

Mary – The Mother of Mercy

Here's what **Archbishop Carlo Vigan**, the Papal Nuncio to the United States said to all of the American bishops back in November of 2013 – these are words that were put on the heart of back then **Cardinal Wojtyla – now known the world over as St. John Paul the Great** – these words were spoken during the Eucharistic Congress back in 1976 for the Bicentennial celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. **They are profoundly prophetic:**

"We are now standing in the face of the GREATEST HISTORICAL CONFRONTATION HUMANITY HAS EVER EXPERIENCED. **I do not think that the wide circle of the American Society, or the whole wide circle of the Christian Community realize this fully...** We are now facing the **FINAL CONFRONTATION** between the Church and the anti-church, between the gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the antichrist.

The confrontation lies within the plans of Divine Providence. It is, therefore, in God's Plan, and **it must be A TRIAL WHICH THE CHURCH MUST TAKE UP, and face courageously..."**

The Papal Nuncio then went on to say that those words from the then-Cardinal Wojtyla, **appear to have been inspired from the Diary of Saint Faustina Kowalska**, who greatly influenced his spirituality. As many of us know, Pope John Paul II not only proclaimed this Religious Sister a saint during the Jubilee Year of 2000 - but also **INSTITUTED THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY WITHIN THE CHURCH'S CALENDAR TO TAKE PLACE THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EVERY EASTER.**

And just so that believers the world over might '**PAY ATTENTION**' to not only the messages but also the promises of Divine Mercy, **God's providence made it so that John Paul II DIED** – in other words, he left this world to meet his maker and give an account for his life as the Vicar of Christ on earth, he died during the vespers, that is the prayers being lifted up to heaven during the **feast of Divine Mercy!!**

The FEAST that was inspired by St. Faustina herself...

Perhaps wondering: "*Why would a talk on Mary begin with reference being made to the message of divine mercy that has come to us through St. Faustina and been part of the Church is LIVED OUT TRADITION since the year 2000?"*

Because, everything that we believe about Mary is based on what we believe about Christ – what we teach about Mary **ULTIMATELY ILLUMINES AND BRIGHTENS OUR FAITH IN CHRIST.**

And as it stands, we are living in the times for which DIVINE MERCY is being poured forth from the heart of God himself! As such, **to understand Mary as the mother of Mercy means to contemplate her role as Co-Redemptrix with her son within the historical times of the church in which the Pilgrim church is living out.**

In his Encyclical entitled: "**Redemptoris Mater**," meaning "*The Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church,*" St. John Paul II writes: "**By virtue of divine election Mary is the earthly Mother of the Father's consubstantial Son and his "generous companion" in the work of redemption "she is a mother to us in the order of grace."** In other words, there is NO DISCONNECTION THAT'S EVER TO BE MADE between everything and anything that our Blessed Mother is doing from Heaven above and the work of her beloved Son in light of the unfolding's of salvation history in our midst.

Hence the message Our Lady gave to she who is now known the world over as the Secretary of Divine Mercy, St. Faustina back on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1936. (the Feast of the Annunciation is when we recall the event in history when God the Father sent Saint Gabriel from heaven to reveal **HIS PLAN OF MERCY FOR**

THE SALVATION OF HUMANKIND: the sending of his Son into our world by means of a woman – the Feast of the Annunciation is when we recall Mary's Fiat.

“FIAT” means **An Official Decree**, to **Give Sanction To Something**. Think of that for a moment – PUT YOURSELF THERE – immediately following the archangels announcement to Mary, and the weight of silence that followed before she consented with her free will – as **St. Bernard of Clairvaux expressed so eloquently**:

"Tearful Adam with his sorrowing family begs this of you, O loving Virgin, in their exile from Paradise. **Abraham begs it, David begs it!** All the other holy patriarchs, your ancestors, ask it of you, as they dwell in the country of the shadow of death. THIS IS WHAT THE WHOLE EARTH WAITS FOR, PROSTRATE AT YOUR FEET. It is right in doing so, for **on your word** depends comfort for the wretched, ransom for the captive, freedom for the condemned, indeed, salvation for all the sons of Adam, **THE WHOLE OF YOUR RACE**."

It was precisely while ALL OF CREATION HELD ITS COLLECTIVE BREATH, that Mary's Fiat echoed the world over as an emphatic “YES!” to the Father’s Plan, her response was: “***Let it be done to me according to thy Word!***”

My question for you this evening is: "***How will you take THE FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT that came to us not from Gabriel the Archangel, but rather from the Mother of God herself... and on the very Feast when the world recalls the announcement of our salvation made flesh?***" Given to her in 1936.

