

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

## MARY: AWAKEN OUR FAITH, MAKE US STRONG

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In the Name of the Father and the Son and 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, by guardian angel intercede for me.

We can ask the Lord now to stir up the fire of our faith. As we do with any fire, we start small, we start to put little twigs on the fire, things that are easy to burn, the branches, light things. And all these little twigs that we put in very carefully, one after the other, they get the fire going. A faith will be raging. And one of the most effective twigs that we can put into the fire of our faith is our devotion to our Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, our devotion to her, those glances, those aspirations, those short little prayers, or repeated Hail Marys, repeated memorares.

Those little things, awaken something in us. In particular, they awaken within us or devotion to the Blessed Mary as Mother. That's what we want to do, during this time of prayer to stir up our faith or awaken within us the fire of our faith that will rage into a burning fire. So, our father would say, stir up that fire of faith. Christ is not a figure that has passed, he is not a memory that is lost in history; not an old fire we're stirring up.

And Mary, the Blessed Mother seems to stir up devotion within us. We know in some ways, she's an historical figure, of course. She was next to Jesus. She appears there in the Gospels. But she has been present all along just as the Lord has been present all along throughout history. And she is that figure that stirs up something strong in us, stirs up something pious, stirs up something devout.

Naturally, there are many images of Our Lord, many crucifixes. But throughout history, there have also been many, many statues and images dominated by the Blessed Mother. It's as though she accompanied us, like children who are afraid to go off on their own. She's accompanying us through history. It's one of the explanations for the beauty of art in general. The beauty of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

You could say that of a crucifix, you could say that of Our Lord as well. But of course, there's something about her feminine presence that stirs up within us, this emotion for her beauty as a mother.

The other day I went for with a group of boys to the Art Gallery of Ontario. And we saw some beautiful works and medieval works and more modern things and landscapes and beautiful paintings. We spent several hours there, looking very carefully at each painting. In fact, I had a chance to do a little video of the whole thing, just videoing every little painting zooming in.

But one thing I had never noticed before at the Art Gallery of Ontario was a beautiful painting by Dutch painter, Abraham Bloemaert. It's a painting from 1625 with the most tender image of Mother and Child, of Mary the mother with the Child in her arms. I did not expect this from a painter like this guy Bloemaert. I mean, it was he's, he doesn't do this kind of thing. He just doesn't do it. He's what we call a mannerist that he's It's a style of painting that is just like it's it's kind of often showing these rather extended and contorted images of bodies almost preternaturally muscular, contorted bodies, that's the hallmark of this guy Bloemaert from Utrecht.

And he often does seas or nice flowers, paintings of flowers, still lifes, animals. He did lots of etchings of cities. But you know, they were kind of, you know, not too interesting in, in what I had known of him, but they're staring at me in the face was a beautiful image of Mary, our Mother with a child. She has thick blond hair, very, very, very smooth skin, the child with flushed cheeks, half asleep. I didn't expect this of Bloemaert.

So I looked him up again, and saw that well, he was actually a devout Catholic. And I didn't expect that in 17th century, Holland, there weren't that many devout Catholics. In fact, most of them were Calvinists or certainly quite anti-Catholic. And in his career, he did end up working for a few large churches, including a Jesuit Church there in Brussels. But he didn't have that easy. And this is the first time I'd seen this image. And it really, really proves that he loved our Blessed Mother. Just looking at this, look at that. I mean, that's it, this guy loved Our Lady, this guy was devout.

And of course, when we think of Our Lady as Mother, we understand that Mary was mother in at least two fundamental ways that is, we say that there are two motherhoods of Mary. The first came when she became Mother of God, when she consented freely, to the Incarnation with her fiat when the angel appeared, and she said, Yes, feed me, I will be the Mother of God. That instant, and then of course, throughout the days after she was really a mother, she became pregnant, that's what mother that happens to mothers.

But she became mother again. You know, when she stood in front of the cross, and Our Lord Himself, made her a Mother, when He entrusted to her to John, and entrusted John to her, Behold, your Mother, behold your son. But of course, she would have had to have said fiat to that as well. We don't think of the fiat that she would have said at the foot of the cross. But there was definitely some form of acceptance. Like the fact that He was on the Cross, didn't depend on her fiat in that sense that it just happened when she like, said, be it done, but she had an internal acceptance, accepting that this was God's plan for her son. She didn't rebel against it, and, I don't know, just tear her hair out in front of this, she would have been very sorrowful of course, but accepting and serene in front of this reality.

And there too, she became Mother, a Mother, which required her fiat and here too the history of art has shown just, I mean, just such a tremendous variety of ways in which that Motherhood, the Motherhood of Mary at the foot of the Cross has been expressed. She's often shown in blue, sometimes fainting, at the pain of her seeing her dying son, John holding her in red.

