
MI MONTHLY FORMATION (5)
In Fr. Kolbe's Marian and Missionary Spirituality



MAY 2007 PRAYER INTENTION:

That our love for the Immaculata will enrich us
to live our lives all for God like Mary.

Dear Friends and MI Members,

May is the most beautiful month in Poland. Nature seems to explode in color after the dreariness of the grey skies and the harsh and long winters. Almost every house has a brilliant yellow flowering stalk or the flaming orange azalea that often reminded me of the burning bush from which God spoke to Moses. In this month dedicated to our Heavenly Mother we also celebrate our love for our earthly mothers. The liturgy explodes with the light and grace of the solemnities' of the Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost and the feast of the Visitation. How appropriate then that our theme for May is *Contemplation and Action in the Life of the Church*? Isn't that what these events explicitly imply?

Christ has risen from the tomb. Before ascending to the Father he returns to his disciples, to encourage them and further teach them; and to confirm Peter in his role as the Head of the Church (Jn 21:15-19). Christ gives the apostles their apostolic mandate; "*Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.*" (Mk 16:15-16)

But the apostles do not immediately heed Christ's mandate... Why is this? They have not yet received the fullness of the Gift of the Father. So, they gather in the Upper Room, which tradition says, was where the Last Supper was celebrated... to await the Advocate promised by Our Lord: "*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.*" (Jn 14:26) The apostles were heartened when Christ was present but as soon as he left they became aware of their human weakness and sinfulness. They didn't feel up to the task. As they gathered they prayed: "*Together they devoted themselves to constant prayer. There were some women in their company, and Mary the mother of Jesus...*" (Acts 1:14)

The apostles, the first leaders of the Church, found solace in gathering in prayer around Mary. They found solace in her presence, her grace, her words and her teaching them about the childhood of Jesus, about the mercy of her Son (*Redemptoris Mater*). John must have told them that at the foot of the cross Mary had been entrusted to his (their) care. In the presence of Mary they felt the presence of Christ. Mary, also, knew the gift for which they were waiting and added her fervor in prayer for this gift. From her Immaculate Conception she was the Spouse of the Holy Spirit who, at the Annunciation, overshadowed her with the gift of the Incarnate Word. In the Upper Room she played a most particular role of preparing the apostles for this most beautiful gift that would fill them with the grace to preach to all nations, as her Son had mandated them.

“When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enables them to proclaim.” (Acts 2:1-4)

The apostles, filled with the Spirit, burst from the upper room and began to preach. Gone were the fears, the uncertainty. The perils were the same. The threat of martyrdom was prevalent. But the Spirit of the Lord rested upon them. They could now heed his mandate to go into the entire world and preach the Good News with enthusiasm and confidence.

Yet, years before all this came to be in time, a young virgin woman was to live out these mysteries. The same words that Christ was to speak to the apostles; he spoke through the angel, *“Do not be afraid...”* (Lk 1:30) The young virgin, named Mary, while in prayer, was overshadowed by the gift of the Holy Spirit and became the Mother of the Incarnate Word. Thereupon, she immediately left the comfort of her home to go in haste to her cousin Elizabeth who was in need. Not only did Mary go to help in a material way, but most importantly to bear Christ to Elizabeth and her household. (Cf Lk 1:39-45) And upon encountering Elizabeth Mary’s heart bursts forth in praise and song; *“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior....”* (Lk 1:46-47)

The Church has no other itinerary but to live out these mysteries, as did Mary and the first apostles. Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* 35: *“...the canticle of the ‘Magnificat,’ having welled up from the depths of Mary’s faith at the Visitation, ceaselessly re-echoes in the heart of the Church down the centuries.”* In the Church’s contemplation – all the prayer of the Church, in her liturgy and in the soul of each member, the Spirit descends and moves the Church to action – caring for the poor, teaching, healing the sick...defending the weak and helpless. The Church sings the praises of the Lord and wants each member, too, to sing the praises of the Lord for all he has done for and in us.

Let us live this month intimately united to the mysteries being unfolded in the Church’s liturgical celebrations. Let us gather around our May altars, in our parishes, our homes, our bedrooms and pray to Mary to prepare us, the Church, for the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost so that our minds and souls may be renewed in the teachings of Christ. And let us be prompt to his stirrings in our souls, in the service of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The gospel readings before Pentecost will remind of us Christ’s ultimate plea and command, *“Love one another as I love you.”* (Jn 15:12) Fr. Kolbe fulfilled the command of Christ. Can we MI members?

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PERSONAL REFLECTION AND READING:

- ❖ Meditate on the daily readings for Mass and discuss them with someone – family members, someone at work, or in the parish.
- ❖ Read *Symbiosis: Contemplation and Action*, pgs. 27-30.
- ❖ Read Parts II and III of *Redemptoris Mater* by Pope John Paul II and let your hearts be filled with a renewed love for the Church.
- ❖ It's May! Does your parish have a May altar? If not, can you suggest preparing one for the month? Have a May altar in your home where the family can gather to honor her, especially in the recitation of the holy Rosary. Each member can take turns making sure she has fresh flowers. Kolbe says: "...the Immaculate repays liberally even the least exhibition of honor to Her."
- ❖ Begin your daily examination of conscience praying the words of Mary's Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55) and reflect on how you have fulfilled or not fulfilled them always remembering to pray for the Church.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- MAY -

- 1 St. Joseph the Worker
 - 3 St Philip and James, Feast
 - 6 5th Sunday of Easter
 - 10 Bl. Damien of Moloka'i
 - 13 6th Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day
 - 14 St. Matthias, Feast
 - 17 Solemnity of the **ASCENSION OF THE LORD**
 - 20 7th Sunday of Easter
 - 27 **PENTECOST SUNDAY**, Solemnity
 - 28 Memorial Day
 - 31 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Feast
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- 5 *MI Teen Day* at the Kolbe Missionary Center in West Covina, CA
 - 19 *Rosary Bowl* at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, CA (6-9:00pm)
 - 25-27 *MI Young Adults Retreat* at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside, CA
 - 28 *20th Annual MI Family Picnic* at Shabarum Park, Rowland Heights, CA

QUOTE:

“Given Mary’s relationship to the Church as an exemplar, the Church is close to her and seeks to become like her: ‘Imitating the Mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves with virginal purity and integral faith, a firm hope, and a sincere charity. Mary is thus present in the mystery of the Church as a model. But the Church’s mystery also consists in generating people to a new and immortal life: thus is her motherhood in the Holy Spirit. And here Mary is not only the model and figure of the Church; she is much more. For, ‘with maternal love she cooperates in the birth and development’ of the sons and daughters of Mother Church.” --*Redemptoris Mater*, #44.

“Souls which know the Immaculate more intimately and love Her more ardently, strenuously endeavor to make their consciences more pure and delicate, in order to resemble Her more, be pleasing to Her, make Her happy.” --*St. Maximilian Kolbe*