

Mary

Mother of Mercy

Gathering Prayer

Mary, Virgin Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own 'yes'
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Obtain for us a new ardour born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.

Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.

Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's
little ones,
pray for us.

Amen. Alleluia!

From *Evangelii Gaudium*



Introduction

When Pope Francis opened the Holy Door at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome on 1st January, he said: “It is most fitting that on this day we invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary above all as ‘mother of mercy.’ The door we have opened is, in fact, a Door of Mercy and those who cross its threshold are called to enter into the merciful love of the Father with complete trust and freedom from fear; they can leave this Basilica knowing that Mary is ever at their side.”

In Misericordiae Vultus # 24 Pope Francis invites us to contemplate the face of mercy, Jesus, through Mary.

“My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy. May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God’s tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love.

Chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the Ark of the Covenant between God and man. She treasured divine mercy in her heart in perfect harmony with her Son Jesus. Her hymn of praise, sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth, was dedicated to the mercy of God which extends from “generation to generation” (Lk 1:50). We too were included in those prophetic words of the Virgin Mary. This will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year to experience the fruits of divine mercy.

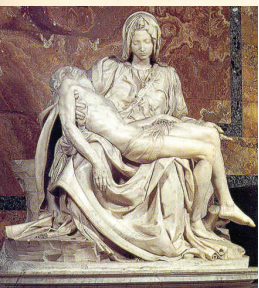
At the foot of the Cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified

him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception. Let us address her in the words of the Salve Regina, a prayer ever ancient and ever new, so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus.”

Misericordiae Vultus #24

The Latin word for mercy, *misericordia*, is derived from two words, “poor” and “heart.” As such, *misericordia* is where the merciful heart of God meets the misery of man. Where does this happen? In Jesus, in his crucified love, he receives all the human misery, pouring out his merciful love on the world.

Fr James McTavish, March 21, 2012



Hail Holy Queen – *Salve Regina*

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy,
our life, our sweetness, and our hope.
To you we cry, the children of Eve;
to you we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this land of exile.
Turn, then, most gracious advocate,
your eyes of mercy toward us;
lead us home at the end
and show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus:
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.



Reflection on Mercy

Pope John Paul II refers to Mary as Mother of Mercy in his 1980 encyclical, Dives in Misericordia:

Mary is also the one who obtained mercy in a particular and exceptional way ... Mary, then, is the one who has the deepest knowledge of the mystery of God's mercy. She knows its price, she knows how great it is. In this sense, we call her the "Mother of mercy" (#9).

The Hebrew word for mercy, *rahamim*, comes from *reham*, a mother's womb. God's mercy must have something of a maternal warmth about it—unconditional, intimate, and nurturing love, symbolized by a mother's womb. God's mercy is, therefore, tender and affectionate, life-giving and indispensable. God chose Mary to reveal this merciful love to us. Therefore, we need Mary in our lives as Christians.

God has given us a mother for a reason. At the foot of the cross, Jesus said to his beloved disciple, St. John: "Here is your Mother," and he said to Mary: "Here is your son" (Jn 19:27). Mary was able to stand firm at the foot of the cross—a merciful love is a strong love! Merciful love is capable of withstanding the cross; capable of withstanding difficulties and challenges.

The love of Mary is gentle and feminine, yet, also strong and firm. It is a love that does not give up. St Paul even said that love believes all things, hopes all things and endures all

things—the mercy of God, likewise, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things.

Through Mary, Christ is born in us, Christ matures in us

In the words, spoken by Christ from the cross, "This is your son," Mary is given her mission: to form the image and likeness of Christ in each of her children. In some ways, the mercy she shares with us is to help form the face of Christ in us. It helps me to imagine a mother's womb. What is a mother's womb? It is the place where new life grows, where the growing child is nourished, nurtured and protected. Mary, our Mother, desires that the life of Christ grows in us, his divine life in us grows and becomes strong.

To be sharers of God's mercy to others

In Lk 6:36, Jesus gives us a commandment: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." We are called to be instruments of God's mercy, revealing the power of God's mercy in our lives. It is not only to experience mercy, but that others can experience his mercy through our lives. Jesus asks us also to show merciful love by reaching out to the "lost" ones, too. In his parables of mercy, he talks of the lost son, the lost coin, and the lost sheep. He wishes us to seek out the lost until they are found, in the same way that we have been found.

Fr. James McTavish, *Mary Mother of Mercy*, March 21, 2012. <http://www.hprweb.com/2012/03/mary-mother-of-mercy-christ-the-power-of-merciful-love/>

"We are called to be instruments of God's mercy, revealing the power of God's mercy in our lives."



