



*Devotion to the Immaculate and Sorrowful Heart of Mary  
according to Father Masmítja,  
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*Uniting with the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

Does our world, our country and ourselves need transformation? Let us read what Pope St. John II once wrote. “We are living in a very unique time and facing a struggle unlike that of previous generations, the greatest combat that mankind ever saw. I do not believe the Christian Community completely understands this.” (Gress, *The Marian Option*, p. xxi) John Paul II, as Cardinal Karol Wojtlya said these words in 1967. What would he say now?

We will reflect in this article on how to cultivate an inner awareness of Mary’s Heart, so as to cause peace in our occasionally anguished hearts and in our troubled world.

A man passed by a group of Sisters quietly eating; he could hear no one talking. He waited and during the entire meal no one said a word. Astonished, he drove to the nearest Catholic Church and immediately asked for instructions to become a Catholic. “Why do you want to become a Catholic?” asked the priest. The man replied, “Any religion that can make thirty women quiet must be true!”

What happened here? Prayerful silence, an effect of holy living, ignited the man to look at the cause: a true religion. Signs can point to truth. When Mary becomes our companion, miracles in our life occur. Causes produce effects. Mary, the cause, makes miracles, the effects, occur.

Do we and the world need miracles of peace? I pray you give a strong inner YES!





I don't know about you, but people seem uneasy about the U.S. --- infanticide exists as well as euthanasia, ISIS surprise attacks frequently occur, even the compelling of our priests to break the seal of confession in one state ... the list goes on and on ad nauseum. Our Faith tells us a definite solution exists: union with Mary's Immaculate Heart, the answer to all problems.

Why do I say this? The secular historian Arnold Toynbee wrote about the rise of twenty-six great civilizations. Toynbee asserted that the key to rejuvenating a decadent culture is through what he termed a "creative minority." (Gress, *The Marian Option*, pp. 5-7) I believe you who are now reading sincerely this article may be part of this "creative minority."

A creative minority consists of only two kinds of people: the first is a few people who teach the truth, as Toynbee coined it, to "the unthinking masses." The second, in which we are more concerned, is the man or woman who enters the world and exits it to go back to his reservoir of prayer. In short, the second creative minority are people who pray, and the most efficacious prayer is one united with Christ through Mary. Will you be part of this creative minority?

Now, you may be thinking, "Fine, Sister, you live in a convent. What about me? I'm a busy father, I am a mom with little children, I'm a grandparent constantly babysitting, I am a single man/woman and everyone asks me to do all the extra work...etc. How in the world can I have such a lofty relationship with Mary, let alone transform the world? I'm no saint."

St. Juan Diego could very well say the same thing. He was just a widowed lay man who worked and took care of his elderly uncle. Yes, he saw Our Lady, and his obedience won the conversions of millions and the transformation of a pagan culture. However, others have seen Our Lady in apparitions but failed later to walk in her presence and even declined. What was Juan's secret? He encountered, listened and consecrated himself to Mary.



Encountering, Listening and Consecrating, three acts we can all do, be we  
laity, diocesan priests, religious, to cultivate a deep relationship with our Mother. An  
acronym to help you: ELC

1. Encountering Please think of any deep relationship you have: a spouse or friend. How did it  
happen? Now, you may raise an objection: Sister, I saw the manliness in my future husband; I first looked  
at the beauty of my wife. I talked to my friend who connected with me. Yes, in our earthly lives we live  
by our five senses; however, scientists can reason to other dimensions and we know by Faith the  
supernatural world exists. The word again: Faith. We must believe in the reality of Mary's closeness.  
She is present, here, now.

You may question, "but how can I have that kind of faith?" Ask. Jesus told us, "Ask and it  
will be given to you." (Mt 7:7) Our heavenly Father will give good things to those who ask and there is  
nothing better than a theological virtue! So, it is there for the asking!

With faith, we encounter Our Lady. She gradually reveals herself to us. As our Mother  
Foundress, Mother M. Joanne Brummel, once pointed out, "There is no such thing as 'instant  
friendship.'" We may unconsciously, thanks to our society's over emphasis upon speed, convenience and  
instant gratification, want instant friendship but it will not occur without time. Mary is not going to  
immediately become our companion, unless we have already fostered this relationship.

