



Journey to Our Lady

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My Dear Friends,

We cannot allow our lives to go to waste. There is so much we can do, so much we can accomplish in the eyes of our Lord. Small sacrifices, simple acts of kindness, and little offerings have great ways of growing and spreading when they are done in unity with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Each of us can serve humanity by offering up every aspect of our lives, including any sufferings we may face, for the love of God. That may mean stepping outside of our comfort zone, going the extra mile, and perhaps taking on suffering so that others may suffer less. We have seen examples of these works of love with strangers helping strangers in the recent tragedies that have hit our nation.

We cannot always make sense of the events that happen in our world and understandably, no one wants to suffer. Jesus Christ did not want to suffer as He prayed in the Garden of Olives, “Father, if You are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but Yours be done” [Luke 22:42]. It is God’s will that we all enter the Kingdom of Heaven which depends on how we live and treat one another. Christ shows us the way.

Are we willing to be Christ-like by the way we live? Our Blessed Mother can help us to say yes. Mary understands the responsibilities that come with following God’s will. Mary also knows we can handle those responsibilities when we put our lives in God’s hands and accept the love and mercy He bestows upon us.

Like Mary, when we choose to follow the Lord’s path, we accept the way of living on earth that ultimately leads to eternity in Heaven. By living our faith and showing our love for God, we can bring hope to our world and help our brothers and sisters in spirit to do the same. Let us continue our journey.

The Rock

God gives us many treasures that can help us on our journey to holiness and ultimately to Heaven. With an open heart, we can find those treasures when we look at life through a spiritual lens. Those spiritual treasures are different for each of us because each of us is unique by God’s design.

Now imagine yourself on a spiritual treasure hunt and see what you can find to help you move forward on your journey. Could you find such a treasure in a rock? It is possible. When Simon Peter said to Jesus, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God,” Jesus replied: “Flesh and blood have not revealed this to you but my Heavenly Father...you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it” [Matthew: 16:17-18].

Through the strength of his faith, Peter recognized Jesus as the Messiah, thereby making Peter the foundation of the Church – that is the community Jesus gathers to join Him in God’s Heavenly Kingdom. However, Peter was not always strong or as steady as a rock. Peter cried out in fear in the stormy seas when he tried to walk on the water toward Jesus. When Jesus rescued Peter, our Lord said “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” [Matthew: 14:31] Peter doubted again – denying three times of ever knowing Jesus – when Christ was arrested.

We can take comfort in Peter’s fear as well as in his faith. In today’s increasingly (See story, pg. 2)>

(The Rock, cont'd from pg. 1)

secular world, our faith can be easily shaken. We become scared and often succumb to society's pressures even when we know society is headed in the wrong direction. If we rely only on our own resources, instead of relying on our Lord, we become confused and lost on life's journey.

However, when we reach out to our Lord who gives us the strength to hold onto our faith in Him, we can recover just as Peter did. Like the rocks used as markers to help hikers on difficult trails, the grace of God and the strength of our faith can keep us on the right path and help us to guide others on the journey to holiness and Heaven.

For this journey, we must constantly remind ourselves that we are not alone. Forever united with Jesus Christ, our Blessed Mother can help us find those spiritual treasures that keep us directed toward Heaven because Mary pondered everything in her heart. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary had the strength to keep her heart open throughout her lifetime and had full faith and trust in God's word, His way, and His mercy. Mary put herself completely in God's hands and never pulled away.

How often are we tempted to pull away from God, especially when life as we know it is shaken to the core? Truly it is hard to hold onto what we cannot see. We are prone to holding onto what is tangible. We are attached to earthly ways and earthly treasures. Therefore, with Mary as our guide, let us "look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal." [2 Cor 4:18]

Then, steady as a rock, Mary gives us her maternal love – just as our Lady did with Peter and the Apostles – to support and comfort us on our journey to where sin and death will not prevail.#



Prayer

*Holy Mother,
Life can change
in a moment.*

*Help me to be strong
when life is no longer
what I planned.*

*Guide me to our Lord's
loving mercy
which is the
greatest treasure
I will ever receive.*

*I pray that my heart
remain open to cherish
the beauty of
God's plan.*

*May I live my life
in unity with
the Holy Trinity
and*

*may all that I do be
offered up for the
love of God
and His creation.*

Amen.

