



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

**MAY 2006 PRAYER INTENTION:**

**That, we learn from you to magnify the Lord our Savior who casts down the mighty from their thrones and lifts up the lowly that we make of your solicitude our style of life**

Dear Friends,

For the following three months, we will focus our attention on the “second pillar” of our Kolbean spirituality, **the obedience of faith**, particularly on Mary’s obedience of faith to God’s will.

Let us begin by concentrating on **FAITH** as the assent of our intellect, mind and heart to God who reveals his love for us. In a beautiful document concerning Mary<sup>1</sup> the Bishops of the USA wrote: “The Gospels portray her as a woman who walked by faith from the time of the Annunciation to Pentecost. . . . The Mother of Jesus appears as totally responsive to the Father's will, always one with her Son’s purposes, led by the Holy Spirit in everything. ‘*Be it done unto me according to your word*’ (Lk 1:38) was the act of faith of the Lord’s handmaid, a sign of her unwavering service to God in every detail of her life. In the Scriptures, ‘faith’ means surrender of heart and body as well as of mind and intellect. St. Luke writes of Mary ‘*reflecting in her heart*’ (Lk 2:19, 51). St. John records the advice she exemplified in her own life: ‘*Do whatever he tells you*’ (Jn 2:5). The Gospels provide few details of Mary’s life; but they do delineate a remarkable portrait of the woman who gave herself wholeheartedly to her Son and His mission in perfect faith, love and obedience. What Mary began on earth in association with the saving mission of Jesus, she continues still, in union with the risen Christ” (n. 69).

**DEFINITION**

In looking for a definition of faith, we find that it is

- An allegiance to duty or a person
- A belief and trust in and loyalty to God
- An inner attitude, conviction, or trust relating man to a supreme God or ultimate salvation. In religious traditions stressing divine grace, it is the inner certainty or attitude of love granted by God.

It comes from the Latin word *fides*; akin to *fidere* to trust.

In what does faith consist? According to Saint Augustine: “If you have the simple desire to know God, you already have faith.” The Constitution *Dei Verbum*<sup>2</sup> explains that by faith, “man freely commits his entire self to God, making ‘the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals’” (n. 5). Thus faith is not only the intellect’s adherence to the truth revealed, but also a

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<sup>1</sup> *Behold Your Mother* is a pastoral letter addressed to the dearly beloved of the Church in the United States. The bishops promulgated the document on November 21, 1973, the ninth anniversary of *Lumen Gentium*, The Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. As the document states, the bishops wished to share with the American people their “faith in the truths concerning her.” (BYM 1) At the same time, the bishops wished “together with you to express publicly our filial love for her.” (BYM 1)

<sup>2</sup> Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican II, Nov. 18, 1965.

submission of the will and a gift of self to God revealing himself. It is a stance that involves one's entire existence.

### IMITATING MARY, THE "VIRGO FIDELIS" (THE FAITHFUL VIRGIN)

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1: 38) Mary's Fiat at the Annunciation allows God to inaugurate a new Covenant with humankind, even more wonderful than the one ratified with the people of Israel. In these words of the Virgin we hear an echo of the words spoken by the entire people of Israel when they accepted the gift of the Covenant on Mount Sinai. "All that the LORD has said, we will heed and do" (Ex 24: 7): these words remain memorable in the Jewish spirituality of every age because they are like the "Yes" with which Israel accepted in order to unite itself to God as a bride to her husband. The faith of Israel matured on Mary's lips.

In his Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* John Paul II states that "certainly the Annunciation is the culminating moment of Mary's faith ... but it is also the point of departure from which her whole 'journey toward God' begins, her whole *pilgrimage of faith*" (RM 14). Mary was the person closest to her Son, yet her relationship with Him was a mystery of faith. Mary who is called blessed because 'she has believed' (cf. Lk 1:45), continued to believe day after day amidst all her trials and adversities. Between her and her Son there was a kind of "veil" through which she had to draw near to the truth about her Son and to live in intimacy with His mystery.

Many times Mary could not understand God's inscrutable ways (cf. Rom 11: 33), but she conformed herself to them in the dim light of faith, accepting fully and wholeheartedly everything that was decreed in the divine plan. "Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross," as *Lumen Gentium* states,<sup>3</sup> where Mary's Fiat reached its zenith.

Mary's 'Yes' prepared and made possible the response of the entire Church to God's call to holiness. In fact, "**Mary**, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, stands before us as an exemplar of faithful obedience, and her '*Be it done to me according to your word*' is the grace-filled response each of us is called to make to God, both personally and communally, as the Church, the body of Christ. It is as a figure of the Church, her arms uplifted in prayer and praise, her hands open in receptivity and availability to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that we are one with **Mary** as she magnifies the Lord."<sup>4</sup>

Dear friends, after the example of St. Maximilian Kolbe, let us repeat daily our 'Yes' to God's will in union with Mary so that our lives may become a response of perfect love, a mature and free response which will accompany us unto the cross, giving meaning and value even to the most difficult moments of our lives.

