

Walking with Mary on the Path to Holiness

Friday, June 19, 2020 ~ Mary, Mediatrix of all Grace



I would venture to say that every mother has been a mediator at some point in her life, especially if she has uttered the phrases, “Can’t you two get along?” or, “Do I need to come back there?!” Mary, as our Mother, is a mediator *par excellence*, but her maternal mediation is different from settling sibling squabbles.

A mediator is one who stands between two persons or groups of persons either to facilitate an exchange of favors or, more often, to reconcile parties at variance.¹ (Hence the example of the arguing children!) In Scripture, mediators are chosen and utilized for the purpose of uniting and reconciling God and the human family, who is not always faithful to God’s love.² Moses is a good example of a mediator...God communicates a message to Moses, such as the news of the Exodus from Egypt, and later the Ten Commandments, and Moses communicates that message to the Israelites. He mediates.

Since the feminine form of ‘mediator’ is ‘mediatrix,’ Mary is known as the Mediatrix. And why does she have this title? According to the teaching of many Saints throughout the centuries, God has willed “that we obtain all favors through Mary.”³ It is one thing to say that God *cannot*, and another to say that He *will not*, give graces without the intercession of Mary. In the words of St. Alphonsus Liguori, God is the source of every good and the absolute master of all graces, yet He has decided that all graces should pass through Mary’s hands and be dispensed by her.⁴

¹ *Dictionary of Mary*, p. 226.

² Miravalle, Mark. *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, p. 25.

³ St. Bernard, as quoted in Miravalle, Mark. *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, p. 37.

⁴ Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*, p. 98.

The wedding feast at Cana⁵ is the first time that Jesus' power as the Messiah is publicly manifested, when He publicly performs the miracle of changing water into wine. This is also the first manifestation of Mary's extended motherhood of the Spirit, the motherhood she has over all people. This motherhood is manifested because we see her motherly intercession for the needs of her spiritual children.⁶

Cana was the announcement of Mary's mediation, and her mediation was established at the foot of the Cross.⁷ At Cana, Mary tells Jesus that "they have no wine."⁸ Wine symbolizes Messianic times and heavenly blessings. Therefore a lack of wine in the Biblical sense means a lack of blessing. Mary presents to Jesus the thirst of Israel and of all mankind. At the Cross when she sees the thirst of Christ again, Mary realizes that the wine she asked for at Cana is poured out at the Cross.⁹

In the account of the Crucifixion in the Gospel of Saint John, we read, "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple standing there whom he loved, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home."¹⁰

According to Fr. Mark Miravalle, the author of a book on Mary as Mediatrix, "These words of the dying Savior...bring forth the establishment of Mary as the motherly mediatrix of graces for the human family."¹¹ One of Jesus' last actions was to give us His Mother...He wants us to go to Mary in all of our wants and needs.

Sometimes people, especially Protestants, will claim that it is dangerous to go to Mary. But that argument holds no weight, because Jesus told us to "Behold your mother," to look at Mary, to take her into our home, as he told Saint John. And when Jesus ascended into Heaven, He allowed Mary to remain on earth in order to watch over the infant Church and to be an example for them, as a good Mother, the Mother of the Church.

⁵ John 2:1-11

⁶ Miravalle, Mark. *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, p. 33.

⁷ Miravalle, Mark. *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, p. 33.

⁸ John 2:3

⁹ Creus, Fr. John Therese. Conference to IHM Sisters, June 2020.

¹⁰ John 19: 26-27

¹¹ Miravalle, Mark. *Mary: Coredemptrix, Mediatrix, Advocate*, p. 34.

All of Mary's actions as Mediatrix are centered on Christ...there is nothing that is an obstacle in her; looking at her will never prevent us from going straight to Jesus through her. She will only, ever, lead us to Him.

