

ST. JOSEMARIA INSTITUTE PODCAST

TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

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In the Name of the Father and of the Son, and 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.

We have to admit that whenever we have the chance to pray about Our Lady, we melt. It's only natural that we melt in the presence of Our Mother. But on this feast day, Our Lady of the Rosary, we melt doubly. During this time of prayer together, our first order of business is to embrace Our Lady, to remind her of how much we love her and how grateful we are for the countless favors that she obtains for us.

We need the Rosary. It's only logical that Mary has given us the Rosary. She did so because she understands how we function. With those we love, we know that it is not enough to tell them I love you, just once. We want to say that again and again and again.

Someone was recently telling about his mother who was in the final months of her life. Lying there in bed. And with one of her daughters at her side. Her eyes closed. And at one point her daughter said to her, "Mom, I really love you. I'm so grateful". And there was no response. So, this daughter said again, the very same thing, and still no response. And finally, the daughter said, "Did you hear me?" And her mother opened her eyes, looked at her, and said, "I heard everything. I just wanted to hear you say it again and again and again and again." It was logical. Our mother, Our Lady. She loves to see us melt. She loves to see us melt every day.

A long time ago GK Chesterton wrote, speaking about this need for us to repeat things. He said, "Because children have abounding vitality; because they are in spirit, fierce and free, they want things to be repeated and repeated unchanged." They always say do it again. And the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For, grown-up people are not strong enough to exalt in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exalt in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, do it again to the sun. And every evening, do it again to the moon.

In our case, we obviously love glancing at the image of Our Lady as we enter a room. Perhaps we even walk over and give a statue of Mary a kiss. But we need to be convinced that this is not simply a way of remembering someone from the past. This is someone, Our Mother, who is watching us, who is listening to us, guiding us, and who is mesmerized as she watches us show our devotion to her.

St. Teresa of Avila had spoken along these lines back in the 16th century. She was talking about vocal prayer and about the importance of being aware when we say vocal prayers of what we're saying, who said it first, and above all, who it is who is at the receiving end of these prayers. And so, she said when it comes to Mary, we have to realize Mary is listening. And Teresa goes on to say how ridiculous it would be if we were sitting in the same room with another human being speaking to that person, and yet that person has their back to

us. We would think there is something wrong here. We can't be that person with our back to Our Lady, we have to be looking at her right in the eyes because she is there, and she is listening.

But along comes a really interesting, very subtle, possible obstacle. We cannot be content with simply appreciating Mary, and indeed, loving her with tender devotion. That subtle danger would be to remain content with praying an occasional Rosary. Or having a Rosary hanging from the rearview mirror, and thinking, well that's it. Like that person who said, I am a devout Catholic. And the person having lunch with this man said, "Well, what does that mean? When you say you're a devout Catholic, what do you mean?" And he said, with a serious face, "It means, every single night without exception, I say an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory be." And the other was there waiting for more, but nothing, no more was coming. And so, the other person, basically, let go with both barrels, saying, "Yes, that's a fine beginning, but let's get serious."

But in our case, talking about Our Lady, we can't be content, you could say, with a static life of piety. Because Our Lady is much more dynamic than that. We can say that every mother and especially Mary, Our Mother, every mother wants to see her children mature. And in the case of Mary, she places us front and center, before Jesus on the Cross. In fact, Mary makes sure that we are there at her side, precisely so that we can mature by realizing that we too, share in the mission of Jesus. Mary wants our faith to be truly dynamic. And so, she is there in our spiritual life, urging us on to embrace the mission in which we are called to be protagonists. And that mission, of course, is the ongoing mission of the Redemption. It's as though, Our Lady were to say to us, she is saying to us each day, we've got a lot of work to do.

All My Children Mary says to us, all my children are called to continue this work of the Redemption begun by my Son. This is what St. Josemaria was getting at when in one of his homilies, he says, "Mary always does the immense favor of bringing to the Cross, of placing face to face with the example of the Son of God, those who come close to her and contemplate her life. It is in this confrontation; the Christian life is decided." Those are startling words, that Mary does the immense favor of bringing us to the Cross. It's her way of saying it's not enough to be pious, to say a Rosary, a part of the Rosary every day. That's just the beginning. That is the source of spiritual energy that will then propel you. So that when you get out there in your daily circumstances, that you go about building the Church, building society.

In this homily, St. Jose Maria goes on to say many conversions, many decisions to give oneself to the service of God, have been preceded by an encounter with Mary. Our Lady has encouraged us to look to God, to desire to change, to lead a new life. And so, those words, "Do whatever he tells you," that Mary said at Cana. That message has turned into real self-giving. It has turned into a Christian vocation, which from then on enlightens all our personal life.

Just think what happens when we bring to everything we do, this relationship with Mary, this vision of being protagonists, but it injects in everything we do tremendous dynamism. It gives us a seriousness of purpose. It gives to our life much depth. And it liberates us from a happy-go-lucky attitude. A happy-go-lucky rhythm of life.

You might recall a passage from Tolstoy's, *Anna Karenina*. I believe it's in section six, chapter three. Tolstoy is describing the musings of one of the characters whose name was Levin, as he contemplates his young bride. There's been a change there. There's been a change in her. And so, Tolstoy says that Levin wanted to listen to his wife's voice, which had changed and acquired, along with her gaze, that mixture of sweetness and seriousness that is so characteristic of people who give themselves body and soul to a single occupation.

We can transpose those words to Our Lady very easily. And imagine looking in her eyes, we can imagine her when she was 18, 19, and 20, there by the well in Nazareth. And imagine the others who were there, speaking with her, observing her, and undoubtedly thinking to themselves, there is something special about her. This is someone who, despite her, her very, very young age, is locked on to something. That something, of course, was her mission. It gave her a single mindedness of purpose. That seriousness, so characteristic of people who give themselves body and soul to a single occupation.