Probably one of the most famous paintings was Roger Vander Videns 1435 painting, which is the descent of the Cross, right. It was done for crossbow guild in I believe it would have been somewhere in either Brussels or another Dutch town. It was a huge, huge painting, I mean, and ended up in the Escorial. Now it's in the Prado. I mean that the painting takes up an entire room. It's like a stage play. But these hard sculpted figures, very, very realistic facial features, and Jesus amongst these vivid colors being lowered down from the Cross. It's all shown in minute details.

It's, it's impressive because as the Lord is gently being lowered, at that very moment, Our Lady echoes His position and faints into the arms of she fainted into the arms of St. John. And the image of Jesus being lowered, like this kind of diagonal echoes exactly what happens to Mary. He is lowered gently. And this painting was done at the same time or, more or less at the same time as Thomas a Kempis's famous Imitation of Christ was a monk around there. And there are too there are sort of expressions of the suffering of Mary, the suffering of Jesus.

And our closeness to Jesus, which is brought about by a closeness to the Blessed Mother. He says, in this imitation, "When Jesus is near all is well, and nothing is difficult. All is well, when he is absent, all is hard." When Jesus does not speak within, all comfort, is empty. But if he says only a word, it brings great consolation. This is what we want to ask our Mother, right? To have her Son, Jesus, near when He is near, all is well. Even though there might be upheavals in our life, even though it might be contradictions, difficult people if he is there, if we're conscious of His nearness, nothing seems difficult.

And that's why we say that Mary is our Mother, because she will teach us how to calmly stay at peace, and not get agitated, not lose peace, in front of setbacks, in front of difficulties, front of the possibility of agitation, she is Our Lady of Peace. And we can ask her now, be for me, Our Lady of Peace. I get a lot of work, I get agitated, if I get a lot of things to do. If I'm in the temptation of sadness. This is as though we're sad when He is absent. And everything seems to be hard. When He doesn't speak within us, when He doesn't whisper His love.

Even the greatest joys and comforts we can have they seem they seem uninteresting. Certainly they don't satisfy us. But what we need is just a word. Just an acknowledgement from the Lord. And that somehow what Our Lady provides for us. She, of course, received Jesus in her womb. He was present deeply within her, but she also received Him in her arms at the Cross. We say this in the spiritual communion, we've heard it from our father.

But you know, the other day I was... I had that opportunity to, to give a benediction. Actually, it was here. But say the people that were here were not the usual crowd. Not the usual crowd. Lots of people that I was not familiar with. And I think lots of people that were really unfamiliar even with the benediction.

And of course, it was a vigil. So, at the end, I said spiritual communion. I wish my Lord to receive you, with purity, humility and devotion with what your Most Holy Mother received you with a spirit and fervor of the Saints, but we've said that many times. Prayed that many times. That we've received that from our father, but where did he get that from? Did he write this up on his own the idea that we wish to receive the Lord in holy communion, like Our Lady received him. Where did he get that? It's probably all recorded somewhere where he got it.

But I just happen to be reading *The Imitation of Christ*, which actually, is one of the few places that makes reference to our Blessed Mother with regards to Communion. And there, Thomas a Kempis says, "O Lord God, my Creator, and my Redeemer, I long to receive you this day, with such reverence, praise and honor, with such gratitude, worthiness and love with such faith, hope and purity as that, with which your Most Holy Mother, the Glorious Virgin Mary, longed for, and received you when she humbly, devoutly, answered the angel who announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation. Behold, the handmade of the Lord be, it done unto me according to Thy word.

So that's the connection, that's the parallel, we receive Our Lord, the way our Blessed Mother received Him in the Incarnation. Perhaps we thought, Well, I wish my Lord to receive you. Like our Blessed Mother received you. But does that really refer to the Blessed Eucharist as such? Are we referring to the moment in which say John gave her communion? Well, maybe. But certainly, there's no that I know of, there's no record of that. That Our Lady assisted at St. John's Mass.

But she did receive Him in a very real way, when she said her fiat with such devotion, but with such willingness to do God's will, to be the Mother of God to be transformed, to play her role there. And that's a bit what we have to do also, when we receive Holy Communion, we receive with faith, with honor, with gratitude, with purity. But in a way that really transforms our life, as happened with our Blessed Mother.

That's why when anything rises up, when we get confused, or somehow hardened, we really have to have that model of our Blessed Mother in the way we have to receive Our Lord and the way we have to allow Him really to come into our life and gives us peace, gives us serenity, gives us purity. He's the one who gives us all that. We have our Blessed Mother, because it's as a Mother that she received that and it's as a Mother that she received Our Lord into her arms at the Cross.