Natural Beauty

Each one of us is blessed with natural beauty. That beauty is the inner goodness that God gives to each of us. Like a butterfly breaking through its cocoon, God wants our beauty, our inner goodness, to come through us by the way we live and treat one another, friend and stranger alike.

Just as a new butterfly pumps blood to its wings in order to fly, we need God's strength, through the body, blood, soul and divinity of His dearly beloved Son, pumping in our souls in order to live the way God wants us to live. Like the butterfly, each in our little way can bring beauty into the world that is pleasing to God.

The beauty of faith, hope, and charity needs to be shared every day. We need God's goodness in the world because it is all pure, everlasting, and cannot be destroyed. We may not always recognize the Lord's goodness in ourselves or in each other especially when our faith is challenged by the events of the day. So often, years of hard work and determination to build up a life are torn down and we are left asking "Why even bother to try?"

Although we may face great trials and tribulations, we should not give up because God does not give up on us. Instead of allowing sin to overcome the world, God sent His only Son into the world to save it. Through Mary, the Blessed Virgin, Jesus Christ entered the world to show us the way to live for goodness sake—for God's sake and for the sake of our salvation.

Why some people choose the destructive force of sin over a gentle act of kindness is hard to understand and we may never find an answer that satisfies us. Instead of searching for an elusive answer, let us follow God's will. Like the butterfly, our time is limited. Therefore let us use our time and energy to share God's goodness with one another and spread God's beauty to make our world a better place. #



Look at the Sun!

St. Pius of Pietrelcina once said that God is the supreme sun and enlightens the soul with His grace. That enlightenment helps us to see ourselves as we really are, which includes our weaknesses and shortcomings. For many, that sight is too difficult to behold. Perhaps, that is why many choose to turn away from God, instead of turning away from sin.

At times, even miracles from Heaven are not enough to open the hearts and minds of those who have closed themselves off from God's heavenly graces. On October 13, 1917, thousands of people witnessed the Miracle of the Sun in Fatima, Portugal. For those who chose to believe in the miracle, their faith was strengthened. For those who chose not to believe, their hearts grew harder. The challenge of changing the hearts and minds of those who want to shut out God continues today; that is why Our Lady asks us to pray very much.

We may ask, "What is the point if people refuse to change?" Imagine if Mary, our Blessed Mother, asked that question at the Annunciation! Instead, Mary's yes to God's call was an act of faith, hope, and love as was Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta's yes to Mary. Without fail these children, who witnessed the Marian apparitions, prayed the Rosary every day. Everything they did and endured became an offering of love to God for the sake of the world's salvation.

Like the children of Fatima, our task is to pray every day for stronger faith and for the conversion of sinners so that God's hope and love can spread throughout the world. As we learned from Fatima, prayers make a difference. When Lucia cried out "Look at the sun!" people saw a sight more spectacular than the recent solar eclipse and many prayers were answered. Yet, the miracle would have been even greater if more people had faith in God. Therefore, when God enlightens our souls, let us see what we can become when we believe in God's greatness. Then let us pray for God's graces to conquer our sins and bring peace to our world.#

Harvest Time

Now is the time of year to gather up the many fruits of our labor. What does our harvest show us? Were the seeds planted in fertile ground and did they grow to provide a wonderful bounty or were they overtaken by weeds due to lack of care and attention?

Perhaps, we can ask the same questions about our souls. How much effort do we put into our lives so that the seeds God plants within us can grow? Do we allow our faith to come to fruition by the way we live and work?

Each one of us has the potential to bring so much of God's goodness into the world and to spread hope that can sustain one another in difficult times. How many of us actually live up to that potential? Do we take the time to clear out the sins that drain us of our strength and stop our growth in faith, hope, and charity?