Just how can I nurture this intimacy with the Virgin? One truth may help -Mary wants a  
relationship with each of us more than we do. She is our Mother and paid for it through her sorrows,  
especially at Calvary.

When someone shows she wants a relationship with me, I am more ready to cultivate it. Isn't  
that natural? Mary is our mother and desperately desires to connect with us. Besides cultivating faith and  
realizing Mary's love for me, what else must one do to encounter? I must be ready to invest time in the



relationship. Go back to the people you remembered ... your spouse or friend. Were you and are you willing to take time to cultivate this special relationship?

What is the secret of a good relationship? If we examine our own friendships, we can see a gradual mutual knowledge, appreciation, doing of kind actions, availability to our friends, and mutual readiness to encourage or just be present in times of desolation. Friendships take work, but is it ever worth it! Likewise, we need to take time for cultivating our relationship with Our Lady.

Along with investing time, we need to look for signs. St. Juan Diego immediately saw Our Lady of Guadalupe on the hill, right? Wrong. Juan Diego first heard an uncommonly beautiful chorus of birds; then he saw an unusual light in the morning and finally felt a nudge of grace stirring him to go off his own preplanned way and turn another way.

We too can see signs if we are open. I know a young woman, a single mom whose boyfriend wished her to abort the baby before and verbally abused her afterwards, sought help with the St. Stephen Ministry. This ministry gave the young woman a mentor, and her guide told her to look for “signs” of divine presence. The young lady did and the practice of “signs” helped sustain her in trials as a single mom with the baby’s abusive father. If this woman could do it, each of us can do it.

Signs of Mary’s presence exist! A big sign is your sitting right now in our IHM chapel --- a sign of Mary’s personally beckoning you to come to Herself. I urge you tonight, if you are beginning a relationship with Our Lady, to consider signs of her presence in your life.

2. LISTENING: As we check our phones and watch the news, we see in our country a preferential love for texting and talking. To counter this trend, we must foster the art of listening to others. If we do not listen, can we have any relationships? Not really ... and if we do listen, people will seek us out. Mary wishes to speak to us; are our ears open?



Think about it. Every time Mary appears, from Guadalupe to the latest apparition, She speaks. True mothers wish to speak to their children. She has urgent words for us as a people, but also messages that are unique to each of us.

Will Mary speak to me audibly? Perhaps, but probably not. She speaks to us by inspiring us. Mary speaks, but she places conditions for our spiritual ears: a receptive faith and a docile will.

The faith we need to hear Mary is the awareness of Her personal involvement in our life, Her concrete plans for each of us. The Blessed Mother is not just here to give a boost to my spiritual life or answer a prayer (as good as this is). She is here by God's design to fulfill the divine plan for our life.

How often does She talk? Always ... I must listen to her not just once a year in a retreat or novena, not only on Sundays or Saturdays, but each minute of my life, in my trials & my joys.

Signs of Mary's presence exist! A big sign is your sitting right now reading this article on our IHM web site --- a sign perhaps of Mary's personally beckoning you to come to herself. I urge you, if you are beginning a relationship with Our Lady, to consider signs of her presence in your life.

You may think: This is impossible. If you think this, you are in one way right: it is impossible with us. However, if we are aware of our nothingness, an awareness failures and suffering can provide; if we ponder that Mary has chosen us, little that we are, to "do great things for God,"; if we reflect that she loves us in an unimaginable depth, then the impossible will become possible; we will look upon Mary saying, "Here I am, send me."

Juan Diego certainly must have felt small to deliver such an important message to the bishop: God's Mother wished a church built; however, in his awareness of Mary's love and plan for his mission, he obeyed. Likewise, we too have "missions" and Mary will direct us, if we but listen and trust in her love.

By the way, nothing in us repels or surprises Her. Queen of Mercy, she envelopes us in her love and sends us off to build the Kingdom in our entrusted area.



