



*The
Immaculate
Heart of Mary*



**The Flame of
Charity**

June 20, 2025



The Flame in the Heart of Mary

Good evening. Before I begin, I would like to make a parenthetical note regarding the Scripture selections. My primary source is [The Four Gospels](#) that has been included in the Penguin Classics series for its literary excellence. This is a translation that uses the original Greek of the text as best as possible. That being said let's begin with a prayer.

Come Holy Spirit living in Mary and show us Jesus. Hail Mary...

Have you ever sat by the fireplace and watched the flames lick the logs and listened to them crackle? There's something fascinating and soothing about taking in the dynamics of watching a fire burn. What is fire exactly? I decided in order to understand better the fire in the Heart of Our Lady I would need to have a clearer idea of the concept of fire so I did a little bit of research.

I went to a site that is used to teach about fires and looked up "Reporters Guide: All About Fire". Did you know that fire is not a substance? Okay, so maybe that is a silly question but none the less in the mythology of most cultures, including the ancient Greeks "fire is a sacred substance that gives life or power." So, then it should not surprise us that fire is used as a symbol of love with a capital L.

Since fire is not a substance, then what exactly is it? According to [Xplorlabs.org](#), fire is defined as "a gas phase chemical reaction that releases heat and light. Matter can exist as a solid, liquid, gas, or plasma. These are known as phases of matter. When temperature changes, matter can change from one phase to another. Only fuel in the gas phase of matter can burn. Solids and liquid fuels must be changed to gas in order to burn. A chemical reaction is a process where substances are converted to different substances with new properties" such as black char, an altogether new substance, indicating something was on fire. Signs that a chemical reaction has occurred are the release of heat and light. When



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enough heat, oxygen, and fuel are present, a chemical reaction occurs that produces fire. This process which occurs very quickly, releases light, heat and sound sometimes with great force and majesty as to justify the reverence of the ancient Greeks.

On this second day of our novena as we continue our study of the Heart of Mary, we begin by looking at the three components of fire: heat, oxygen, and fuel, analogously as a way of introduction to the flame in Her Immaculate Heart.

First oxygen. Oxygen is all around us. In fact, without it, life cannot exist. Everything that lives and that breathes relies on oxygen including man, who is both a physical and spiritual being. As all creatures on this earth, man too lives in the realm of the natural. But since by God's design, his destiny is to live with God for all eternity, man needs more than nature can offer; he needs the very presence of God to animate his entire life. Saint Paul reminds us that "in Him, we live, move, and have our being." So, could we say that the Presence of God, which permeates all of creation, is like the oxygen in the air that we breathe? When the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit whom we receive at our Baptism comes into our soul and breathes His life into us, He brings the very Presence of God with Him into our soul which is like the oxygen that we breathe into our lungs.

Second heat. When this divine oxygen, the Presence of God, comes into the soul of a person it creates a heat (although not natural heat) within the soul. This heat is the very love of God Himself, who purifies and sanctifies the soul with tenderness and care.

Third fuel. The more the person gives himself (as fuel needed for a fire) to the love of God's Presence within, the greater the fiery blaze becomes releasing the heat of zeal setting the person ablaze with the fire of God's own love. As a person lives this zeal, this passion for God, he himself becomes a light, an example for others. This is what we see in Our Lady and the flame burning in Her Heart.

So that we may gain some understanding into how the fire of love in Mary is manifested through her zeal and example, we turn now to the first two joyful mysteries of the Rosary, the Annunciation and the Visitation (both found in Luke chapter one) in conversation with Our Mother.

We first encounter this burning fire of love in the Heart of Mary in the account of the Annunciation. God makes known His love for her through His messenger the Archangel Gabriel. He shows the Virgin Mary that the Heavenly Father beholds her with tender love and care, that His Heart burns with a fire that cannot be quenched or put out. This is where Our Lady finds her center, her anchor, in the reality that she is deeply and profoundly loved by God. Her only response is to return her love for His Love. Love for love.

I invite you now to join me in conversation with Mary as we walk with her in these mysteries. Listen as she speaks to you in the depths of your own hearts.

