, our Heavenly Mother, Mary, when we pray her Rosary, it's springtime, there's roses, you know, it's a perfect time to turn to her. We contemplate the life of Jesus... I mean, think of the Hail Mary, we repeat so many times in the- in the Rosary, that's all about the- the Incarnation, you know, and- and then the Hail Holy Queen, we ask her to show us Jesus, show unto us the fruit of thy womb. Really, it's about the centrality of Christ, right. It's about contemplating the mysteries of the Rosary which really are the mysteries of the life of Christ the way Mary contemplated them.

John Paul II explains that Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ treasuring his every word. She kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. This is the attitude that will unite us with Christ. Just like she was united with Christ by contemplating Christ's life and the mysteries of his life as they were playing out in her life, that's the, you know, the effect is that she has- she glows, she's aglow with the Spirit. Well, that's the same thing that's going to happen to us, we will be aglow with the spirit and we will look like Christ, like her son.

The memories of Jesus impressed upon her heart were always with her leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her son's side. In a way, those memories were to be the "rosary" which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life, you know. Think of the Rosary- what do we do in the Rosary? Well, we say the Hail Mary a lot. Well, what is the Hail Mary but the moment when she became the Mother of Jesus. And Mary must have contemplated that a lot, you know, because that's one of the greatest moments in her life. She must have remembered that a lot. And then she was kind of praying the Hail Mary, you know- of course not praying to her, but remembering it, it's just an amazing, amazing thing that even Mary does or did what we do in- in- in contemplating the Rosary and the mysteries of the Rosary, and the Hail Marys and- and everything else.

One of the things that we- we are aware of in- in the Gospel of St. John is that St. John was a very Marian apostle. And why? Well, primarily because at the Cross, Jesus entrusted him to her- to Mary and Mary to him. And there is- there's a word that is used in the Gospel of John that is kind of very striking when we-

when we read it. He says- St. John says, "When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold thy son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold thy mother.' And from that hour, that disciple took her into his home." Now, the word for *his home* in Greek is not really the word for house or home or anything like that. It's just- the word is actually *idia*. What is *idia*, and it just means his things, one's own things, one's own things, it's like your things. What things? Things, it's kind of a very general thing. And this word in the Gospel of John actually is repeated several times. And, for instance, the first time we hear it is in the prologue of St. John where we read that "he came into his own but his own except that him not, but those who did accept them, he gave the power of becoming children of God." He came to his own, to his- to his own- to his own people, but they did not accept him. Alright, so we have that. Then we have another instance in which there is- where Jesus talks about the Good Shepherd and he says that they hear- "the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd." And it really is about to this man, the gatekeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice and he calls his own- his own, here's the word again, his own sheep by name and leads them forth. The sheep are his- his own, right, and they hear him, they listen to him.

And then, another instance, and bear with me, and this is the last one, "Behold, the hour is coming," Jesus says at the Last Supper, "and has already come for you to be scattered, each one to his own house, again to his own things and to leave me alone." So, notice that, really, one's own things. This word *idia* refers to Jesus' own people, his sheep that he loves so much and that he's united to and whose voice we obey, you know, or we reject like those people who rejected him and they couldn't become children of God. Or, like- like these in this last passage that I just read, that people will go into their own things and actually reject Christ, you know, and going, you know, away, it always has to do with fleeing, with being scattered with rejecting or accepting. And maybe I'm reading too much into this, but basically, without Mary, we run away into our own things. When we are with Mary and when we bring her into our own things, we're actually doing the opposite of fleeing and getting scattered and rejecting. We actually bring Christ together into our own world and we can then become children of God. So, bring Mary into your things, then you will belong to Christ.

And actually, St. Josemaria has a point in *The Way* which is very striking because it says something about along these lines, "Be Mary's and you'll be ours," you know, think of the Holy Trinity saying that to you, be Mary's and you'll be ours, you will belong to us. If you belong to Mary, if you put Mary into your life, then you will- you will be part of- part of the Holy Trinity. "Say to her, Mother of mine, yours because you are hers on many counts. May your love bind me, not make me flee, but bind me to your Son's Cross. May I not lack the faith nor the courage nor the daring to carry out the will of Jesus." Isn't this what we've been talking about here in this meditation? It's about doing the will of God, that's how we will look like Jesus and we will be kind of- we will be his own people, his own people that he has acquired with his blood which is the blood of Mary as well. We won't be scattered. We will be gathered together as one- as one people, as- as one family.

Well, that's what Mary will bring to us. And so, when we turn to her this month, we pray to her as a family, as a whole, as a people, because we're all suffering from the same thing, and we- we want to ask her for really making Christ present in our lives, that we may resemble his face so that we may then radiate it to many of the people around us and give them peace.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations which you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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