

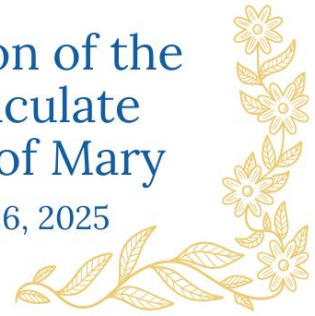


The Immaculate Heart of Mary



Imitation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

June 26, 2025



Introduction

Why does imitation prove our admiration and love?

A personal example: As an 18-year-old, when I began studying at a small liberal arts college, we called our professors tutors, since there were only fifteen in a class. I admired all my tutors, but especially one who seemed the most brilliant and holy. He had a quirk which my classmates and I unconsciously imitated: putting our finger to his mouth before he spoke. When I came home, my family thought me strangely different in some way; when I entered the IHMs and until my final vows, Sisters would tease me about this quirk!

Why did I do this? I admired this tutor who I saw pray a long time after Mass, who was interested in us, who spoke so brilliantly. From this example and many of your own, we can say that imitating another consists of **being with the person and practicing the virtue we admire.**

In regard to Our Lady, St. Louis de Montfort tells us that the essential practice of devotion is to perform all our actions with Mary. This means that we must take her as the model for all we have to do.¹

Being with Mary

One way to help us imitate Mary is being with Her. How can we “be” with Mary? I will give four examples:

First, *when rising from bed in the morning, tell her something like this: Mary, I give you all I am, choose, desire today. Help me.* Of course, we also add the Morning Offering, in which we offer all to God through Her Immaculate Heart. *Before going to sleep, we can offer our sleep to Her and ask Her to protect us during the night.*

¹ St. Louis de Montfort, *The Secret of the Rosary*, (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishing, 1998), 36, note 45.



Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Wichita

3550 North 167th Street West Colwich, KS 67030
(316) 722-9316 | www.sistersihmofwichita.org

Second, praying the rosary. The Rosary is a powerful way to be with our Mother. I know of people today who say all four mysteries of the Rosary. Mary transformed their lives, brought seemingly impossible conversions of loved ones, and most of all, these people felt Her presence.

Third, be affectionate with our Mother. I know of a lady who rises in the night and has a visit with Mary, calling her “Mom.” Others call her Mama Mary. And why not? These individuals are aware of Her presence, and most of all, are with her. The more we are with someone, the more we imitate him/her.

Fourth, Be quiet, and try to listen to her. Ask her, *Mary, what would you have me think, say, do?*

Another way to imitate Our Lady is to practice one of her virtues.

We will look at one, Her amiability, from the title, “Mother Most Amiable.”

Just what does amiability mean?

“Amiability” means first, *friendly* and even more deeply *Lovable* from the Latin *Amare*, “to love.”

Out of his list of virtues to imitate Mary, St. Louis de Montfort identifies two: “Angelical Kindness” and “Ardent Love” which we can say fall under amiability.² St. John Henry Newman described our Mother’s amiability with these words: *it was her beautiful sinless soul, which looked through her eyes, spoke through her mouth, heard in her voice, & compassed her all about; when she was still, or when she walked, whether she smiled, or was sad, her sinless soul, this it was which would draw all those to her.*³

Why look at “amiable?”

Well, when the rubber hits the road, what virtue can be hardest, love of God or of neighbor? Most will say love of neighbor. For example, St. Therese when entering the austere Carmelite monastery did find the poor food, little sleep and above all the intense cold difficult. What she found hardest, she writes, was living with her sisters, some of whom didn’t like her or with whom she had difficult personalities.⁴

When you and I reflect, we can manage with some effort physical pain or deprivation of comforts. But what we often find most challenging are people who irk us. Every saint had someone or many who tested him or her.

² Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, (Bay Shore, New York: The Montfort Fathers’ Publications, 1950), 108.

³ St. John Henry Newman, *Meditations and Devotions*, (Westminster, Md. Christian Classics, 1975), 18-19.

⁴ Conrad de Meester, *With Empty Hands, the Message of St. Therese of Lisieux*, (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002), 25.

Recall that Our Lady lived among people. Many probably looked down upon her when pregnant before moving in with St. Joseph, a wife of a poor carpenter, coming from a small unknown village. Despite the trials she faced—misunderstood by others,—Mary remained gentle, kind, and open-hearted. She did not withdraw or grow bitter. She always remained amiable.

