



The Immaculate Heart of Mary



The Rose of Obedience

June 23, 2025



On this fifth night of the novena to the Immaculate Heart, we will return to consider the three roses that encircle Mary's Heart. On Saturday, we learned that one rose represents the virtue of humility. Tonight, we will learn about the rose of obedience, and tomorrow, we'll complete the roses by hearing about purity. Hail Mary...

If you could only say one word to describe Mary, what would it be? "Jesus" seems like an obvious choice as Mary always points us to her Son. Another fitting option would be "Mother" signifying her singularly unique vocation as Mother of God and furthermore, the gift she is as our Mother. Or maybe in all simplicity the only word you can pronounce is a reverent but childlike "Wow." Each of these words is layered with meaning, but one word, *fiat*, summarizes them all. This Latin translation of Mary's response at the Annunciation, "Let it be done unto me according to your word" captures her free, joyful, and total response to the plan of God. It signifies both the loving command of God and Mary's loving response in return. Though we struggle to follow God's plan as receptively and lovingly as Mary did, by examining her life, we can find remedies to counter any obstacles we may face in saying "yes." Specifically, we will reflect on Mary's obedience through the lens of three titles from the Litany of Loretto: Vessel of Singular Devotion, Virgin Most Faithful, and Mother of Good Counsel.

Vessel of Singular Devotion

Mary's obedience was very simple because there was only one aspiration in her Heart: to please God. She knew that following His will was the best—actually, the *only* way to please Him. As scripture tells us, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen [is better] than the fat of rams" (1 Sam 15:22).

St. John Henry Newman reflects on Mary's gaze of love upon her Lord, both in her Heart in prayer and with her eyes as she beheld her God incarnate. Explaining her title, "Vessel of Singular Devotion," he writes, "To be devout is to be devoted. We



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know what is meant by a devoted wife or daughter. It is one whose thoughts center in the person so deeply loved, so tenderly cherished. She follows him about with her eyes; she is ever seeking some means of serving him. And, if her services are very small in their character, that only shows how intimate they are, and how incessant. And especially if the object of her love be weak, or in pain, or near to die, still more intensely does she live in his life and know nothing but him” (Newman 108). How much happier we would be if we imitated Mary’s undivided Heart as we go about our daily tasks.

As we know, seeking to accept God’s will each day is not always easy. There can be many unexpected alterations or delays, frequent monotony, and new responsibilities that can pop up. For example, do you ever have those days where everything you touch falls on the floor, rolls under the couch, and usually breaks or becomes disfigured? What about the days you are pressed to meet a deadline and yet are peppered with persistent pauses? (That’s a polite way to say “interruptions.”) What’s delightful in these moments is to remember that God knows everything. The item that fell on the floor and broke? You don’t need it. The deadline that simply can’t manage one more interruption? Well, it can. At times you will need to purchase a new item to replace the one you broke. Or you may need to move to a secluded location to meet your deadline. But for the most part, these circumstances are not as dire as our self-will makes them seem. And practicing detachment helps us to grow in docility to God’s refining chisel, as He uses each moment and circumstance of our day to form us in the likeness of Jesus. Furthermore, these instances are not diversions from God’s will but rather, manifestations of His providential power. In his book, *Into your Hands, Father*, Fr. Wilfrid Stinissen writes, “God has everything in his hand. Nothing exits outside the sphere of his influence. Nothing can upset his plans.” Stinissen continues by quoting St. Augustine: “‘Nothing happens that the Almighty does not will should happen, either by permitting it or by himself doing it.’ To let something happen is also a decision of God” (14).

These examples refer to common, almost comical encounters with human frailty, but what about the bigger suffering we experience? Again, Stinissen quotes St. Augustine who writes, “‘There is indeed much done against God’s will by evil men,...but [God’s] wisdom and power are so great that everything seemingly contrary to it, in reality, works toward the good outcome or end that he has preordained” (16-7). Our Lady did not fear suffering because she trusted the Lord who does not allow evil to have the last word. Furthermore, she kept her attention wrapped in the enduring love of God. Mary also pondered the scriptures in her Heart such as psalm 145 verse 17: “The Lord is faithful in all His ways and loving in all His deeds.” Mary did not confine the word “all” to: just the situations that pleased her, or to the outcome that she anticipated, anyway. No, she allowed the Lord to

arrange every detail of her life; she let herself be led even in the midst of darkness. This blind obedience is reflected in the second title I wish to highlight: Virgin Most Faithful.

Virgin Most Faithful

When we think of Mary trusting the Lord in the midst of darkness, we may readily think of the cross. At that moment, all hope seemed lost. To an outside, merely human perspective, Satan had triumphed. With what strength of conviction our Blessed Mother clung to the Lord's promises, continuing to be blessed because she "believed that what was spoken by the Lord would be fulfilled." When the opportunity to suffer presented itself, as it often did, Mary did not run from it. In fact, "When she saw the opposition raised against the preaching of Jesus, [for example] Mary was not surprised. The maneuvers of the adversaries, the plots they multiplied along the path of her Son in order to discredit him, she beheld as a sign of the authentic mission of the Savior...Far from being disturbed in her faith, she believed all the more firmly in Jesus and interiorly she committed herself all the more resolutely to be at his side in the incessant battle" (Congregation 31).