This is why Mary wants to aid us in overcoming vice. Mary was created and conceived immaculately, with no trace of sin on her soul, in complete separation from evil. She knows what it means to be totally, perfectly united to God, and she wants this for each of her children. She wants this for *you!*

In the letter to the Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3, St. Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him."¹² This is being immaculate. It is Mary's privilege, but it is also what God desires for our souls...to be purified through Mary's help, to be perfected so that we can be perfectly united with the Trinity in Heaven. As St. Paul goes on to write, "In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved."¹³

Yet becoming immaculate seems such a huge task, so far beyond our strength. "How can mankind (with its egoism, vices, and weaknesses) approach God and love Him above all? It is Mary's mission to draw man to Jesus Christ because she is the Mediatrix..."¹⁴ Take the advice that nearly every saint and theologian gives: go to Mary, because she will help you!

Fr. Luigi Faccenda, a Franciscan priest, said, "Since no defect is too big and no sin is too great for God's merciful love, we can strive again for the highest sanctity if we trust in Mary and give ourselves totally to her."¹⁵

And Fr. Federico Suarez, a member of Opus Dei, said, "Mothers always have a certain weak spot for their delicate, most incapable and unattractive children: these need their mothers even more than the others even if they do not know it. If the Church calls the Virgin

¹² Ephesians 1:3-5

¹³ Ephesians 1:5-6

¹⁴ Faccenda, Fr. Luigi, OFM Conv. *One More Gift*, p. 57.

¹⁵ Faccenda, Fr. Luigi, OFM Conv. *One More Gift*, p. 59.

Advocate and Refuge of sinners, it is because time and time again she has shown her particular love for those who need her most, those who would be lost without her.”¹⁶

As Saint Maximilian Kolbe has said, “We must fight with our weaknesses without growing angry. We must place all our trust in [Mary] and through holy obedience she will bring us to heaven. Trust without limit in her and all your weaknesses will be turned about to your own good...The saints affirm that anyone who prays to the Mother of God in time of temptation will most surely not sin, and who throughout life has recourse to her with confidence, will most surely be saved.”¹⁷

In his book *The Glories of Mary*, St. Alphonsus Liguori tells an incredible story about this:

A young man, who was a slave to habits of vice, went to confession to a certain priest in Rome. The confessor received him with kindness and, filled with compassion for him, assured him that devotion to Our Lady could free him from his shameful habits.

Accordingly, he imposed on him as his penance that he say a Hail Mary to the Blessed Virgin every morning and evening, when he got up and when he went to bed, until his next confession; also, that he offer her at the same time his eyes, his hands, and his whole body, asking her to preserve them as if they were her own, and that he kiss the ground three times.

He performed the penance, but at first there was only slight improvement. However, his confessor insisted that he continue with the practice, advising him never to abandon it and encouraging him to trust in the power of Mary. The young man then left Rome with a few companions and spent several years traveling here and there.

When the young man came back to Rome he returned to his confessor, who found, to his great relief and wonder, that he was a changed man, completely

¹⁶ Suarez, Federico. *Mary of Nazareth*, p. 247.

¹⁷ St. Maximilian Kolbe, as quoted in Faccenda, Fr. Luigi, OFM Conv. *One More Gift*, p. 59.

free of his sinful habits. "How did you secure so wonderful a change from God?" he asked.

The young man answered, "It was our Blessed Lady who obtained this grace for me, because of those simple acts of devotion you taught me."

This was not the end of the graces. The priest related the story in one of his sermons. A certain captain in the army, who had been committing sin with a woman for years, heard the sermon and made up his mind to try the same practice.

He determined to break the chains that kept him a slave of the devil (for every sinner must have the purpose of amendment, otherwise the Blessed Virgin is powerless to help him), and he too gave up his habit of sin and changed his life.

But there was still more. After six months, relying too much on his own strength, the captain made the mistake of going back to the woman, to see if she too had changed her ways.

But as he came up to the door of the house, where he was in certain danger of falling again, some unseen power forced him back, and he found himself at the other end of the street, standing before his own door. He had no doubt that it was Our Lady who had done this for him and saved him from perdition.