Do other people experience God's mercy through me? Can you think of any examples?



Scripture

The Annunciation - Luke 1:26-38

The Magnificat

Mary was a virtuous woman, a woman of strength, a woman who lived according to the rules of her time. On a certain day she heard the voice of an angel sent by God.

And the angel said: “Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you.”

This greeting was odd and unfamiliar. Mary was troubled, frightened, anxious, startled, disturbed, and she thoughtfully pondered what it could mean.

And the angel said: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.

You will conceive in your womb, you will bear a son, you will call his name Jesus.”

And the angel sang on about the greatness of her child.

But Mary was a woman who knew herself and asked, “How shall this be? I have no husband.”

And the angel said: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you, the child to be born will be called holy.”



Mary's Magnificat of Acceptance - Luke 1:38

My soul trembles in the presence of the loving Creator
and my spirit prepares itself to walk hand in hand
with the God who saves Israel
because I have been accepted by God
as a simple helpmate.

Yes, forever in the life of humankind
people will sing of this loving encounter;
through remembering this moment, the faithful
will know all things are possible in God.

Holy is the place within me where God lives.
God's tender fingers reach out from age to age
to touch the softened inner spaces of those
who open their souls in hope.

I have experienced the creative power of God's
embracing arms
and I know the cleansing fire of unconditional love.

I am freed from all earthly authority
and know my bonding to the Author of all earthly things.

I am filled with the news of good things;
my favour with God,
faithful trust in the gentle shadow of the Most High,
the mystery of my son, Jesus,
the gift of companionship with my beloved kinswoman,
Elizabeth, who believes as I believe.
The place in my heart that I had filled
with thoughts of fear and inadequacy
has been emptied and I am quiet within.

God comes to save Israel, our holy family,
remembering that we are the ones who remember,
...according to the kinship we have known...
remembering that we are the ones who remember
and that where God and people trust each other
there is home.





Quiet Reflection

Spend some time in quiet reflection...



Mary says: ‘...my spirit prepares itself to walk hand in hand with God.’
What is God asking of me? Am I willing to respond with Mary’s faith?



‘Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception.’ Am I willing and/or able to put these qualities into practice?



What will I commit to?

Maternal tenderness

Filled with wonder

Discerning

Channel of God’s forgiveness

Marian Qualities

Motherhood~ inner life

Contemplative

Nurturing

All embracing love

Giving priority to the needs of others

“Do whatever he tells you”

Prayerful

Mary pondered

Maternal love~ ethic of care

Giving birth

Responding to the cry of the poor & those in need

Has time to listen

Respectful

Justice with Mercy

Like Mary



“Mary is the model I feel called to follow:
a lay woman open to the presence of God,
who shares the concerns,
the happiness and the hardships
of the people in her village.
I firmly believe that Mary continues to be
our ordinary resource and that
she does everything among us.”

Spain

Gathered Around the Same Table, p72



Like Mary...

Spend some time reading and reflecting on the following selection of quotes taken from one of our Marist texts, *'Gathered Around the Same Table – The Vocation of Champagnat's Marist Laity'*.

72. Like Mary, we go out to assist those who need us, we visit Elizabeth, we rejoice in each other's company and create family together. We are attentive to the newlyweds in Cana, we offer our help with simplicity and we enjoy good wine together. We pray for each other in Jerusalem, we experience brotherhood and in this way we build a community in the Spirit.

110. Mary is our model for following Jesus. She opens up her life so that God can model it like clay in his hands: Be it done to me, according to your word. The first disciple, she kept all these things, meditating on them in her heart. She listens, welcomes and gives fruit. We keep Jesus present through Mary's features.

111. Mary, a lay woman, is also a model for us of the simple and hardworking life. Next to her and Joseph, Jesus learns how to forge relationships, to see the world and to discover his vocation. Like her, we evangelize and we educate through presence. In our families, in the work place, in encounters with friends and neighbours, we manifest the maternal face of the Church in the style of Mary.

112. Committed to the processes of liberating the excluded, we proclaim Mary's Magnificat, knowing that God is the one who drives us and sustains our efforts to bring about a world in which the hungry are filled with good things.