"I gave the world a Savior, you must make known his mercy, and prepare the world for his second coming. He will then come, not as a merciful Savior, but as a Just Judge. And Oh, how terrible is that day! Determined is the Day of Justice. ANGELS TREMBLE BEFORE IT. So speak to souls of his Great Mercy while there is still time..."

As both Fr. Cristino and Fr. Nathan highlighted during their respective talks on various aspects of Mercy, the very definition of mercy lies in the compassion of one's heart being moved by the misery of others...

The **DEFINITION OF MERCY** lies in the compassion of one's heart being moved by the misery of another:

“When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus – Mary’s Only Son – they took his clothing and divided into four shares, one for each soldier. This is what the soldiers did... and near the cross of Jesus stood his mother.” (John 19:23, 25)

Thankfully: it remains rather rare, an unnatural event for a parent to have to bury a child... **but as I witnessed back in November, while presiding at the funeral of a 19-month-old boy, the son of one of my closest friends** – the PAIN and REALITY of perhaps losing a child is very real for every parent out there and nothing will bring you to your knees while enveloping you within a land of misery LIKE THAT REALITY.

And that's just the passing of a child by means of foreseeable events on earth – nevermind a mother or a father having to stand there and witness one of their children, **completely guiltless and free from all wrongdoing**, having to stand there and WATCH YOUR CHILD BEING CRUCIFIED RIGHT BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES.

In our times of prayer, do we ever really pause the thoughts we like to entertain in exchange for forcing ourselves to be there with her. Join **OUR BLESSED MOTHER'S SORROWFUL HEART** as she stands at the foot of the cross watching her only son die OUT OF LOVE – out of MERCY for US...

Behold Mary... the Mother of MERCY – “**the compassion of one's heart being MOVED BY THE MISERY of another.**”

I've brought us to this **POINT FOR CONTEMPLATION** this evening because its from here that all sources of Divine Mercy gushed forth from heaven above. It wasn't back when our Lord turned water into wine, or when he healed the sick and cast out demons. It wasn't during the Sermon on the Mount nor was it when he raised Lazarus from the dead... It was from RIGHT HERE, on Golgotha with his Mother by his side while:

"The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they saw he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs, one of the soldiers pierced his side with the lance; and **immediately there came out blood and water.**"
(John 19:32-35)

Do we want to **UNDERSTAND Mary the Mother of Mercy?** Then we have to join her in prayer as she stood on the brink of God's mercy being poured out over creation itself – and not just figuratively – but LITERALLY out of God's Heart as he hung from the cross. And it's not just me who's asking this of all believers. I mean, there is a lot of other things that I enjoy contemplating concerning our Lord's life, his message, and his promises of eternal life that we find throughout the Scriptures. This isn't just me, this is right from God the Father himself!

For as he revealed by means of an Oracle that was composed by the prophet Zechariah some 500 years before the coming of the Messiah:

"I will pour out a SPIRIT OF COMPASSION (suffering with) AND SUPPLICATION (Asking for Mercy), **when they LOOK ON HIM whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child,** and weep bitterly over him, **as one weeps over a first-born.**" (Zechariah 12:10)

Over the course of my own journey towards answering the Call to the Priesthood, and still to this day, every once in a while I recall the words that Jesus once exclaimed while standing in the Temple of Jerusalem:

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. For as the scriptures say: 'rivers of living water will flow from the heart of anyone who believes in me." (John 7:38)

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink..." A few months prior to being ordained, a priest ends up being consumed with all the details and preparation work that needs to take place. **Unlike when a man and woman are getting ready for their sacrament of marriage, which really means that the woman is looking after all the details** – when it comes to the sacrament of holy orders, it's the priest to be that has to worry about.

Out of everything that one has to look after, I put a lot of thought and prayer into **the little Prayer Card that people would walk away with following June 19th, 2009.** On the front I selected a picture with our Blessed Lord's face crowned with thorns, while on the back, two hands are seen holding out the Sacred Heart surrounded with thorns.

The Scripture passage I chose was from John's Gospel: "ONE OF THE SOLDIERS PIERCED HIS SIDE AND IMMEDIATELY BLOOD AND WATER CAME OUT."

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink..."

I can't tell you how many times during the course of my journey into the mystery of Christ's call to the priesthood – when **OVERCOME BY GREAT SORROW AND SUFFERING** – I can't tell you how many times I have internally envisioned myself standing there, at the foot of the cross with Mary, **while blood and water gushes forth from his pierced side *and I drink...***

I drink until I'm full and then I hang my head before him and stand there for a while being drenched from head to toe until I'm strong enough again to keep going.... And just so that we come to understand Mary's role in all of this, here is how I defined my introduction to the world as a priest on the back of the card underneath those inscriptions:

*Fr. Jérôme J. Lavigne
Slave of Jesus in Mary*

What's it LOOK LIKE??? A Heart Pierced out of Love... Out of Mercy?