So many paintings show Our Lady of Sorrows because there were many sorrows in her life, they call it the seven sorrows of the blessed and Virginia from Simeon's prophecy to the Flight into Egypt. To the child lost and found. The lost part is the sorrow, to the moment which He was, you know, seeing the Lord there in the way of the Cross, which is not in Scripture, but it's, it's once one of those that is assumed. The descent from the Cross this moment which she received Him literally in her arms. The moment in which she sorrowfully placed Him there in the tomb, now really He was really dead. And this was the definitive moment of her sorrow, when she places her Son there, on the slab. Churches entire Churches dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows, showing the Seven Swords.

Now there are better... that represent every one of those moments that people can see them reflect on each one of the mysteries, but they're not mysteries per se, but they're mysteries. Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, sometimes represented with seven swords into her heart starting with the prophecy of Simeon who said a sword shall pierce was going to be Seven Swords.

But she will help us You intercede for us. So we really as we receive Jesus as she did, we really know how to converse with Him. It's like an art. It's an art form that we have to redevelop, reawaken. Thomas a Kempis says, "It is a great art, to know how to converse with Jesus, and a great wisdom to know how to keep Him. Be humble, and peaceful, and Jesus will be with you. Be devout and calm, and He will remain with you. You may quickly drive Him away and lose His grace. If you turn back to the outside world. And if you drive Him away, and you lose Him, to whom will you go, and to whom will you seek then seek as a friend.

You cannot live well without a friend. And if Jesus be not your friend, above all else, you will be very sad and desolate. Thus, you are acting." He says, "foolishly if you trust or rejoice in any other, choose the opposition of the whole world. Rather than offend Jesus, choose the opposition of the whole world, the rejection of the whole world, rather than offend Jesus."

Of all of those who are dear to you, let Him be your special love. Let all things be loved for the sake of Jesus, but Jesus for His own sake. That's how we have to love Him. And this is Mary's role to bring us back to Jesus. She's really, you could say, the one behind the fact that we have Gaudium Cum Pace. We say that in the p..., give us joy with peace. And she will stir up our faith. Your faith is like a tree that produces fruits. So many good and lush fruits, like the fruits of joy, the fruits of serenity of peace.

These are the fruits of the Holy Spirit that come from the tree of faith. The fruits of peace, the fruits of kindness, the fruits of gentleness many fruits that are very good for us to eat in our life that are good for us to enjoy. Good for us to grab from this tree of faith. And the two most excellent fruits are Gaudium Cum Pace, joy with peace. Because if we really believe Him and trust Him, have faith in Him in His providence working, we will enjoy those fruits. Our Lord said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in me." Believe in me.

Because I guess the disciples were troubled and agitated at the fact that Peter had denied Him that they would suffer hardship that He would you know that He would not be with them. Of course, He does put us through hardship, He does put us through difficulties. You will have tribulation in this world, He says.

But we can only get frustrated if we demand that everything go according to our terms, everything go well according to our understanding. But if we trust Him, if we go to that tree, the tree of faith then we will have that peace and that joy. But it only comes from the tree of faith, the tree of the Cross where Our Lady stood.

And we have to be people who are joyful people who are at peace. Like Saint Teresa of Avila said, “May God protect me from gloomy saints would that we never have gloominess in our life.” We know we want that peace, that joy, that hope, Spence Nostra. And Sheila Domini, we we say, our hope. Because the joy we get isn’t something emotional. It’s not what we commonly think perhaps of joy. It’s a state of being kind of undisturbed by negative things in life doesn’t say that we never have negative things are hard things are pain. But it’s a tranquility that despite that pain, the spite those hardships, we still maintain.

Things happen. There are upheavals. But real anxiety doesn’t cloud our vision, or depress us. It could be that we have come to believe in certain things that we have knowledge of the faith and believe in the Eucharist. But it could be that we still are kind of like in a tunnel sometimes like that we that the faith hasn’t really revived us that we haven’t embraced or haven’t fully captured the Gaudium Cum Pace. Or father talks about that, you know, going through life as through a tunnel without ever understanding the splendor of the security of the warmth of the Son of faith.

That’s what our Mother will kind of engineer for us. All the great saints had great devotion to her. Pope John Paul II attributed to her protection the fact that he was not killed while he was shot, but he was not killed. He attributed that to her protection, that she guided the bullet. And today, the bullet is in the temple there in the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima. And it decorates the crown that she is wearing there. It’s a very valuable gem on that crown. It’s much more valuable than St. Edward’s crown, which King Richard has now already worn. With all those jewels, beautiful crown 17th century. The crown, it’s amazing. They abolished the Monarchy and then they brought it back. And that’s why it has all these incredible jewels.

But the best jewel is that bullet that Our Lady guided and protected the Holy Father. She’s the one who gives us Gaudium Cum Pace. Let’s ask her today to protect us in that way.

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



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