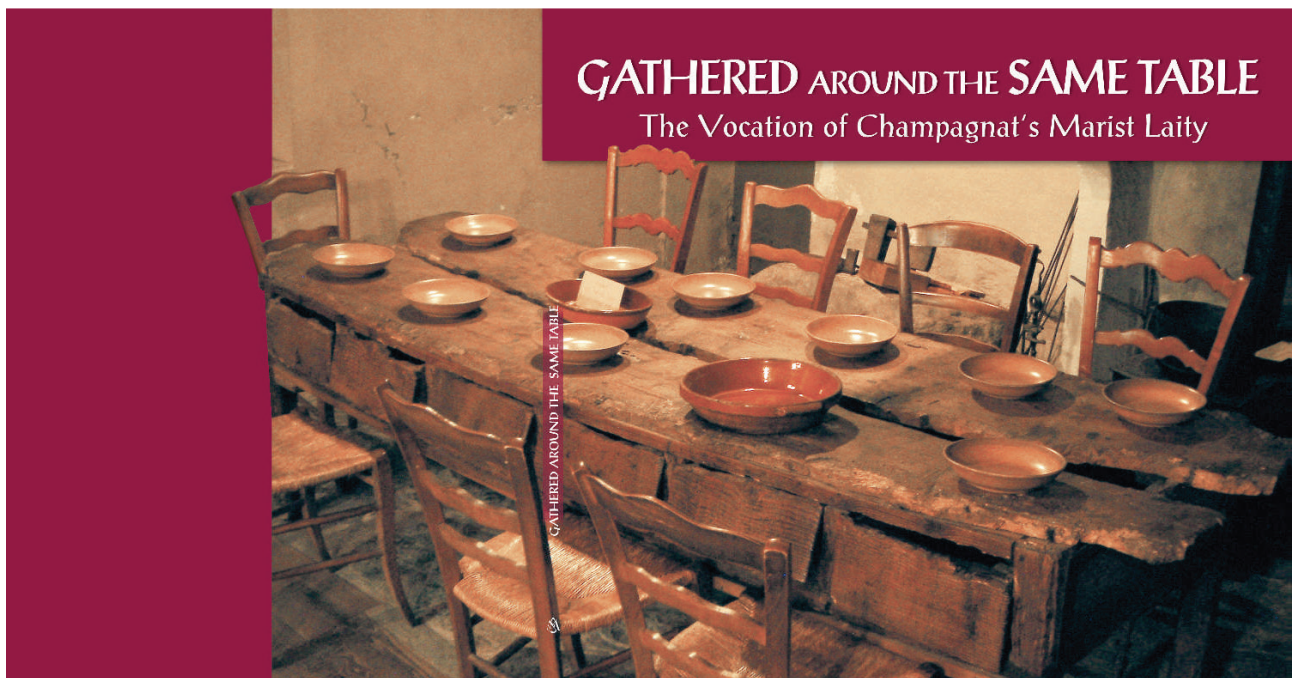
113. The image of Mary that Marcellin chose for his Brothers is also our symbol: the Good Mother. We want our relationships to be imbued with her tenderness and proximity. With those feelings of compassion, we present to the world the great gift of God made man.

114. We feel a special confidence in Mary. Like Marcellin, we admit that she has done everything for us, and it is our custom to go to Christ through his love for his Mother. Devotion to Mary centres us in Jesus and sustains us on the way of the Gospel.

144. Driven by the Spirit, we are helping a new ecclesiastical model to be born, one based on the equal dignity of all Christian vocations and in the image of the Church as People of God in communion.

145. The experience of sharing the charism directs us to rethink the institutional model that until now has embodied the Marist charism in the Church. Experience seems to indicate that we not only need to widen the tent of the Institute, but also to build together a new tent where everyone, Brothers and Lay people, may find our place.

148. Mary is our example on the road to vocation. She teaches us to integrate life around Jesus, to follow him to the foot of the cross and to savour the happiness of the resurrection.



Mary of Nazareth is our model. She teaches us to live in family, to evangelize through presence, to commit to the poor and to be welcoming to all those who live at our side. We want to live in Christ, through his mother's love.

Mary, our companion on the way, leads us to God.



Where do you most easily find God? What obstacles have you experienced along the way?



In what way is Mary a model for your life? Which of her characteristics appeal most to you? Which characteristics do you feel you should deepen?



In practical ways, how do you live the presence of God in your surroundings...family, work and community?



Closing Prayer



O God, we praise you
for the multitudes of women, men,
young people and children, who
are seeking to be witnesses of
peace, trust, and reconciliation
throughout the world.



In the footsteps of the holy witnesses
of all the ages, since Mary and the apostles,
to the believers of today,
grant us to prepare ourselves inwardly,
day after day, to place our trust
in the mystery of faith.



Amen.

Life from Within, Prayers by Brother Roger of Taizé

St Marcellin Champagnat:
Mary our Good Mother:
And let us always remember:

*pray for us
pray for us
to pray for one another.*