Attempting to contemplate the meaning behind the title: "**Mary the Mother of Mercy**", means that **WE MUST BEGIN WITH JESUS** – and not Jesus lying in the crib on Christmas morning, but rather with the IMAGE that he gave us as a Symbol of God's Mercy made manifest: **his most Sacred Heart**, which Fr. Cristino beautifully described for us 2 weeks ago.

I love the way #478 in the Catechism of the Catholic Church captures the essence and the depth of God's Mercy as it has been revealed to us through the image of the Sacred Heart:

"Jesus knew and loved each and all during his life, his agony, and his passion and gave himself up for each of us. **He has loved us all with the human heart.** For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, is quite rightly considered the **CHIEF SIGN AND SYMBOL OF THAT LOVE** with which the Divine Redeemer continually loves the Eternal Father and all human beings: WITHOUT EXCEPTION!"

It's from there that we are then led into contemplating the land of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. As Pope Pius XII puts it; "It is entirely fitting, that the Christian people – **who received the divine life from Christ through Mary** – after they have paid their debt of honour to the Sacred Heart of Jesus should also offer to the most loving Heart of their heavenly Mother the corresponding acts of piety, affection, gratitude and expiation."

Our spiritual walk towards the land where the sun will never set is one that is meant to be marked with the accompaniment of Mary because Mary **is in solidarity with us!!** She is continually being moved with pity by the plight of her children on earth.

We acknowledge this reality every time we pray the Rosary:

"To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley, of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, **THINE EYES OF MERCY TOWARD US;** and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb Jesus."

We need to see ourselves walking this earth as part of a **MUCH LARGER COMMUNAL CHURCH** – in union with the Saints, the Angels, and our Blessed Mother. For our relationships with those who have achieved an intense communion with God becomes quite important along the development of our Faith Journey.

Mary and the saints ARE NOT BRIDGES to Christ's mediation; **Jesus is not some distant figure in our Sacramental Economy and Doctrine of Grace.** Rather Mary's role and mediation has implications in our understanding of the Church as **A COMMUNION.** – THIS IS IMPORTANT!!

Our personal relationship to God is ***BOUND UP*** in other people's relationships to God for we form one Family – we are all children of our heavenly father and of Mary, our heavenly mother. And it is precisely because Mary is His Mother that she continues to participate, **TO A GREAT DEGREE**, in Jesus' ongoing work of redemption.

For from the moment that Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb, **her life was irrevocably joined with the redemptive work of her Son**. Her love and her sorrows were completely and intimately united with the love and sufferings of Jesus. When Mary consented to bear Jesus into this world, she consented not just to His birth: but **TO EVERYTHING THAT WOULD COME TO PASS**: His life, death, and Resurrection. That's what makes Mary His first disciple, the **PERFECT** disciple and also the Mother of the Church.

As St. John Paul II writes: MARY "As Virgin and Mother – she was singularly united with him in his first coming, so through her continued collaboration with him she will also be united with him in expectation of the second; (for she) has that specifically **MATERNAL ROLE OF MEDIATRIX OF MERCY** at his final coming, when all those who belong to Christ "shall be made alive," when "**the last enemy to be destroyed is death**" (1 Cor. 15:26).

Just as Mary's walk on this earth was marked with **TIMES OF GREAT JOY** along with times of great sorrow, her life example invites us to stand at the threshold of what it means to be human. I love the way that French spiritual writer, **Jean-Pierre de Cossade**, explains what it's like for a believer to echo out the FIAT of our Blessed Mother in our own lives: To have the courage to say: "**Let it be done to me according to thy word.**"

He writes:

"We must **offer ourselves to God like a clean, smooth canvas** and not worry ourselves with what God may choose to paint on it. We need to have a perfect trust in him and abandon ourselves along with all of our needs to his creative hands.

It is the same for a lump of stone...

Each **thunderous blow** of the hammering of the sculptors chisel makes it ***feel as though it were being destroyed***. As blow after blow descends, the stone knows nothing on how the sculptor is shaping it: all it feels is the chisel chipping away at it, changing it, **mutilating it** – [for example, let's take a piece of stone destined to become a beautiful statue: while it is being chiseled away, we might ask of it:]

"What do you think is happening to you? ***Why do you think you suffer at this time?***"

If it could, perhaps the stone might answer: '***Don't ask me*** - all I know is that **I must stay immovable** in the hands of the sculptor. I MUST TRUST THE SCULPTOR. **I must love him** and endure all that he inflicts upon me to produce the beautiful figure he has in mind.

For **what I do know** is that ***His work is the best possible!*** It is perfect and I welcome each blow of the chisel as the best thing that could happen to me – although, **if I am to be truthful** – I feel that every one of these blows is ***disfiguring me, ruining me, destroying me...***"

To walk the walk of Mary, Our Mother of Mercy, means:

Learning to BECOME STONES IN THE HANDS OF THE SCULPTOR...

