

# Our Blessed Lady

in the words of *Blessed John Paul II*

J.M.J.  
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## The Person and Mission of Mary

**Mary is the Mother of God.** "With this title, which is broadly echoed in the devotion of the Christian people, Mary is seen in the true dimension of her Motherhood; she is the Mother of God's Son, Whom she virginally begot according to His human nature and raised with her motherly love, thus contributing to the human growth of the Divine Person Who came to transform the destiny of mankind."

**Mary enjoys a special bond with each Person in the Most Blessed Trinity.** "Everything comes from the Will of the Father, Who has sent His Son into the world, revealing Him to men and establishing Him as the Head of the Church and the center of history. This plan was fulfilled by the Incarnation, the work of the Holy Spirit, but with the essential cooperation of a woman, the Virgin Mary. She thus became an integral part in the economy of communicating the Trinity to the human race."

**Mary is near to us.** "Through her closeness to the events of our daily history, Mary sustains us in trials. She encourages us in difficulty, always pointing out to us the goal of eternal salvation. Thus, her role as Mother is seen ever more clearly: Mother of her Son, Jesus, tender and vigilant Mother to each of us, to whom, from the Cross, the Redeemer entrusted her, that we might welcome her as children in faith."

**Mary is the Immaculate Conception.** "Granted 'by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God,' this preservation from Original Sin is an absolutely gratuitous divine favor, which Mary received at the first moment of her existence. The Virgin Mother received the singular grace of being immaculately conceived 'in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the

human race,' that is, of His universal redeeming action. The Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Church 'admires and exalts in Mary the most excellent fruit of the Redemption.'"

**Mary was free from all sin, both Mortal Sin and Venial Sin.** "The Church has constantly regarded Mary as holy and free from all sin or moral imperfection. The Council of Trent expressed this conviction, affirming that no one 'can avoid all sins, even venial sins, throughout his life, unless he is given a special privilege, as the Church holds with regard to the Blessed Virgin.' Even the Christian transformed and renewed by grace is not spared the possibility of sinning. Grace does not preserve him from all sin throughout his life, unless, as the Council of Trent asserts, a special privilege guarantees this immunity from sin. This is what happened with Mary."

**Mary is the Ever-Virgin.** "In a brief formula, the Church traditionally presents Mary as 'virgin before, during and after giving birth,' affirming, by indicating these three moments, that she never ceased to be a virgin. Her Virginity 'during and after giving birth,' although implicit in the title 'Virgin' already attributed to Mary from the Church's earliest days, became the object of deep doctrinal study since some began explicitly to cast doubts on it. Pope Saint Hormisdas explained that 'the Son of God became Son of man, born in time in the manner of a man, opening His Mother's womb to birth (see Saint Luke 2:23), and through God's power, not dissolving His Mother's Virginity.' The Second Vatican Council confirmed this doctrine, and stated that the firstborn Son of Mary 'did not diminish His Mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it.'"



### WHAT IS THE OFFICE OF THE MARIAN APOSTOLATE (OMA)?

Established on July 1, 2009 during the Year for Priests by Bishop Paul J. Swain, the Office of the Marian Apostolate is to increase awareness of and appreciation and love for Mary the Mother of God and her abiding presence in the Diocese of Sioux Falls.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS INSERT TO THE AUGUST 2011 ISSUE OF THE BISHOP'S BULLETIN?

On May 1, 2011, which was Divine Mercy Sunday (the Second Sunday of Easter), Pope Benedict XVI (2005- ) beatified his immediate Predecessor, Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) in Saint Peter's Square, Vatican City. Blessed John Paul II is well remembered for his devotion to and teaching about the Blessed Virgin Mary. Who is Mary and what does she do? And how do our hearts respond to her? Blessed John Paul II speaks to us.



**Mary, the Virginal Spouse of Saint Joseph, bore Jesus Christ the Son of God in Bethlehem.** "The Virgin's action was the result of her complete willingness to cooperate in God's plan, already expressed at the Annunciation in her 'let it be to me according to your word.' (Saint Luke 1:38) Mary experienced childbirth in a condition of extreme poverty. She could not give the Son of God even what mothers usually offer a newborn baby. Instead, she had to lay Him 'in a manger,' an improvised cradle which contrasts with the dignity of the 'Son of the Most High.'"