This brings us to the wisdom of Pope Leo XIV, who, on June 14th, addressed young people in the Chicago Archdiocese. He emphasized the very same quality we see in Mary—what he called *friendship*. He reminded them that in building community, in fostering true friendship, we discover meaning.⁵ That’s what Mary shows us: *amiability* rooted not in mood or convenience, but in love—a love that radiated from the flame in her heart.

Meaning and Importance of Amiability

What’s your perception of Mary? What do you imagine or think of what she’s like? I hope “loving” in some way came to your mind. Who doesn’t like a loving person? Sometimes we don’t think of Mary as lovable but just distant or too holy for us. Is this your perception or of others you know?

If anyone has this perception, it is probably due to seemingly holy but grumpy people in your lives? You’ve heard the expression, “Yes he is saintly but I’d definitely wouldn’t like to live with him!”

Mary isn’t like those people who appear holy but are self-righteous and judgmental. These people, **unlike** Mary, still have the effects of original sin.

We recall Mary is **sinless**.

In fact, if we have a true perception of Her, there’s in her something which draws us to her, which makes us want to be with her, to speak to her, to hear her speak to us. What is this something? It’s what’s described by the title Mother Most Amiable; her loveliness, unselfishness, kindness, her interest in and desire to help us. We know what it means when people aren’t amiable, when they seem cold, forbidding, and we feel they wouldn’t put themselves out to listen to us, or care what we’re suffering, or desire to help us. Those are not the people we want to go and speak to, or to be with and live.

Perhaps we ourselves, in some of our moods, at least, are too often of this type; perhaps our self-absorption keeps people away from us, and would describe us not as “most lovable,” but as “most unlovable.”⁶

⁵ Pope Leo XIV, “Address to the Young People of Chicago,” *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, June 14, 2025, <https://www.usccb.org/news/2025/full-text-pope-leo-xivs-address-young-people-chicago-and-whole-world>.

⁶ “Mother Most Amiable,” *The Reign of Mary*, Volume 40, Session 52, 1, accessed July 2, 2025, 1, www.salvemariaregina.info/Reference/rm52web.pdf.

Practical Suggestions for Developing a Virtue of Mary's based upon Amiability

Who sees us as loveable or not? The outsiders? Definitely not. Those who really know us, who live with us, can tell us whether we are lovable or not. What do people around us think of us, like our family, spouses, co-workers, etc. We are called to practice amiability most of all with our own family.

Now, as we reflect on this, it's important to remember that grace builds upon nature. Just as our natural personal traits shape the way we interact, grace enhances and refines those qualities. If we are not already practicing human natural virtues, it will be difficult to imitate the supernatural ones. such as loving enemies, always looking at the good qualities of another and overlooking faults, and always speaking well of the other. Now, let's take a moment to see how people treasure amiability even from a natural perspective.

From a non-religious source, I will list eleven natural virtues that flow from the virtue of amiability. As I read each one and its description, as yourself in all truth whether you practice this virtue or not.

Examples of Amiability from a non-religious source⁷

- 1. Practice empathy:** Seek to understand others' perspectives and feelings; Listen actively without judgment.
- 2. Express genuine interest:** Show interest in others' lives, experiences, and opinions. Remember and inquire about important details shared by others
- 3. Be approachable:** Maintain open body language like making eye contact and smiling. Avoid negative or standoffish behavior. Create a welcoming atmosphere for others to feel comfortable around you.
- 4. Cultivate positivity:** Focus on the positive aspects of situations and people. Avoid gossip and negative talk. Share uplifting stories or compliments.
- 5. Practice good communication:** Communicate clearly and effectively. Use a friendly and respectful tone. Be mindful of your non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures.
- 6. Show appreciation:** Express gratitude for the efforts and kindness of others. Acknowledge and appreciate people's contributions. Be generous with compliments. **Pause**
- 7. Be flexible and understanding:** Adapt to changes with a positive attitude. Understand that

⁷ Anubha Singh, "Cultivating Amiability: 12 ways to foster positive connections and friendships, Apeejay News, February 21, 2024, <https://apeejay.news/cultivating-amiability-12-ways-to-foster-positive-connections-and-friendships>.

everyone has different perspectives and ways of doing things. Avoid being overly critical or rigid. I add to this, Choose your battles. Some things are worth fighting for such as the right to life. Some things are not, but are just opinions or mere preferences. Let's stand up for truth, not mere opinions or preferences!

