

St. Mary The Mother of God

I find myself unworthy of talking about this most holy Saint who reached the highest levels of holiness and righteousness.

I find myself before a sea with no borders.. And who can reach the depths of this sea ?

We try to follow the example of St. Mary by leading a life of holiness. On that said St. Peter, "But as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conducts; since it is written You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1Peter 1:15-17)

Let's learn from her self-control, chastity and purity. St. Peter says: "that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. (II Peter 1:4-7)

The Virgin Mary enjoyed all these virtues. She endured injustice with steadfastness, and she offered brotherly affection from the onset of her life. She paid Elizabeth that visit which was filled with blessings. St. Paul wants to elevate people to that level of purity when he says: "I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband".

(II Corinthians 11:2)

Through her hard work in seeking virtue... through her fasting and prayers, Virgin Mary became worthy of God's great gifts and was flooded by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, she wore the spiritual attire she longed for and was qualified to be the Mother of God.

The Virgin Mary has not been born like that... a Saint. She labored and suffered for righteousness to obtain this holiness. St. Mary lived the life of gentleness and was a living example of the verses: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, Blessed are the meek."

So, shall we learn gentleness from St. Mary? Gentleness is one of the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit listed by St. Paul "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22)

One of St. Mary's many other virtues is meekness and humbleness. When she received the good news from the Angel Gabriel, who told her she was chosen to be the Mother of God: "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you, for you have found favor with God and the power of the most high will overshadow you". She humbled herself and said "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:37).

Humility is a great virtue, very powerful at the face of evil. It does not only defeat the devil, but also crushes him. St. Peter urges us to be humble by saying: "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility towards one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you" (1 Peter 3:22). St. Mary herself said "For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaid, he has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree" (Luke 1: 48-52). And Jesus said "and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

St. Mary lived a life of patience. Wasn't Joseph in doubt about her pregnancy to the extent that he resolved to divorce her quietly if it wasn't for the angel of the Lord who appeared to him in a dream saying, that which is conceived in her is of the holy spirit.

She also patiently endured the pain of seeing her son tortured by the Jews who tormented him in every possible way and had it in their hearts to kill him. Wasn't she in great pain when she heard their false testimonies against Jesus that they may put him to death? How deep was her pain when she saw her beloved son being stripped of his clothes, a scarlet robe put upon him, and a crown of thorns plaited on his head. What about her feelings when they mocked him, whipped, and kicked him until he fell under the cross, or when they nailed him to the cross. She endured in patience to teach us patience in tribulations. A virtue that is so great, but that is often neglected and forgotten, thus leading people to constant complaining and whimpering.

Jesus said "and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15), "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19). St. Paul said "We

rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope doesn't disappoint us" (Romans 5:3).

St Mary taught us and still teaches us many virtues. She is our intercessor who prays for us before her son, and whose prayers are undoubtedly accepted by her beloved son Jesus Christ. Her miracles in the church have continued from generation to generation.

Her miracles in the "Zeitoun Church" are still fresh in minds. I recall a miracle recorded by historians: On the days of Pope Alexandros, the 43rd Pope, when Abdollah, son of Abdel Malek, son of Marawan, was designated ruler of Egypt, by his brother Al-Waleed, he mistreated Christians to a great extent and persecuted the monks there. Once upon entering a monastery in Upper Egypt, he saw a picture of the Virgin Mary and asked whose picture was it. Upon telling him that it was the picture of Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, he was infuriated, he became very outraged and he spat on the picture saying "If I lived, I'll eliminate the Christians and erase any memory of them".

Later, during that night he saw a dream that disturbed him greatly. He wrote to his brother saying I was very disturbed yesterday when I saw in my dream a man sitting on a great throne, whose face was shining brighter than the sun. Around him I saw hundreds of soldiers carrying their weapons, you and I were tied behind him. When I asked about that great king, I was told he is Jesus Christ, The King of the Christians, whom I mocked yesterday. Then one of his soldiers came to me, and hit me in the side with a spear, so I died immediately.

The Ruler Al-Waleed was very saddened and disturbed by his brother's message. While his brother lay sick with a fever that took his life right away, Al-Waleed, followed him to his death in forty days. That ruler, Abdollah son of Abdel Malek was the ruler who prohibited the use of the Coptic language in the government offices of Egypt. May the blessings and the intercessions of Virgin Mary always be with us. Amen.

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