**Mary's confidence in Jesus her Divine Son blossomed into her own receptivity to Him and His work.** "The meaning and role of the Blessed Virgin's presence (at the Wedding Feast at Cana in Galilee) becomes evident when the wine runs out. As a skilled and wise housewife, she immediately notices and intervenes so that no one's joy is marred and, above all, to help the newly married couple in difficulty. Turning to Jesus with the words, "They have no wine" (Saint John 2:3), Mary expresses her concern to Him about this situation, expecting Him to solve it. More precisely, according to some exegetes, his Mother is expecting an extraordinary sign, since Jesus had no wine at His disposal. At Cana, the Blessed Virgin once again showed her total availability to God. At the Annunciation she had contributed to the miracle of the virginal conception by believing in Jesus before seeing Him; here, her trust in Jesus' as yet unrevealed power causes Him to perform His "first sign," the miraculous transformation of water into wine. In that way she precedes in faith the disciples who, as John says, would believe after the miracle: Jesus "manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." (Saint John 2:11) Thus, Mary strengthened their faith by obtaining this miraculous sign."

**Mary has been rightly esteemed by the Christian Faithful for centuries.** "Down the centuries Marian devotion has enjoyed an interrupted development. In addition to the traditional liturgical Feasts dedicated to the Lord's Mother, there has been a flowering of countless expressions of piety, often approved and encouraged by the Church's Magisterium. Many Marian devotions and prayers are an extension of the Liturgy itself and have sometimes contributed to its overall enrichment, as is the case with the Office in honor of the Blessed Virgin and other pious compositions which have become part of the Breviary. The first known Marian invocation goes back to the Third Century and begins with the words: 'We fly to thy patronage (*Sub tuum praesidium*), O holy Mother of God . . . ." However, since the 14<sup>th</sup> Century the most common prayer among Christians has been the 'Hail Mary.'"

**Mary provides a superb example for all women, including those confined to their homes.** "Mary's awareness that she was carrying out a task entrusted to her by God gave a higher meaning to her daily life. The simple, humble chores of everyday life took on special value in her eyes, since she performed them as a service to Christ's mission. Mary's example enlightens and encourages the experience of so many women who carry out their daily tasks exclusively in the home. It is a question of a humble, hidden, repetitive effort, and is often not sufficiently appreciated. Nonetheless, the long years Mary spent in the house of Nazareth reveal the enormous potential of genuine love and thus of salvation. In fact, the simplicity of the lives of so many housewives, seen as a mission of service and love, is of extraordinary value in the Lord's eyes."

**Mary participated in Jesus' saving work on Calvary of reconciling us with His Beloved Father.** "With our gaze illumined by the radiance of the Resurrection, we pause to reflect on the Mother's involvement in her Son's redeeming Passion, which was completed by her sharing in His suffering. Let us return again, but now in the perspective of the Resurrection, to the foot of the Cross where the Mother endured 'with her only-begotten Son the intensity of His suffering, associated herself with His sacrifice in her Mother's Heart, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which was born of her.' With these words, the (Second Vatican) Council reminds us of 'Mary's compassion'; in her Heart reverberates all that Jesus suffers in Body and Soul, emphasizing her willingness to share in her Son's redeeming Sacrifice and to join her own maternal suffering to His priestly Offering. The Council text also stresses that her consent to Jesus' immolation is not passive acceptance but a genuine act of love, by which she offers her Son as a 'Victim' of expiation for the sins of all humanity."

**Mary rejoiced in her Risen Son.** "After Jesus had been laid in the tomb, Mary 'alone remains to keep alive the flame of faith, preparing to receive the joyful and astonishing announcement of the Resurrection.' The expectation felt on Holy Saturday is one of the loftiest moments of faith for the Mother of the Lord: in the darkness that envelops the world, she entrusts herself fully to the God of life, and thinking back to the words of her Son, she hopes in the fulfillment of the divine promises. The Gospels mention various appearances of the Risen Christ, but not a meeting between Jesus and His Mother. This silence must not lead to the conclusion that after the Resurrection Christ did not appear to Mary; rather it invites us to seek the reasons why the Evangelists made such a choice. If the authors of the New Testament do not speak of the Mother's encounter with her Risen Son, this can perhaps be attributed to the fact that such a witness would have been considered too biased by those who denied the Lord's Resurrection, and therefore not worthy of belief. How could the Blessed Virgin, present in the first community of disciples (cf. Acts 1:14), be excluded from those who met her Divine Son after He had risen from the dead? Indeed, it is legitimate to think that the Mother was probably the first person to whom the Risen Jesus appeared. Could not Mary's absence from the group of women who went to the tomb at dawn (cf. Mk 16:1; Mt 28:1) indicate that she had already met Jesus? This inference would also be confirmed by the fact that the first witnesses of the Resurrection, by Jesus' will, were the women who had remained faithful at the foot of the Cross and therefore were more steadfast in faith. It seems reasonable to think that Mary, as the image and model of the Church which waits for the Risen One and meets Him in the group of disciples during His Easter appearances, had had a personal contact with her Risen Son, so that she too could delight in the fullness of paschal joy."