Granted, growing in God's garden requires focusing our energy and attention on living the way God wants us to live which includes making sacrifices and changes in our lives that we may not want to make. Many of us are not willing to put in the effort needed to prevent sin from growing in our souls.

As a result, we miss out on the many graces God wants to instill in us; graces that will help us grow in ways we cannot imagine on our own. St. Pius of Pietrelcina once described God's grace as warming the earth of our souls and causing new plants to grow which bring forth the most delicious fruits, the like of which we never have seen.



Let us remember not to measure our fruitfulness by the number of earthly treasures we accumulate and possess. Those treasures are fleeting; they can be taken away without warning. Instead let us allow the faith, hope, and charity that God has planted in our souls to grow and thrive so we can share God's beautiful bounty especially with those in great need of His love and mercy.#

Prayer

*Dearest Mother,
Help me to see
the heavenly treasures
God bestows
upon our world.
Help me to understand
that earthly treasures
are transitory and our time
in this world is limited.
Let faith, hope, and love be
my constant companions
and give me strength in my
most difficult hours.
Your beloved Son
Jesus Christ
gives us all that we need
— His body, blood, soul
and divinity —
to follow His path to
Heaven.
With your maternal love
and by the power of the
Holy Spirit, may I stay true
to our Lord's will
in all the days of my life.
Amen*

Dear Angel,

My journey is clouded with confusion and anxiety. Life changes so fast and I do not understand all that is happening in our world today. Do not let the events of the day weaken my resolve to live a holy life. Help me to remain steady as I try to draw closer to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Clear a way for me so I may run to Mary, our Blessed Mother, who is lives in unity with the Holy Trinity and will guide me on the path to holiness. May faith, hope, and love give me confidence, especially in times of fear, confusion, and doubt, so that my life can be united with the will of God for as long as I live. Amen.



Our Purpose

How often, especially in times of crisis, do we feel tricked by God? We think we have been duped into believing that all will be well if we just have faith in the Almighty. In fact, when bad times hit, we feel abandoned and betrayed.

Even Jesus Christ felt abandoned when He said from His cross, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?!” [Matthew 27:46] However, as we learn from Jesus, God does not abandon His children, nor does He try to fool us. We fool ourselves if we think we can get through life without suffering. Whether it is physical pain, illness, emotional distress, or all of the above, each of us will come face to face with suffering—because that is part of life.

Sometimes we bring suffering upon ourselves by the way we live and the choices we make. Then there are times when life is turned upside down and inside out through no misdeed of our own; we are left wondering “Why?” We are not always going to understand the events in our lives. It is more important that we do not allow those events and the questions they conjure up to block us in our journey towards holiness and Heaven. The key to entering the Kingdom of God is in the way we respond to life and what we experience in life.

Truly, Mary our Blessed Mother did not allow events in her life—even the most painful one of seeing her Son die on the cross—to stop her on her journey. What Mary did not understand, she pondered and with the grace of God, every event in Mary’s earthly life served a purpose—to draw her closer to God’s loving embrace. That embrace—that unity with the Holy Trinity—gave Mary the strength to overcome her own pain and to share God’s love in this world, especially with those in great need.

St. John Paul II wrote that suffering is the instrument by which love is released in the act of caring and healing. We witnessed God’s love through people helping people, regardless of their own sufferings, in the recent tragedies that have hit our nation and changed so many lives. These devastating events remind us that we are put on this earth to serve a purpose—to love one another as God loves us. When we unite ourselves with the Holy Trinity, we receive the treasure of God’s infinite love; so great it must be shared.

When the Prophet Jeremiah said “You duped me O Lord” [Jeremiah 20:7], Jeremiah was amazed at God’s strength and his own burning desire to spread God’s Word. Despite his own suffering, Jeremiah remained confident in God. Therefore, let us use every moment in our lives to strengthen our union with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and then let us share the sweetness of God’s love with those in greater need than ourselves.

Journey to Our Lady

is published five times a year to help readers develop a closer relationship to Mary our Blessed Mother.

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