

THE BULLETIN

“So the faith was planted: so it must be restored.”

Eight Pond Place, Oyster Bay, NY 11771

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Mary, Our Mother

Adapted from a sermon by The Most Rev. Clarence Kelly
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During May we celebrate Mother's Day. On this day our thoughts go readily to our mothers, whether they be living or dead. On this day, in a distinctive way, we bestow our love upon them. We thank them. We offer special prayers for them to Our Blessed Lord and Savior, Who knows by experience what it is to have a loving and devoted Mother. The bond between a mother and a child is unique. It reflects in a most wondrous fashion the procession of the Word of God from the Mind of God. Our mothers brought us forth. They nurtured us. They endured no little suffering for us. We love them and they love us in a manner that is truly unique. Similarly, on Mother's Day and during the month of May, our thoughts go quite as readily to our other Mother. They turn quickly and affectionately to our heavenly Mother, who is also the Mother of God. She it was who brought us forth in grace on Calvary in much pain. To her we were given by the dying Savior as He hung on the deathbed of the cross.

St. Alphonsus Liguori tells the story of a certain man who fell into mortal sin. The saint does not say what the sin was, but we do know it was a terrible sin of which the poor man was very ashamed. He was so ashamed that he thought it impossible to confess it. Yet, he was tormented with guilt, so much so that he became truly desperate. From desperation he fell into despair, so he contemplated suicide. One day he actually went to the river to drown himself. At the very moment he was going to do it, he received a great grace that stopped him from carrying out this horrible deed. But still, he could not bring himself to go to confession. Instead, he

begged God to forgive him without confession. He went home from the river, rescued from death, but still tormented. One night in his sleep, he felt someone shake his arm and heard a voice which said, “Go to confession.” He was encouraged by this, so he went to the church to seek a priest. But once there, his courage left him and he did not confess. On another night, he again heard the same voice. He returned to the church, but when he got there, he felt that he would rather die than confess his sin. He was going to leave again without approaching the confessional, but he thought of the Blessed Mother, so before returning home, he went to recommend himself to her. He knelt down before her image and fervently prayed for her assistance. In a moment, he received a very powerful grace. There was no apparition. Nothing spectacular had occurred on the outside, but inwardly he was moved. The Blessed Virgin obtained a grace from her Divine Son for the poor troubled man which seemed to overwhelm him. His paralyzing fear disappeared. His common sense returned. His perspective was restored. St. Alphonsus says, “He immediately got up, called a confessor, and weeping bitterly through the grace which he had received from Mary, made an entire confession of his sins. He afterwards declared that he experienced greater satisfaction than he would have experienced had he obtained all the treasures of the world.” (*Glories of Mary*, p. 532)

In Genesis, we read: “God made two lights; a greater light to rule the day; and a lesser light to rule the night” (Gen. 1:16). The greater light is the sun, which

rules the day. By its light the earth is warmed and we are able to see. It gives life to the earth. It sustains that life and keeps the earth in a fixed orbit around itself and on its steady course. The lesser light is the moon, which lightens the night and, as we have recently learned from scientists, stabilizes the earth on its axis. St. Alphonsus says that the sun is an image for Christ, Who is the Life and Light of the world. The moon is an image of Our Lady, who has no light apart from the light given to her by the sun, but who wondrously reflects the light and glory of her Son, and who is used by Him to enlighten the darkness of sinners by her motherly solicitude. St. Alphonsus says, "Christ is the greater light to rule the just, and Mary the lesser to rule sinners." (Ibid., p. 93) He goes on, "...the sun is a figure of Jesus Christ, whose light is enjoyed by the just who live in the clear day of Divine grace.... The moon is a figure of Mary, by whose means those who are in the night of sin are enlightened." (Ibid., p. 93) Pope Innocent III said, "Whoever is in the night of sin, let him cast his eyes on the moon, let him implore Mary." (Ibid., pp. 93-94)

In the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, we invoke her under the title of "Refuge of Sinners." In ancient times in Judea there were cities called cities of refuge. Certain types of criminals could flee to these cities for refuge and as long as they were in them, they were safe. They were able to avoid the punishments that could be inflicted on them by the law. In our day, there is only one such city. That city is Mary. She is given to us by Christ as the Refuge of Sinners and as our Mother. "Behold thy Mother," He says. It is for this reason and others, as well, that Our Lady is called our Mother and the city of God by the saints. Quoting the Psalms, they say: "Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God." (Ibid., p. 94) Yet while Our Lady is a city of refuge, there is a difference between those ancient cities of refuge and her. It is that in those ancient cities of refuge, protection was not extended to every sort of crime. But in Mary, who is our city of refuge, "...all sinners, without exception, find refuge for every sin that they may have committed, provided only that they go there to seek for this protection. She says: 'I am the city of refuge to all who fly to me.'" (Ibid., p. 94) We also see Our Lady in the words of Jeremias the prophet who said, "Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the fenced city, and let us be silent there." St. Albert the

Great says this fenced city is the Most Blessed Virgin. Go to her, the saints say, and she shall go to Jesus for you. Her Son shall look upon her as He looked upon her from His cross, and He shall give her whatever she asks. St. Ephrem says of Our Lady: "Thou art the advocate of sinners, and of all who are unprotected." (Ibid., p. 95)

In the revelations of St. Bridget, Our Lady is called the "Star preceding the sun." (Ibid., p. 96) By this we are given to understand that when devotion to the Blessed Mother begins to appear in the soul of the sinner, "...it is a certain mark that before long God will enrich it with His grace." (Ibid., p. 96) St. Alphonsus says, "Imagine a tempestuous sea, into which sinners have already fallen from the ship of Divine grace. They are dashed about by remorse for their sins and the fear of divine judgment. They are without light and on the point of despair. At this point Our Lord says: 'Behold thy mother.' Behold the Star of the Sea. O poor lost sinners, despair not! Raise up your eyes, and cast them on this beautiful star. Breathe again with confidence, for she will save you from the tempest and will guide you into the port of salvation." (Ibid., p. 97)

The Blessed Mother is called the refuge of those who have offended God. She is the consolation of those oppressed with temptation. She is all mercy, and sweetness, and she is these things "not only to the just, but also to despairing sinners; so that no sooner does she perceive them coming to her, and seeking her help from their hearts, than she aids them, welcomes them, and obtains their pardon from her Son." (Ibid., p. 97) She does not know how to despise anyone. She denies her protection to none. "She consoles all, and she is no sooner called upon than she helps whoever it may be that invokes her." (Ibid., p. 97) As a true mother, she draws her children away from sin and unto Christ the only Savior of the world. This month, show yourself a true child of such a mother. Pray her Rosary each day. Pray to her in times of temptation. Pray to her each morning and night. Run to her in all of your needs, and do not doubt her compassionate love for you. Your great need will earn for your petition a special place in her tender heart, and she in turn will obtain from the Sacred Heart of her Son the answer to your prayer.