- 8. Apologize and forgive:** Apologize when making make a mistake or unintentionally hurting someone. Practice forgiveness and let go of grudges. Recognize that everyone is fallible.
- 9. Develop a sense of humor:** Use humor to lighten the mood and build connections. Avoid sarcasm or jokes that may offend others. Be willing to laugh at yourself.
- 10. Build trust:** Be reliable and keep your commitments. Demonstrate honesty and integrity in your actions. Respect confidentiality and avoid gossiping
- 11. Cultivate patience:** Exercise patience in dealing with others, especially during challenging situations. Avoid rushing or pressuring people. Understand that everyone has his or her own pace.

Do you always and everywhere imitate these natural aspects of amiability? If not, which is probably the case for most of us, then beg Our Lady constantly to help you grow one specific area. Ask for her intercession daily.

Perhaps at this point, you're aware of some jarring faults in yourself when it comes to being amiable. Don't let this discourage you. Two church doctors counsel us. St. Francis de Sales and St. Therese of Lisieux. St. Francis de Sales tells us: *God so loves humility that He sometimes tests us, permitting us to say or do some foolish thing, giving us reason to humble ourselves.*⁸ St. Thérèse of Lisieux also encourages us . . . *Love your powerlessness; your soul will draw more profit than if, approved by grace, you achieve with a certain heroic flair heroic acts which fill your soul with personal satisfaction; Can you bear the distress and personal trial of being an impatient person...*⁹

Developing a Specific Virtue

When thinking of the virtue you want, develop a game plan. Be specific. Which of Mary's virtues speaks to you most—either because you long for it or because you know you lack it? Choose that one. Then, pay attention to when and where the opposite vice tends to erupt in your daily life. That's where the battle begins—and where grace will meet you.

⁸ St. Francis de Sales, *The Sermons of St. Francis de Sales for Lent*, (MD: Tan Books and Publishing, 1987) 123.

⁹ St. Thérèse of Lisieux, as quoted by Joseph F. Schmidt, FSC, in *Everything is Grace, the Life and Work of Thérèse of Lisieux*, (The Word Among Us: Maryland, 2007) 249.

To illustrate, I will give four fictitious examples.

Examples

At meals, Michelle loves to talk. She never gives anyone else a chance to get in. Michelle needs to work on...? You're right, Michelle needs to work on listening.

Frequently, Amy is taciturn, never speaking in a group. Others constantly have to work to bring her out of herself. Amy needs to work on "speaking more."

Justin gets impatient over fellow workers who are slower than he. Justin needs to practice patience. John, who is a perfectionist and meticulous, gets irritated with others work too fast. John needs to work on-----patience.

Objections and Answers

We will now go over some objections to imitating Mary and answers to these objections.

Mary is perfect. I admire her, but how can I ever imitate her?

Answer: Recall that Mary was on the only woman without sin, there are two: Eve and Mary. Eve experienced temptations and gave in at least to one big one! Mary also wrestled with temptations.¹⁰ Our Foundress, Mother Joanne, used to say, "don't rob Mary of merit." Yes, Our Lady too struggled and overcome temptations.

Well, I am a guy. How can I expect to be like Mary?

Answer: Ask St. Maximilian Kolbe or St. John Paul II that question! Just as women are called to be firm and strong, men are called to be gentle and loving.

I don't have any feelings toward Mary, but I am devoted to her. I connect best with Jesus.

Answer: As long as you honor Mary in your heart, without feelings, you are devoted and perhaps Mary is the Maid of Honor, bringing you to the bridegroom, Jesus. Mary always points to Jesus.

I am do not have the temperament to be quiet & gentle.

Answer: Mary experienced the balance of all four temperaments, the quick intense individual,(choleric)the quick but less intense and more social person (sanguine); the intense but introspective individual (melancholic) the steady and persevering person (phlegmatic)

¹⁰ Maureen Mullins, *The Litany of Loreto, How it Came to Be*, (New York: Scepter Publishers, 2024), 32-33.

Our Lady embodies the perfect balance of all four human temperaments. She shows the energy and decisiveness of the choleric in her quick response to Elizabeth's need at the Visitation. She displays the warmth and attentiveness of the sanguine in her presence at the Wedding at Cana, quick to notice the problem and act. She reveals the deep, inward reflection of the melancholic as she ponders the angel's message at the Annunciation. And she shows the perseverance and quiet strength of the phlegmatic as she stands faithfully beneath the Cross.

Our Lady teaches us that holiness is not limited by our natural temperament, but perfected by grace. It is from **being with Mary**, that we will **imitate her, but also striving our best to respond to God's grace and develop natural virtue.** **Mother Most Amiable, pray for us.**

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