This woman of faith, who is Our Mother, shows us what it means to take a risk. The kind of risk that led her to be there at the foot of the Cross. The kind of risk that took her, that led her to say yes, at a very early age, when she received that message from the Archangel Gabriel. As you know, Pope Francis recently wrote to the young people of the world, in a document entitled, *Christ is Alive*. And at one point, he says, "Mary's mission would undoubtedly be difficult, but the challenges that lay ahead were no reason for her to say no." Things would get complicated, of course, but not in the same way as happens when cowardice paralyzes us because things are not clear or certain in advance. Mary did not take out an insurance policy. She took the risk. And for this reason, she is strong. She is an influencer. The influencer of God. Her Yes, and her desire to serve, were stronger than any doubts or difficulties. These are words to live by.

We were saying earlier that Mary inserts, she injects into our spiritual life, tremendous dynamism. And that it is that dynamism, that life of faith, that then gives us the capacity to look out ahead of us. Look at all the possibilities and then turn to Our Father, God and say to Him, "What do you have in mind for me?" Just as Mary, as a 16-year-old, more or less, directed that kind of message to her Father, God. "Do you want it, Lord? Then I want it." We can't imagine how dynamic the life of Our Mother was and continues to be.

A number of years ago, St. John Paul II wrote a document on the *Mother of the Redeemer*. And in that, early on in the document, he makes the startling observation that the entire Bible opens and closes with references to Mary. There she is, at the very beginning and the very end of salvation history. There, in the first pages of the Gospel, of the book of Genesis, Mary is that woman clothed with the sun. Or I should say, more accurately, she is the one who is destined with her Son to crush the head of Satan. And in the book of Revelation, at the very end of the Bible, the woman clothed with the sun who achieves that ultimate victory over Satan. One of our constant references to Mary, one of the principal messages to her, has to be thank you, thank you, thank you. We can't even begin to imagine how many graces she obtains for us.

Here's a quick story that will amuse you. Not that we're supposed to be amused in our time of prayer together. But some years ago in Northern Indiana, there was a mother of a teenage girl who one day showed up and she was obviously upset. And someone asked her why she was upset. So, she explained that she was on her way out the door to go to the mall and her 16-year-old daughter looked up from the couch and said to her, "Mom, if you see anything that you think I might like, feel free to buy it for me." And her mother looked at the daughter and thought to herself, I could strangle her. Well, that's one level.

We don't even have to say that to Our Lady. She already knows that if she sees anything we need, she will get it without our even blinking an eye. This is something that, some centuries ago, St. Alphonsus Liguori pointed out.

You have undoubtedly read that book of his called, *The Glories of Mary*. Very old style, but very helpful. At one point he applies to Mary a passage from the Book of Wisdom where we read, "All good things came to me together with her." All good things came to me together with her. And St. Alphonse says, "Since Mary is the Mother of God, and the dispenser of all good things, the world may truly say that together with Devotion to Mary, they have obtained every good thing." We can consider this feast day not only a chance to thank Our Lady for things, for favors, but also to assure her we're going to spend the entire month showering her with affection as a prelude to doing the very same thing in preparation for her great feast day on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

St. Alphonse goes on to say, again quoting from Scripture, "With me are riches and glory, that I may enrich them that love me." St. Bonaventure got hold of this passage from the Old Testament and applied it to Our Lady. The phrase from the Old Testament again is, "With me are riches and glory, that I may enrich them that love me." And St. Bonaventure comments, "We should all keep our eyes fixed on the hands of Mary, that through her we may receive the blessings we desire."

And while we're taking advantage of St. Alphonse, he has one consideration after another like this. He brings to our attention a famous homily of St. Bernard, who preached 1000 years ago. One of his homilies entitled, *The Aqueduct Homily*. That's putting it in a rather informal language, but he compares Our Lady to an aqueduct. Unusual image. He says, "Mary is an aqueduct that is always full to overflowing, so that everyone can participate in its plenitude. The world was given to Mary, so that through this channel, this aqueduct, torrents of grace and heavenly gifts would descend ceaselessly from God."

At the risk of turning to St. Bernard too much, which is hard to do, actually, we can finish our time of prayer with a consideration that is a little bit long, but very powerful, where St. Bernard says, "If the winds of temptation rise against you, if you strike against the reefs of temptation, look at the star. Call on Mary. If you are tossed by the waves of pride, of ambition, or of envy, look at the star. Call on Mary. If anger, greed, or impurity, throw themselves violently against the ship of your soul. Look at Mary. If you are troubled by the memory of your sins, confounded at the ugliness of your conscience, fearful at the thought of judgment, and you start sinking in the bottomless pit of sadness, or in the abyss of despair, think of Mary. In danger, in affliction, in doubts, think of Mary. Call on Mary. Do not let Mary be apart from your tongue. Don't withdraw her from your heart, and to obtain her intercession, do not depart from the example of her virtue."

And St. Bernard finishes by saying, "You will not go wrong if you follow her, and not lose heart if you pray to her. You will not be lost if you think of her. If she takes you by the hand, you will not fall. If she protects you, you will never have cause to fear. You will not grow weary if she guides you. You will reach a port safely if she aids you." Well, that is way too much to read in one going, but I'm sure Our Lady does not mind. St. Bernard certainly does not mind. And let's face it, these thoughts can really help us. What they boil down to is, in case of any need whatsoever, turn to Mary.

We finish by turning to Our Lady even though we've been talking things over with her during this entire time of prayer. We say, Mary, I'm going to say it not just once, but as I pick up the beads and pray this Rosary, I'm going to say it 50 times knowing how much you love to hear again and again and again, I love you.

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

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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