This should be enough to show how anxious our good Mother is, not only to lift us out of the state of sin if we pray to her for deliverance, but also to save us from the danger of falling back.¹⁸

Mary wants to help her children, and she does help her children in powerful ways! Yet, we must be open to receiving her aid.

When Mary appeared in Paris, France in 1830, Saint Catherine Laboure described the apparition: "[Mary's] fingers were covered with rings and most beautiful precious stones. Rays

¹⁸ Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*, pp. 90-93.

of dazzling light gleamed forth from them...the jewels varied in size as did also the rays of light they threw out.”¹⁹

Mary told Catherine that the rings emitting rays of light symbolize the graces that Mary sheds upon those who ask for them. When Catherine noticed that some of the precious stones did not emit rays of light, Mary explained that these symbolize the graces we neglect to ask for, the graces that Mary wants to give, but no one asks for.

Ask for the graces that you need, and ask for the graces you don't know you need! Mary wants to pour out graces upon her children. Mary loves us individually, not only collectively...she sees and loves each human person as a child, her child, who needs her motherly help.

As our good heavenly Mother, Mary knows exactly which graces we, her children, most need. She knows what our habitual faults are, and she knows which graces can help us to overcome those faults.

And Mary's power is great in time of temptation.²⁰ According to Saint Bernardine of Siena, “Recourse to Mary is a most certain way to overcome all the assaults of hell.”²¹ It is fitting, then, that the prayer on the Miraculous Medal is, “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.”

We are asking Mary, the Immaculate One, the one who is totally separated from sin, to pray for us, to help us overcome our sinful tendencies. On the front of the Miraculous Medal is the image of Our Lady of Grace, with the rays coming from the rings on her fingers, and underneath her feet, she is trampling a serpent, the devil.

This is the power that God has given to Mary! To crush the head of the enemy; to help us overcome our sinful tendencies! While there are many stories about the Miraculous Medal in which physical healings occur because of its use, there are many spiritual conversions and healings that occur because of the Miraculous Medal and Mary's intercession.

¹⁹ Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. *Mary's Miraculous Medal*, p. 14.

²⁰ Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*, p. 87.

²¹ St. Bernardine of Siena, as quoted in Liguori, St. Alphonsus. *The Glories of Mary*, p. 88.

In another apparition to Saint Catherine Laboure, Mary said, “Come to the foot of this altar. There graces will be poured out on all those, rich or poor, who ask for them with confidence and fervor.”²² Mary always leads us to Jesus. She is telling us to come to the altar, to come to the Eucharist! It is there, in the sacraments, especially the sacrament of the Eucharist that we will receive grace.

And come to the altar! You cannot be afraid to go to Mass. Watching the Mass online is not the same as attending Mass, nor will it ever take the place of attending Mass *in person*, of participating at Mass. Going to Mass is not the same as attending a sporting event in which you are merely a spectator. When you go to Mass you are *participating* in the Mass, participating in divine mysteries, participating in the eternal liturgy, standing by Mary at the foot of the Cross as the mystery of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection is re-presented, is made present again. And the graces of the Redemption are poured into your soul, especially when you receive the Eucharist. Come to the altar!!

On a final note, I would highly recommend that you watch the first talk from this year’s novena about how Mary helps us to develop virtues and live a virtuous life. While it is necessary to rid ourselves of vice, and Mary will help us to do that, we must rid ourselves of vice in order to become filled with virtue. Nature abhors a vacuum, so if we do not fill the space where our vices were, other vices will come to fill it.

As Jesus says in the Gospel of Matthew, “When an unclean spirit goes out of a person it roams through arid regions searching for rest but finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my home from which I came.’ But upon returning, it finds it empty, swept clean, and put in order. Then it goes and brings back with itself seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they move in and dwell there; the last condition of that person is worse than the first. Thus will it be with this evil generation.”²³

²² Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. *Mary’s Miraculous Medal*, p. 12.

²³ Matthew 12:43-45

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