



## HIGHLIGHTS FOR TALK 10

### WHO IS MARY? THE MOTHER OF GOD AND MY MOTHER

- ❖ The Blessed Virgin Mary holds a preeminent place of honor and devotion in the life of the Church because of her *unique vocation*, the *special privileges* given her in light of that vocation, her *unparalleled holiness* compared to that of any other human creature, and her *exemplary virtues*. We do not *worship* Our Lady, since worship is due to God alone; but we do *venerate* her in a special way for these reasons.
- ❖ Mary's vocation -- which she embraced promptly and wholeheartedly -- was to be the Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Mother of the Church that He established.
- ❖ Mary is truly the Mother of God. She conceived Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit; bore and gave birth to Him; nurtured and educated Him in His Sacred Humanity; and always maintained an intimate, prayerful dialogue with Him.
- ❖ She was His collaborator in His sacrificial offering on Calvary, suffering with Him and *embracing* it because it was God's Will -- despite its dreadfulness.
- ❖ It was on Calvary that Jesus gave her to us (represented by St. John) as our mother, too. She embraced this role by nurturing and guiding the early Church through her prayer, example, and encouragement; and she continues to fulfill it today by her unceasing prayers and intercession on our behalf.
- ❖ God prepared Our Lady for her singular vocation and rewarded her faithfulness to it by bestowing special privileges on her:
  - *Freedom from original sin and any personal sin*: By the special gift of her Immaculate Conception, Mary's human nature was preserved from original sin, which all of us have inherited from Adam and Eve. She was conceived "full of grace", and *always* corresponded *fully* to the graces given her by God, never choosing herself over Him in the slightest matter.
  - *Perpetual virginity*: Our Lord's conception in Mary's womb was brought about by the Holy Spirit, with no participation by a human father. Mary remained a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ. Our Lady combines in a unique and unrepeatable way the gift of virginity and the special dignity of motherhood.
  - *Preservation from bodily corruption*: Since Mary was sinless, it was fitting that her body would undergo no corruption after her time on earth had ended. The dogma of the Assumption proclaims that God took Our Lady immediately to heaven in body and soul at the end of her earthly life.
  - *Intervessory powers*: On account of her great faith, Mary serves as the "Mediatrice" (i.e. distributor) of grace -- meaning that she is able through her prayer to obtain for us any grace. She also has a unique relationship with the Blessed Trinity in that she is Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, and Spouse of God the Holy Spirit. No one is closer to God or in a better position to intercede for us than she.



## Moms Transmit the Faith

Mary will never fail to help us if we approach her with authentic love and determination to accept and fulfill God's Will.

- ❖ Mary was conceived full of grace, and she lived a holy life by always entrusting herself to God in her vocation.
- ❖ Mary also lived out human virtues in an exemplary fashion. For example, the Gospels show us her:
  - *Surpassing humility*, by which she saw herself simply as God's handmaid, passing unnoticed, despite His many gifts to her.
  - *Fidelity and docility to Joseph, her true husband*, letting herself be led by him as he fulfilled his duties as protector of the Holy Family.
  - *Fortitude and self-sacrifice* in accompanying Jesus to Calvary, witnessing the injustices and sufferings heaped on Him, and **wanting** them as He did -- against normal maternal instincts and desires -- since it was God's Will.
  - *Simplicity and naturalness* in living the details of ordinary life in Galilee over the years, as evidenced by her attention to the lack of wine at the marriage feast in Cana.
  - *Docility to the extraordinary things God asked of her*, such as virginal conception; travelling to Bethlehem on the verge of childbirth so that Scripture could be fulfilled; delivering her Child in poor and humbling circumstances; the disappearance of her Son for three days at age twelve; and "staying behind" after Our Lord's Ascension to be the Mother of the Church in its infant years.
- ❖ The principal means traditionally recommended by the Church to express love for Our Lady are:
  - The *Holy Rosary*: Our Lady's favorite prayer, and a powerful means to obtain her favor. While making a garland of vocal prayers to her, we place ourselves in crucial scenes of the Gospels and contemplate Jesus through Mary's eyes. The *Rosary* is an excellent daily family prayer, and even small children can pray a decade or two. It is a very effective antidote to pride and selfishness.
  - The *Angelus* is a short prayer traditionally recited at noon. It recalls the Annunciation scene, when the Archangel Gabriel announces to Mary her vocation to be the Mother of the Savior. This mid-day prayer is a great way to bring God back into our day and renew our spirit for the day's remaining struggles. The *Regina Coeli* is said in place of the *Angelus* during Easter time. In it, we rejoice with Our Lady at her Son's Resurrection.
  - The *Memorare* is another traditional Marian prayer. It expresses our utter confidence in Our Lady's protection, help, and intercession in our many personal, family, and societal needs.
  - *Aspirations* are short vocal prayers -- quick bursts of love that we can send quietly to Mary many times a day. Examples are "Holy Mary, our refuge and our strength, pray for us", "Mother of Fair Love, help your daughters", "Show that you are our Mother", and "Queen of the Family, pray for us".



- *Greeting images of the Blessed Virgin* is a most effective way to grow in love for Mary. Just as we would greet our moms when coming home, we can greet Our Lady as we move through the house by looking at her picture or statue and simply saying “Hello”. This is a wonderful devotion to teach to small children.
- During the month of May, many people make a *pilgrimage* to a shrine of Our Lady. A pilgrimage consists of praying five decades of the *Rosary* on the way to the shrine, five decades during the visit to the shrine, and five decades on the way home. Pilgrimages are opportune times to ask Mary for special help and blessings, and they can have a true apostolic dimension if we invite a friend or family member to join us.
- Wearing of the *Marian scapular* is a popular devotion that we can practice and introduce to our children. There are eight scapulars approved by the Church, but the Scapular of Mt. Carmel, the “brown scapular”, is the oldest and most widely used. Containing images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in either cloth or metal form, it originated in a vision of Mary to St. Simon Stock, an English Carmelite. In the vision, she showed him this scapular, and promised that anyone who died wearing it would not suffer eternal punishment and would quickly be released from purgatory. The scapular is a sign of our confidence in Our Lady’s maternal protection.
- And finally, *recitation of three Hail Mary’s* at bedtime is a simple way to ask Our Lady for purity -- and for help at other times of temptation in this area. It is a habit that we can instill in our children, as well, recognizing that Mary is the model of purity, the “spiritual power that frees love from selfishness and aggression” (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* 19).