This stalwart desire to remain rooted at the foot of the Cross. Have you ever pondered that Jesus is waiting for you in His will? Especially when His will offers us His Cross, He is not distant or removed from that offering. To say "yes" to God's will is to "go out and meet Him". We can "fill up what is lacking" in His suffering through our humble and loving obedience. This is why Mary followed the Paschal Lamb wherever He went. The details, the amount of suffering, or for how long didn't matter; she wanted to be always united to Him and knew she could do so through her *fiat*.

If Mary was a Virgin Most Faithful in life's most trying moments, she was also most faithful in the very plain moments of daily life. We may be tempted to believe that God's will is only found in the flashy, satisfying, or heroic moments of each day. If that were true, Jesus would not have exemplified for us 30 years of hidden prayer, humble work, and simple, ordinary encounters. Let us not let these brilliant opportunities pass us by. We can encounter our Lord through His will as it is communicated to us through the present moment—not in our digging up the past or in our worrying about or pining for the future. Traveling along the "ordinary" path can also enhance our prayer. Have you ever driven a new vehicle or driven a familiar vehicle to an unfamiliar location? (Imagine before GPS, when you actually had to know where you were going.) In these instances, your attention is divided because there is something new that you are experientially grasping. But when you drive a familiar car down a familiar road, there is not as much "newness" to expect (except deer, distracted drivers, and...new 4-way stops?) The point is, when you are asked by the Lord to do something less-than-glamorous, you can use this as a

special opportunity to enjoy His presence. St. Faustina writes in her Diary, “O life, so dull and monotonous, how many treasures you contain! When I look at everything with the eyes of faith, no two hours are alike, and the dullness and monotony disappear. The grace which is given me in this hour will not be repeated in the next. It may be given me again, but it will not be the same grace. Time goes on, never to return again. Whatever is enclosed in it will never change; it seals with a seal for eternity” (article 62). I wonder what special graces the Lord has prepared for each of us as we follow His will through big, memorable *fiats* as well as the small, hidden ones.

Mother of Good Counsel

Our last Marian title, “Mother of Good Counsel” reflects how we can trust Mary to guide us in our daily walk of obedience. In the official image of Our Lady of Good Counsel, Mary is gently hovering over her toddler son as he whispers into her ear. This reminds us that we should listen to Mary who will not only give us Jesus’ directives but will lead us back to Him.

Most of the time, we are not unaware of God’s will; we simply don’t want to accept it. I once heard it said that God answers our prayers in one of three ways: Yes, Not now, or I have something better in mind. It seems as if we often try to apply the latter two options to our response to God’s will: No...not now...maybe later. Or, can I do *this* instead? Can someone else do what you are asking of me?

Sometimes, however, we scoot around God’s will because we feel unfit for the task. We see our weakness, unworthiness, and our sinfulness like big caution signs that block our view of God’s strength, unfathomable love, His grace and His mercy. This is where Mary is also a beautiful example. At the Annunciation, she allowed the Lord to gift her with Divine Motherhood, making her “blessed among all women.” Not because she relied on her own abilities, but because she received whatever He offered in His Love: the greatest joys as well as the greatest sorrows. Every day, I wake up and REJOICE to be an IHM bride of Christ forever. Not because I’m so good and capable, but because He is. So...don’t forget to receive those aspects of obedience as well...

“In response to thoughts like, ‘I can’t succeed.’ ‘I cannot make it. I lack the energy.’ Or ‘I cannot manage to get rid of this defect,’ St. Maximilian Kolbe says, “We have at our disposal a very easy and reliable means to obtain this: we have the Mediatrix of all graces. It is only necessary that we ourselves really want it and so that we escape from her ever less, that we love her ever more ardently, in our temptations, in our difficulties, in our adversities, acknowledging her power, her universal mediation before God, and that we turn to her with all our trust. We, too, shall be able to do all things, but in [Christ] who strengthens us through the Immaculata.”

Let us travel day by day, step by step, in the Heart of our Blessed Mother. Let us ask her to teach us how to be singularly devoted to the pleasure of her Son, how to cooperate with the graces He offers in order to persevere in faith—no matter the suffering, no matter the monotony, or anything in between. With her, let us remember that “God lifts up the lowly” and “fills the humble with good things.”

To conclude, I will lead us in a prayer that relates to Mary-led obedience:

In the name of the Father...

God’s will is made known. His Love has been shown. Mary, help me accept it.

Let me not second guess, complain, wonder why, slug along, or rush ahead.

Remind me that every day, He’s prepared me; His grace will sustain me; His glory is all I seek.

Help me leave behind my vain desires, shallow hopes, rude resistance, self-pity, and ingratitude.

Replace them with your ready conformity, gently constancy, and still abandonment, with your purest-Hearted devotion to His pleasure, made bold by confidence in His goodness.

You arrange all the details. I do not ask for familiarity nor novelty, risk nor foresight, acclamation nor Gospel-predicted persecution.

Whatever you ask, I will give. Whatever you give, I will take,

But always—only if you help me.

Good Mother, let me share in the freedom of your *fiat* for “Nothing is impossible for God.”

Works Cited

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