For **God continually holds in his Paternal Hand** THE CHISEL OF MORTIFICATION with which He cuts into the quick of our affections. He cuts off those links, those friends, that health, or reputation, which draws us away from discovering Him...

In the **FIRE OF PAIN**, he absorbs the **attachments**, the **secret** and **invisible links** that draw us into the love of perishable, earthly things. He melts them down so that our souls can once again become spiritualized. Can become that well-prepared canvas, on which the rays of Divine Goodness will one day succeed in leaving their imprint.

For the goal of all human **Trials and Tribulations** is that whatever is mortal within us – THROUGH the journey of a life lived on earth IN FAITH – will some day end up being absorbed by the immortality that is to come in Christ Jesus.

Few words on the IMPORTANCE of Daily Prayer combined with a conscious act of journeying with our Blessed Mother along the pathways of the Life Vocation that's been entrusted to our care:

A MIRACULOUS EVENT that took place back on **August 6, 1945**. That morning, **Fr. Hubert Schiffer began his day with Mass in the Church of Our Lady's Assumption**. When he finished, he headed to the nearby rectory for breakfast. He had just sat down to slice his grapefruit when there was a sudden, BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT.

“A terrific explosion filled the air with one bursting thunder stroke,” he recalled. **“An invisible force lifted me from the chair, hurled me through the air, shook me, battered me, [and] whirled me ‘round and round’ like a leaf in a gust of autumn wind.”**

Fr. Schiffer was a Jesuit missionary living in Hiroshima, and what he had seen was no ordinary flash of light. It was an atomic bomb that had exploded just **eight city blocks from the church**. Right within the “**FIREBALL DIAMETER**” of the bomb – which was between two to four kilometers in length and it should have destroyed everything in its path. While the roof of the church was gone, its walls remained standing. **THE TWO-STORY RECTORY WHERE FR. SCHIFFER WAS EATING BREAKFAST WAS INTACT; even the windows were still in place.**

Half a million people were annihilated in that blast. Pictures of those who died can be found on the internet and they will leave you speechless... Yet miraculously, **the eight Jesuit priests living there all survived.** Although they were only ONE KILOMETER from the epicentre of the blast (**where the temperature was in excess of 20,000 to 30,000 degrees Fahrenheit**), they sustained only minor injuries.

They experienced absolutely no ill effects from their exposure to the radiation and did not have any loss of hearing. In fact, they had no visible long-term defects or sickness at all! **How is that even possible?**

A miracle that defies all human logic. For apart from the church and the rectory, there were no buildings left standing anywhere near the vicinity. And while **the Jesuits were not burned or injured in the initial blast, they should AT LEAST have all received enough radiation to be dead within a matter of minutes.** Yet they were all spared.

They said that Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, had protected them.

“We believe we survived because we are living the Message of Fatima,” said Fr. Schiffer.

“We live and PRAY THE ROSARY DAILY in that home...”

The rosary, DAILY ROSARY is the bedrock upon which every family ought to be building the structure of their Faith. As individuals or collectively.

As Venerable Bishop Fulton Sheen once put it:

"The Rosary is the **book of the blind**, where souls see and there enact the greatest drama of love the world has ever known; it is the **book of the simple**, which initiates them into mysteries and knowledge more satisfying than the education of other men; it is the **book of the aged**, whose eyes close upon the shadows of this world, and open on the substance of the next."

The power of the Rosary: it's beyond description..."

To this day, one of the greatest Latin hymns ever composed dates back to the 13th century and it is entitled ***Stabat Mater***, which means (The Mother was Standing)

I leave you with a few of it's verses strung together to contemplate as we carry on during this time of the **FINAL CONFRONTATION** between the Church and the anti-church, between the gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the antichrist.

During this **Jubilee Year of DIVINE MERCY...**

At the Cross, her station keeping, **stood the mournful Mother weeping**,
Close to Jesus to the last. **Through her heart**, His sorrow sharing all His bitter anguish bearing:
Now at length **THE SWORD** had passed...

Christ above in torment hangs while she beneath beholds the pangs of her dying, glorious Son.

O sweet Mother! Font of love: **touch My Spirit from above!** Make my heart with yours accord – make me feel as you have felt; make my soul to glow and melt with the love of Christ, my Lord.

Holy Mother, **pierce me through IN MY HEART**: each wound renew of my Savior crucified.
Let me share with you His pain who for all our sins was slain. Who for me in torments died.

Let me mingle tears with you - **mourning Him who mourned for me...**

All the days that I may live **by the cross with you to stay**.
There with you to weep and pray - **IS ALL I ASK OF YOU TO GIVE**.

Amen.