3. Consecration: This third step, consecration or “entrustment,” means the giving of ourselves to Our Lady, handing over all we are and have into Her hands, including our gifts, tasks, daily events. Spiritual masters often call this entrustment the “secret of the saints.”

St. Juan Diego gives us an example. When he asked that “The bishop wants a sign,” he saw Castilian roses blooming in cold December. Our Lady calls Juan to Herself, so She can arrange the roses in his mantle before he presents them to the bishop. These roses given by God and arranged by Mary, symbolize the gifts that God has entrusted to each of us. Our Lady takes these talents along with the details of our daily lives and guides them, in a way we would not do so on our own. As with Juan Diego’s roses, She will prune and arrange our lives as only She can to present our life as a beautiful bouquet to God.

When we let Mary do this, something that many of us have ---- worry ---- lessens. One Sister friend called Mary the “Ultimate Anti-Ruminator.” Mother Teresa, someone who had faced every kind of trial, both external and internal, never worried. Her secret? She had given herself and her congregation fully to Our Lady’s Heart. She believed what Our Lady of Guadalupe said to St. Juan Diego:

Listen and keep in your heart my littlest son. There is nothing for you  
to fear ... Let not your face nor your heart be worried. ... Am I not here  
who am your mother? Are you not ... under my protection?  
Are you not in my crossed arms? Don’t let anything worry you.

For those of us who are worriers, this calm just does not automatically come. We need to cultivate an interior discipline of giving to Our Lady, repeatedly through the day and over the course of the years, our concerns, doubts, pains, problems, all excessive self-absorption. Here we see the key, the last step which will bring full relationship with Her and allow Her to intervene in our lives, to act on our behalf as She has done for Juan Diego, Mother Teresa and countless hidden ones.



Once we take the first stumbling steps to entrustment, Our Lady begins to enter our lives more perceptibly. Her goal: to fashion us after the pattern God desires, to see us transformed into a living temple of the Lord, bringing Christ to the world.

Each day will be like Christmas. Remember the presents under the tree? Like Christmas, we as children or even adults, with unparalleled excitement, unwrapped our gifts. Like Christmas, every day consecrated to Mary's Heart will cause us to wake in the morning, eager for the surprise blessings of the day, for we know our loving God, through Our Lady, wants to give us gifts.

We have been talking about Mary's Heart. Just what is the Immaculate Heart? Mary's Immaculate Heart can be defined as the inner life of Mary's undivided love for God and others. Her Heart is the one most empty of self and most welcoming of others. We too can be "refuge for sinners" and "consolation for the afflicted" if we entrust ourselves to this Heart.

Let us confide in Our Lady in all our challenges, be they great or small.

#### Practical Tips

A few practical helps to do this: With St. Mother Teresa, let us call out to Mary "Lend me Your heart," a heart which God wishes to share with each one of us. Say when there are spare moments, at a stop sign, waiting for water to boil, "Lend me Your Heart."

Images and statues can evoke an awareness of Mary; sometimes we may even feel her empathy. The Fatima statue in our chapel is my favorite one and I hope each reader has or will have a favorite image or statue.

On a retreat I learned a short prayer guaranteed to give peace: "Jesus, I thank you for everything." Father D'Albee, in his book, *I Believe in Love*, compared saying this prayer, especially when thanking the Lord for any kind of suffering, to Mary's Magnificat. He wrote,

The Magnificat you sing in your disappointment, the 'Thank you for everything' which you say in your humiliation, is the most



beautiful of all successes, the most fruitful of all victories.

(Father D'Elbeé, I Believe in Love, p.64)

This prayer, I may add, has helped me many times in life; I try to thank Jesus for consolations and successes, but also for seeing my weaknesses from my sins, misunderstandings, interior trials; it even helped me through the untimely death of my mother. I can testify it can aid, when prayed with sincerity for anything. It is truly Mary's prayer, she who from her own Heart thanked God for everything.

We began this article with the sad reality of seeing our civilization falling, as well as facing our own battles. If we become a man or woman of prayer, a "creative minority," we can truly transform not only ourselves, but our poor world, through our own hearts united with Mary's. May it be so.



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