**Mary received the same Holy Spirit whom she had received at her Immaculate Conception and at the Annunciation.** "During that prayer in the Upper Room, in an attitude of deep communion with the Apostles, with some women and with Jesus' 'brethren,' the Mother of the Lord prays for the gift of the Spirit for herself and for the Community. It was appropriate that the first outpouring of the Spirit upon her, which had happened in view of her Divine Motherhood, should be repeated and reinforced. Indeed, at the foot of the Cross Mary was entrusted with a new Motherhood, which concerned Jesus' disciples. It was precisely this mission that demanded a renewed gift of the Spirit. The Blessed Virgin therefore wanted it for the fruitfulness of her Spiritual Motherhood. While at the moment of the Incarnation the Holy Spirit had descended upon her as a person called to take part worthily in the great mystery, everything is now accomplished for the sake of the Church, whose image, model and Mother Mary is called to be. In the Church and for the Church, mindful of Jesus' promise, she waits for Pentecost and implores a multiplicity of gifts for everyone, in accordance with each one's personality and mission."

**Mary, at the end of her earthly life, was assumed by God body and soul into Paradise.** "Although the New Testament does not explicitly affirm Mary's Assumption, it offers a basis for it because it strongly emphasized the Blessed



Virgin's perfect union with Jesus' destiny. This union, which is manifested from the time of the Savior's miraculous conception, in the Mother's participation in her Son's mission and especially in her association with His redemptive sacrifice, cannot fail to require a continuation after death. Perfectly united with the life and saving work of Jesus, Mary shares His heavenly destiny in body and soul."

**Mary, who was crowned as the Queen of Heaven and Earth, cherishes each one of us.** "One can conclude that the Assumption favors Mary's full communion not only with Christ, but with each one of us: she is beside us, because her glorious state enables her to follow us in our daily earthly journey. As we read again in Saint Germanus of Constantinople: 'You dwell spiritually with us and the greatness of your vigilance over us makes your communion of life with us stand out.' Thus far from creating distance between her and us, Mary's glorious state brings about a continuous and caring closeness. She knows everything that happens in our life and supports us with maternal love in life's trials. Taken up into heavenly glory, Mary dedicates herself totally to the work of salvation in order to communicate to every living person the happiness granted to her. She is a Queen who gives all that she possesses, participating above all in the life and love of Christ."

**Mary is Mater Ecclesiae—The Mother of the Church.** "The title 'Mother of the Church' thus reflects the deep conviction of the Christian Faithful, who see in Mary not only the Mother of the Person of Christ, but also of the Faithful. She who is recognized as

Mother of salvation, life and grace, Mother of the saved and Mother of the living, is rightly proclaimed Mother of the Church. Pope Paul VI would have liked the Second Vatican Council itself to have proclaimed 'Mary Mother of the Church, that is, of the whole People of God, of the Faithful and their Pastors.' He did so himself in his speech at the end of the Council's Third Session (November 21, 1964), also asking that 'henceforth the Blessed Virgin be honored and invoked with this title by all the Christian people.' In this way, my venerable Predecessor explicitly enunciated the doctrine contained in Chapter Eight of *Lumen gentium*, hoping that the title of Mary, Mother of the Church, would have an ever more important place in the Liturgy and piety of the Christian people."

**Mary desires unity among all Christians and assists the Church's efforts.**

"Just as Mary's presence in the early Community fostered oneness of heart, which prayer strengthened and made visible (see Acts of the Apostles 1:14), so the most intense communion with her whom Augustine called the 'Mother of unity' will be able to bring Christians to the point of enjoying the long-awaited gift of ecumenical unity. We ceaselessly pray to the Blessed Virgin so that, just as at the beginning she supported the journey of the Christian Community's oneness in prayer and the proclamation of the Gospel, so today she may obtain through her intercession reconciliation and full communion among all believers in Christ. Mother of men, Mary knows well the needs and aspirations of humanity. The peace, harmony and unity for which the Church and humanity hope still seem far away. Nevertheless, they are a gift of the Spirit to be constantly sought, as we learn from Mary and trust in her intercession."



## Mary Moves Our Hearts In Love of Jesus Christ



Saint Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort (1673-1716), a French missionary priest who founded two Religious Institutes, the Daughters of Wisdom (1703) and the Missionaries of the Company of Mary, which is also known as the Montfort Fathers and Brothers (1715), identified what he called the ten "virtues of the Blessed Virgin" in his classic *True Devotion to Mary*.

Blessed John Paul II cited the helpful influence that this volume had on his own spiritual life.

As Saint Louis Marie and Blessed John Paul recognized the marvelous virtues within the sinless soul of Our Lady, we do, too, and we seek to imitate them. We ask Our Blessed Mother to impress upon us the desire for these virtues so that we may live as free, holy sons and daughters of God.