Where were you, Mary when the Angel came to you? What were you doing? Were you praying? Were you working? Were you walking? Were you relaxing? We wonder sometimes but then we realize it does not really matter because for you, God is everything. Even before you were conceived in the womb of your mother Ann, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had decided that in order for the Second Person to become man, for God to become incarnate, He would need a woman. Thus, the Triune Godhead devised the plan of creating a woman who would be the perfect tabernacle to house God the Son. You dear Lady are that woman! He has chosen you and set you apart to be the place where He can tabernacle himself within a womb that is perfectly pure without the stain of sin. He fills you with His heat and light emanating from the Presence of God within you. This burning heat, this zeal, this ardor ignites your heart to flame and fills you with a passion to give yourself unconditionally to Him as He gives himself totally to you. The messenger from God addresses you: “Hail Mary, full of grace/Rejoice highly favored one/Greetings, Lady of Grace!” (These are all different renditions of his greeting to you). And then he says: “The Lord is with you”, confirming that the Presence of the Almighty already resides in you.

The Angel greets you with these salutary words and you are frightened. No, it is true that the presence of Gabriel is not what frightens you but his greeting. Why Mary? Is it because you know who you are before God and in your profound humility see yourself so unworthy to be set apart and chosen? Being addressed as “full of grace” must shake you to the core of your being. I imagine that you never dreamed of being the mother of the long-awaited Messiah as did so many other Jewish women. You must have thought it impossible because you have allowed the heat, the zeal, the passion of God’s love for you to inflame your desire for Him and make a complete gift of yourself, bound to Him by the vow you have made to be exclusively His.

Gabriel hears your heart. “Have no fears, Mary; for you have found grace with God. Know that you will conceive and bear a son, whom you shall call Jesus. He will be great and shall be known as the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He shall reign over the House of Jacob into the ages, and of his Kingdom there shall be no end.” These words impress themselves deeply into your heart and leave you with great wonder and awe as how this is to occur.

Is this not the reason you ask the question: “How can this be since I do not know man?” This is not to say that you hold marriage in contempt. That would be absurd because you are betrothed to a just man named Joseph who is of the house of David. But in your heart, that is burning with a zealous love for God, you want to

know how you can be intimate with a man and still be totally given to God. Oh, how the Heavenly Father must smile on you! And He does not leave you in your dilemma. Once again, the Angel settles your fluttering heart. He tells you that the Spirit of God, who is already so present in you, is to overshadow you and fill you again with His Presence. “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the Power of the Most High will draw its shadow over you. Wherefore the Child too is holy, and shall be called the son of God.” You are certainly not a stranger to the Holy Spirit. He has been present with you from the beginning. After all, being full of grace indicates that you have been immaculately conceived. You have been spared through the foreseen merits of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of this holy Child, from original sin and the stain of any sin. But now, this particular overshadowing, fuels the fire of love that consumes your heart.

What is this love that burns like fire in your heart? Is it not the love that binds together the Father and the Son for all eternity, where the Father gives Himself completely to the Son and the Son, receiving all the Father gives Him, pours Himself back to the Father as a complete gift? This eternal giving and receiving between the Father and the Son is like a dance (a theological term known as perichoresis) as the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds forth from this dynamic union of Father and Son. You, in a special way dear Virgin, are called into this communion of the Three Persons in God. Filled with the Holy Spirit, you can do nothing more, nothing less than love. And just as the Trinity cannot contain this fiery love within the Three Persons, neither can you. You learn from the Angel that Elizabeth who is your kinswoman has conceived John the Baptist in her old age. She has been with child for six months even though the people call her barren, bringing upon her the greatest disgrace a Jewish woman has to endure. Now you know as the Angel states: “But nothing is impossible for God”. These words give you the assurance: He has made a barren woman pregnant with child; He will make my womb, I who am the Virgin, fruitful by bearing His Son.

Now comes the proclamation, the fiat, the yes, upon which all salvation hinges: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word. /I am the bondswoman of the Lord. Let me be dealt with as you say.”

Having accomplished his mission, the Angel leaves you. Now you are left to ponder this grace that is beyond all graces. Here Mary, you make known to us not only who you are but whose you are. The term bondswoman brings out a profound reality that we moderns can't really grasp. When looking at the word itself, the word bonds seems to call to mind being held bound. Is it not true that we are held by a bond of our own making or that of God's making? In other words, we are slaves to self or slaves to God. Do we not have the continual choice towards one or the other? You dear Mary always chose and always choose the latter. For you, nothing else exists but to be eternally enslaved to God. Not that you are bound to God by mere

necessity or duty, but by love. This is the love of the Holy Spirit burning in your heart that bursts forth into flame, consuming all that is not God.