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<sup>3</sup> LG 58

<sup>4</sup> Pontifical Council for promoting Christian unity, Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, Preface by the Co-Chairmen, A. Brunett and P. Carnley

**Church's Teaching**

**From the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)**

**Abraham—"father of all who believe"**

**145** The Letter to the Hebrews, in its great eulogy of the faith of Israel's ancestors, lays special emphasis on Abraham's faith: "By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go." By faith, he lived as a stranger and pilgrim in the Promised Land. By faith, Sarah was given to conceive the son of the promise. And by faith Abraham offered his only son in sacrifice.

**146** Abraham thus fulfills the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen": "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. "Because he was "strong in his faith," Abraham became the "father of all who believe."

**147** The Old Testament is rich in witnesses to this faith. The Letter to the Hebrews proclaims its eulogy of the exemplary faith of the ancestors who "received divine approval." Yet "God had foreseen something better for us": the grace of believing in his Son Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

**Mary—"Blessed is she who believed"**

**148** The Virgin Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. By faith Mary welcomes the tidings and promise brought by the angel Gabriel, believing that "with God nothing will be impossible" and so giving her assent: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be [done] to me according to your word." Elizabeth greeted her: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." It is for this faith that all generations have called Mary blessed.

**149** Throughout her life and until her last ordeal when Jesus her Son died on the cross, Mary's faith never wavered. She never ceased to believe in the fulfillment of God's word. And so the Church venerates in Mary the purest realization of faith.

**165** It is then we must turn to the *witnesses of faith*: to Abraham, who "in hope . . . believed against hope"; to the Virgin Mary, who, in "her pilgrimage of faith," walked into the "night of faith" in sharing the darkness of her son's suffering and death; and to so many others: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12: 1-2).

**166** Faith is a personal act—the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.

**Prayer**

*O Virgin Mary, to you we commend our young people, in particular the youth called to follow your Son more closely. You know the difficulties, the struggles, the obstacles they must face. Assist them to utter their 'yes' to the divine call, as you did at the invitation of the angel. Draw them to your heart so that they can understand with you the beauty and the joy that awaits them when the Omnipotent calls them into his intimacy, to make them witnesses of his Love and make them able to inspire the Church with their consecration.*

*O Virgin Mary, help us to rejoice with you in seeing the love brought by your Son received, treasured and returned. Grant that we may see even in our own days the wonders of the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit.*

John Paul II

### Wisdom for our time

28. The episode of the Annunciation concludes with a double tribute to Mary's faith. The better-known is Mary's word of consent; her maternal "yes" was also her act of faith: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk 1:38). These words have echoed and re-echoed in Christian liturgy and literature from earliest times. ...

29. Less well known is the delicate praise of Mary's faith embodied in the final words of Gabriel: "for nothing is impossible with God" (Lk 1:37). This phrase is taken from the Genesis story of Abraham, great OT "man of faith." For Christians, too, Abraham is "our father in faith," as we still call him in Eucharistic Prayer I. The memory of Abraham permeates the opening chapters of St. Luke, as it does the epistles to the Romans, the Galatians and the Hebrews, and his name and faith are commemorated repeatedly in Christian liturgical prayer.

30. There are remarkable likenesses between Abraham and Mary, especially in the accounts of the birth of Isaac, child of promise, and the virginal conception of Jesus, holy Child of Mary. Abraham, Old Testament man of faith, illuminates our understanding of Mary, New Testament woman of faith. Abraham, our father in faith, can teach us much about Mary, our mother in faith.

*Behold Your Mother*, Pastoral Letter, Bishops USA

### More Resources

**Bible:** Gen 12: 1-4; Ex 24: 3, 7; Heb 11; Rom 4: 10-25. Mt 6:30; 8: 10,13,26; 9: 2, 22, 29; 13: 58; 15: 28; 17: 20; 21: 21; Mk 2: 5; 4: 40; 5: 34; 9: 23, 24; 10: 52; 11: 22, 24.

**Marian:** Lk 1:38, 45; 11: 28; Jn 2: 5

**Benedict XVI**, Message for the XLIII World Day of Prayer for Vocations, May 7, 2006 - at

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages)

**John Paul II**, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, March 25, 1987, nn. 12-19.

*Faith in Christ*, General Audience of Wednesday, 18 March 1998

**Arthur Calkins**, *Totus Tuus*, p. 238

**CCC (Catechism)** 273, 494, 506, 511, 534, 964, 967-968, 972, 2617, 2622, 2719

**MI General Statutes n. 8** [www.consecration.com](http://www.consecration.com)

“The LORD gives perfect peace to those whose *faith* is firm.” (Is 26:3)

### MI Youth-Beat

#### From Benedict XVI

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119 [118]:105)*

My dear young friends, I urge you to become familiar with the Bible, and to have it at hand so that it can be your compass pointing out the road to follow. By reading it, you will learn to know Christ. Note what Saint Jerome said in this regard: “Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (*PL* 24,17; cf. *Dei Verbum*, 25). This helps us to keep our hearts attentive to the presence of Christ whose word is “a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Pt 1:19). Reading, study and meditation of the Word should then flow into a life of consistent fidelity to Christ and his teachings.