These are the ten virtues exemplified by Mary according to Saint Louis Marie. Blessed John Paul II commented extensively during his almost twenty-seven year Pontificate on these vital qualities that are to be found within every disciple of Jesus Christ.

**1. Deep Humility.** "With her wise reading of history, Mary leads us to discover the criteria of God's mysterious action. Overturning the judgments of the world, He comes to the aid of the poor and lowly, to the detriment of the rich and powerful. In a surprising way He fills with good things the humble who entrust their lives to Him. While these words of the song show us Mary as a concrete and sublime model, they give us to understand that humility of heart especially attracts God's kindness."

**2. Lively Faith.** "The Church lives by faith, seeing in her (Mary) 'who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord' (Saint Luke 1:45), the first and perfect expression of her faith. On this journey of trusting abandonment to the Lord, the Virgin goes before the disciples, adhering to the divine Word with an increasing intensity that embraces all the stages of her life and spreads to the very mission of the Church. Her example encourages the People of God to practice their faith and to study and develop its content, by keeping in their heart and meditating on the events of salvation."





**3. Blind Obedience.** “At the Temple in Jerusalem, in this prelude to His saving mission, Jesus associates his Mother with Himself; no longer is she merely the One who gave Him birth, but the Woman who, through her own obedience to the Father’s plan, can co-operate in the mystery of Redemption. Thus keeping in her Heart an event so charged with meaning, Mary attains a new dimension of her co-operation in salvation.”

**4. Unceasing Prayer.** “Mary also represents the model of the Church at prayer. In all probability Mary was absorbed in prayer when the Angel Gabriel came to her house in Nazareth and greeted her. This prayerful setting certainly supported the Blessed Virgin in her reply to the Angel and in her generous assent to the mystery of the Incarnation. In the Annunciation scene, artists have almost always depicted Mary in a prayerful attitude. Of them all we recall Fra Angelico. This shows to the Church and every believer the atmosphere that should prevail during worship.”

**5. Constant Self-denial.** “The Son of God loved us first, while ‘we were yet sinners’ (Romans 5:6), with an unconditional love which asks nothing in return. Giving not only from our abundance, but sacrificing something more in order to give to the needy, fosters that self-denial which is essential to authentic Christian living. Strengthened by constant prayer, the baptized reveal the priority which they have given to God in their lives.”

**6. Surpassing Purity.** “It follows that man’s body is no longer just his own. It deserves that respect whose manifestation in the mutual conduct of man, male and female, constitutes the virtue of purity. This is not only because it is the body of the person. When the Apostle writes: ‘Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God’ (1 Corinthians 6:19), he intends to indicate yet another source of the dignity of the body, precisely the Holy Spirit, Who is also the source of the moral duty deriving from this dignity.”



**7. Ardent Love.** “Love for God, made possible by the gift of the Spirit, is founded on the mediation of Jesus, as He Himself affirmed in His priestly prayer: ‘I made known to them Your Name and I will make it known, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them and I in them’ (Saint John 17:26). Christian love draws from this wellspring of love, which is Jesus, the Son of God offered for us. The capacity to love as God loves is offered to every Christian as the fruit of the Paschal Mystery of the Death and Resurrection.”

**8. Heroic Patience.** “The imitation of Jesus, the suffering Servant, has led great saints and simple believers to turn their illnesses and pain into a source of purification and salvation for themselves and for others. What great prospects of personal sanctification and cooperation for the salvation of the world does the path marked out by Christ and by so many of His disciples open to our sick brothers and sisters! The example of Christ, the good Samaritan, must inspire the believer’s attitude, prompting him to be ‘close’ to his brothers and sisters who are suffering, through respect, understanding, acceptance, tenderness, compassion and gratuitousness.”

**9. Angelic Kindness.** “The Son of God does not come into the world empty-handed. It is true that in the stable at Bethlehem He receives the gifts of the shepherds, but first He Himself brings great gifts. His generosity is indescribable. Precisely that priceless gift which the Apostle calls ‘*grace*’—the gift of a share in the life of God, a universal gift, the opening of the path of eternal salvation — is the most profound source of Christmas joy.”

**10. Heavenly Wisdom.** “Holy Spirit and Seat of Wisdom, help us in the great endeavor that we are carrying out to meet on a more and more mature way our brothers and sisters in the faith. Help us all to proclaim Christ and to reveal the power of God and the wisdom of God hidden in His cross.”

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of God and our Mother, too. We are called to venerate her as her own Son did and does now in Heaven.



### PRAYER TO OUR BLESSED MOTHER

*SUB TUUM PRAESIDIUM*

(The oldest known prayer in honor of Mary, dating back to the second or third century)

**We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God;  
despise not our prayers in our necessities,  
but ever deliver us, O holy and glorious Virgin.**

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