In his book The Admirable Heart of Mary St. John Eudes speaking of you explains: “Jesus lives in her soul and in her body, and in each faculty of her body and soul. He lives in her entirely, which means that whatever is in Jesus is also in Mary. His Heart abides in her heart, His soul in her soul, His spirit in her spirit. The memory, intellect and will of Jesus are alive in the memory, intellect and will of Mary; His interior and exterior senses in her interior and exterior senses. His passions in her passions; His virtues, mysteries and divine attributes are living in her Heart. Nay, more than living, they hold sovereign sway, producing inconceivably marvelous effects and impressing a living image of themselves as her Heart mirrors His Sacred Heart” (Eudes, 25). Thus, when we encounter you, we encounter Him. You always lead us to Him. To Jesus through Mary.

The Holy Spirit now prompts you to go with haste into the hill-country, to a town in Judea, to a home that belongs to Zechariah and Elizabeth. As soon as you utter the Jewish greeting of peace, “Shalom”, and Elizabeth hears it, a marvel occurs within her. She is filled with the Holy Spirit. The baby John the Baptist in her womb sensing the presence of the baby Jesus in your womb makes his first proclamation. He who is to be the precursor to the Messiah begins his mission in Elizabeth’s womb. He leaps for joy because the Savior you carry under your heart sanctifies him and he is set free from original sin. Yes. Mary, as you know, the Church celebrates three birthdays in her liturgy: that of Jesus, yours, and that of John the Baptist. As he is freed from sin, his mother Elizabeth, your kinswoman loudly proclaims what is to be no longer your secret. Now, the reality of the Child you bear and the reality of your identity in relation to the Child’s mission, becomes public. For you and for all who are present, the Holy Spirit confirms the truth:

“Blessed are you among women,

And blessed is the fruit of your womb!

But how have I deserved

That the mother of my Lord should come to me?

For no sooner did your greeting reach my ears

Than the baby in my womb leapt in his delight.

I too was happy in the trust I felt,

For the words that reached me from the Lord are coming to fulfillment.”

(Luke 1:39ff)

What beautiful words coming from Elizabeth under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! Any other woman would be filled with pride but not you dear Blessed Mother! Filled with the Holy Spirit, you immediately turn the glory to the One Who has gifted you:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit has exulted in my savior God;
For he looked upon his servant’s lowliness –
And all generations from to-day will call me happy.
For the Mighty One has done great things for me,
And his Name is holy.
His mercy for those that fear him
Stretches from generation to generation.
He has wrought a victory with his arm:
He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their hearts;
He has dragged dynasts from their thrones and exalted the humble,
Filled the hungry with good things and sent away the rich man empty;
He has embraced his servant Israel,
So that, as he told our fathers,
His mercy may be kept in mind
By Abraham and by his sons forever.”

(Luke 1:46ff)

This is your song of praise, your Magnificat. Here you recall the wonders of all God has done for you and His people, shedding light upon the history of our salvation, thereby teaching us that all the promises of God are fulfilled in you through the birth and life of the Messiah.

You stay with Elizabeth about three months, helping with all her needs in her last months of pregnancy. Then you return to your own house, awaiting your time to bring the Savior of the world to birth.

But we would be remiss if we did not mention the fire of Love that purifies your Heart at the foot of the Cross. How your heart burns with the agony of a Love that for us is incomprehensible as you watch your Son being poured out like a libation for our sins. And when He cries from the Cross “Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your Mother” although your heart is shattered, you stand in the fiery blaze of Love united with Him until all is consummated. The offering of Love complete, you become our Mother, the Mother of the Church.

I would like to conclude with these last thoughts. As Mary allows the fire of God’s love to consume all that is not Him or of Him matching it with the heat, the zeal, the passion of her love for Him, His illuminating light passes through her. The presence of our dear Mother, which we can so easily call to mind in the mysteries of the rosary becomes a teaching, an example for us to imitate. We look to her as our model, as our teacher. By her words, few they may be, and her gracious deeds, we see how we must live out our lives; to have our hearts ignited into flame under the influence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us so that like her, we in turn may be filled with zeal, ardor, fervor for God and for souls and bring His light into the world. Fiat! May it be so. Glory be... Thank you.

Consulted Works

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