From this moment onwards, my dear young friends, in a climate of constant listening to the word of God, call on the Holy Spirit, *Spirit of fortitude and witness*, that you may be able to proclaim the Gospel without fear even to the ends of the earth. Our Lady was present in the cenacle with the Apostles as they waited for Pentecost. May she be your mother and guide. May she teach you to receive the word of God, to treasure it and to ponder on it in your heart (cf *Lk* 2:19) as she did throughout her life. May she encourage you to declare your ‘yes’ to the Lord as you live “the obedience of faith.” May she help you to remain strong in the faith, constant in hope, persevering in charity, always attentive to the word of God.

*Message to the Youth, 2/22/06*

### Discussion corner

- Do you describe yourself as a person of faith? Why?
- How does Mary’s faith help you?
- When is faith most needed?
- Are you willing to submit everything to God’s will?
- Are you committed to give witness to your faith no matter what opposition or refusal you may encounter?
- Do you trust in God?

### What true love really means

*A friend gave birth to a baby with a rare condition that has rendered her severely handicapped. She is not expected to live much past her tenth birthday. I just can't understand why God does that. If life has a purpose, what is the purpose of such a short and sad life?*

Every birth is a gamble. A soul enters the world innocent and pure. But it may not stay that way. This world is a maze of diverging pathways, both good and evil, and the choice is ours which way we go. Once a soul enters a body, it is free and therefore vulnerable to corruption. While acts of good elevate the soul, every act of evil makes a blemish on the soul. Some souls are so pure, it simply isn't worth the gamble. These souls are too precious to risk being compromised by life in a body. They are too high to come down to this world. But the other option, not to be sent down at all, to never reach this world, would mean that we would miss out on meeting these holy and lofty souls and hearing their message.

So these souls do come down. But in order to be protected from the potential evils of an earthly existence, they are sent down into a body that will not compromise their holiness. They enter this world in a form that is above sin, above evil. From a purely physical perspective we call them disabled or handicapped; from the perspective of the soul they are protected. They will never sin. Their sojourn in this world is often brief, and in terms of this world may seem sad. But they have retained their purity. And they have fulfilled their mission. These special souls remind us that true love doesn't need a reason. We often love others for what they give us - we love our children because they are cute, smart, and high achievers; we love our spouse for the pleasure and contentment they give us; we love our parents because they care for us. This is love, but it is not pure.

When a child is born that will never achieve worldly success, cannot provide the usual source of pride for her parents, all extraneous reasons to love her fall away and what's left is the purest love that there can be. These children are lovable not because of what they do for you, and not because of what they will one day become, but simply because they are.

These pure souls remind us what love should be. Only such a pure and holy soul can elicit such a pure and holy emotion. We can only stand in awe of them and of the parents and friends who care for them. And we can only thank them all, for giving us a glimpse of what true love really means.

*Rabbi Aron Moss, Sydney, Australia*

### FROM THE WRITINGS OF ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

“Faith is an act of reason, which, commanded by will and moved by divine grace, recognizes a revealed truth” (SK 1202).

“Learn to see Jesus in others and accept everything as if it had been offered or permitted by Jesus Himself; serve your neighbor as you would serve Jesus” (SK 963).

“A means of capital importance in maintaining peace consists in contemplating everyone in the light of faith and finding Jesus in everyone” (SK 987 F).

“God said: ‘Let it be’ and creation came to be. A creature, Mary, said: ‘Be it done unto me’ and God came to be in her.

Creatures repeat: ‘Let it be’ and submit their will to that of the Immaculate One. A loving action and reaction.”

“I do not believe that there can be more than one truth about the same question.

I am not capable of believing that there is no God, Omniscient, Almighty, Sovereign Good and sole Creator of all things. I do not believe that the universe was formed by itself [or] by chance. I do not believe that man has no soul, and is a result only of blind and accidental physical-chemical forces.

Neither do I believe that everything ends with death.

I do not believe that no one under the sun exists that does not want happiness, the greatest happiness possible, happiness without limits, that is to say... God” (SK 1169, 1186, 1276).

### Dates to Remember

- 1** *St. Joseph the Worker*
- 7** FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER. 43<sup>RD</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations
- 13** **Anniversary of the first apparition of the Bl. Virgin Mary at Fatima.** Plenary Indulgence for MIers.
- 14** FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER. Mother's Day.
- 25or28** ASCENSION OF THE LORD
- 29** Memorial Day (USA)
- 31** **Visitation of the Virgin Mary.** Feast.