



MARY. THE MOTHER OF GOD: DEVOTION TO MARY

By Betty Louise Courtney

Behold your Mother” (John 19:27). With these words, Jesus symbolically gave Mary to us as our Mother. How blessed are we to receive such a gift.

Mary is the most exalted human being and models for us all virtues. We can go to her with our cares and sorrows as we would an earthly mother and know that she hears and loves us. She is the intercessor between us, her children, and Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Our personal devotion to Mother Mary can grow and flower over a lifetime. There are a myriad of paths toward a close relationship with her. Sometimes one chooses a path and sometimes one finds oneself on a path she chooses for us. She is always there for us but it is up to us to seek her.

The most familiar way of honoring Mary is the Hail Mary. The origin of this prayer comes from three sources: First, the Angel Gabriel’s greeting to Mary, “Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with you... (Luke 1:28), Second, Elizabeth’s greeting to Mary, “... Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.” (Luke 1:42). And the third, “Holy Mary, Mother of God...” was added by the Church sometime before 1566 when the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* was published.

It has been said that The Rosary is Mary’s favorite form of prayer. In 1858, in Lourdes, during the first apparition, Bernadette Soubirous put her hand in her pocket and took out her Rosary. The Blessed Mother smiled and took into her [Mary’s] hands her own Rosary. Years later, in 1917, during the apparitions in Fatima, Mary told the children, “I am the Lady of the Rosary” and stressed the importance of praying the Rosary for world peace. And now, in our lifetime, since 1981 Mary has been appearing to six visionaries in Medjugorje which is in Bosnia, Hercegovina. These apparitions, not yet approved, are currently being investigated for their authenticity by the Church. In one of her messages she has said: “Dear Children, grow day by day close to God through prayer.” She has given us five ways in which to do that, one of which is: Pray The Rosary with your heart.

The Rosary is a form of contemplative prayer which is in essence a spiritual walk with Jesus and Mary through the most important events of their earthly lives. The Mysteries or events are divided into the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious. John Paul the II instituted a new Mystery during his Papacy called the Luminous Mysteries. The wearing the Miraculous Medal is another way to honor Mary. In 1830, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared three times to Catherine Labore, a member of the Daughters of Charity, at the

mother house in Paris. “... the Blessed Virgin appeared as if standing on a globe, and bearing a globe in her hands. As if from rings set with precious stones, dazzling rays of light were emitted from her fingers. These, she said were symbols of the graces which would be bestowed on all who asked for them around the figure appeared an oval frame bearing in golden letters the words, ‘O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee’: on the back appeared the letter M, surmounted by a cross with a crossbar beneath it, and under all the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the former surrounded by a crown of thorns, the latter pierced by a sword.” (Glass, J. (1911). *Miraculous Medal*. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved December 13, 2011 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10115a.htm>)
Mary requested medals be made according to the revealed model and promised great graces, after being blessed, to those who wear it.

May is the month of the Blessed Mother. As a parish, we honor her with a procession and place a crown of flowers on her head. Children and adults process down the aisle and place flowers, especially roses, at her feet. Likewise in October, the Month of the Rosary, we revere her at SJV with the International Rosary. That evening we, in our small way, acknowledge the universality of the love for Mary throughout the whole world.

Innumerable prayers, novenas and litanies contain her name. Books have been written about her; Cathedrals have been built at her request; numerous Marian Societies have been founded to honor her; artists and musicians have created magnificent works showing their love for her. The words from The Canticle of Mary resound throughout the ages: “... behold, from this time on all generations will call me blessed.” (Luke 1:48)

Mary, our Mother, pray for us.

