



33 Days

Spiritual Warfare and Virtue

Introduction

What is Consecration?

Consecration means to set something aside for a particular purpose. When we walk into a church, we immediately get the sense that something special happens there. We can feel the presence of the sacred within the building. The building itself, the altar, the tabernacle, statues, art, and the sacred elements used at the Lord's table all contribute to the feeling of the sacred. That is because all these things have been consecrated to use for religious purposes and are not to be used for common or profane purposes.

When a church is closed, there is a process that is followed whereby the sacred vessels are removed and the building is decommissioned or “desacralized.” The Code of Canon law gives the local bishop the authority to return the building “to profane but not sordid use.” (CIC 1222). Understanding this contrast elucidates the importance of the sacred effect of consecration.

Profanity is the use of something for other than its intended use. In the temple of Jerusalem, removing the sacred elements from the Holy of Holies was to profane them. Think about the types of profane language prevalent today. Many of these words refer to things that should happen in the bathroom or the bedroom; things that have a proper place but are profaned by bringing them out into the world.

If we can consecrate buildings and common objects, why not also ourselves? Human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. When we are baptized, we are consecrated for a sacred purpose, not profane or sordid use. When we sin, we profane our bodies by using them for purposes other than the sacred. We can combat the effect of sin in our lives by enlisting the help of Mary and the saints.

Worship and Veneration

Before we explore the idea of invoking the assistance of Mary and the other saints, we first must gain an understanding of how the saints, and Mary in particular, relate to God and to us.

First and foremost, it is important to state that Mary and all the saints are human beings who are created in the image and likeness of God, the same as every one of us, and every human that has ever lived. Their status as creatures means that they have no innate powers attributable to themselves. Those who are recognized by the Church as saints, lived lives of holiness and virtue and the Church in her wisdom has discerned that each one of them now resides in heaven. From their place in heaven, before the throne of God, they have the unique ability to intercede with God on our behalf. But no matter what favor we receive by asking for the intercession of the saints, God alone is the arbiter of all grace, and the giver of all gifts. Saints to whom miracles are attributed are conduits of grace, but God alone is the source.

Furthermore, any honor or veneration paid to the saints can never ascend to the same level of worship that is due to God alone. The word for this is *latria*, which is derived from Greek and means praise or



worship. We worship God the Father, the creator, the source of all goodness, truth, and beauty. We worship God the Son; our Redeemer; our Savior. We worship God the Holy Spirit, our Advocate.

Another word derived from Greek - *dulia* - is used to describe the relationship we have with the saints. We have great respect for those who have shown us by their lives and their witness of faith how we should strive for holiness and perfection.

Since Mary is the greatest of the saints - God's masterpiece - we owe her the most respect and honor. The prefix 'hyper' means 'more than' or 'the most.' Hence the word we use to describe our regard for Mary is hyperdulia - the highest form of veneration that can be given to a creature.

Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare is a reality that modern man likes to dismiss as backward or superstitious. In fact, it has been quipped many times that the devil's greatest trick was to convince people that he doesn't exist. But as sacred scripture tells us:

"Be sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8).

The battle between good and evil has been waged since the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. It will continue until the very end. In the book of Revelation, it is Mary who is depicted crushing the head of the serpent, the same serpent who was the tempter in the Garden.

We must arm ourselves for this battle. Ephesians 6 tells us to put on the Armor of God, and to wield the Sword of the Spirit. Jesus did not leave us empty handed. He gave us the gift of His Church which gives us the tools we need. Among these are prayer, fasting and mortification, sacramentals, and sacred scripture. Throughout our 33-day journey, we will learn how to bring the treasury of resources that Holy Mother Church offers us to bear in the fight here on earth.

Consecration to Jesus Through Mary

It would be a mistake to assert that Mary is merely "the best of the best," when it comes to the saints. Beyond having aligned her will completely with the will of God, Mary was also blessed to be "full of grace," from the moment of her conception. That is why the Church gives her the title "The Immaculate Conception." In an act of pure gratuitous gift, God saved Mary from the stain of original sin at the time of her conception.

Mary enjoys a relationship to the Holy Trinity that is unique in the history of all mankind. Her relationship to each person of the Holy Trinity is unique. She is a daughter of God the Father, the mother of God the Son, and the spouse of God the Holy Spirit.

Many of the greatest saints had devotions to Mary and recommended to all the faithful to venerate Mary and ask for her special protection. They are too numerous to list, but they include, St. Dominic, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Louis de Montfort, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Calcutta, and St. John Paul II.

Format



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Introduction

The journey toward consecration day will proceed in four stages as recommended by St. Louis de Montfort. First, we will endeavor to leave the world behind by learning about the seven deadly sins, and the opposing virtues. Second, we seek self-knowledge as we meditate upon the four cardinal and three theological virtues. During the third section, we will learn more about Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows. In the final section, we focus on Jesus and meditate on His seven last words spoken from the cross.

During each phase, we will add new spiritual weapons to our arsenal as we arm ourselves for the spiritual battle that is already being waged around us. We will learn to use the spiritual weapons of prayer, fasting, mortifications, sacramentals, and devotions - especially the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

As we begin, let us invoke the intercession of all the saints, especially those who taught Marian devotion. We ask for their assistance in helping us grow in holiness and devotion to Mary and Jesus. May they accompany us not only during these 33 days, but also throughout our lives.



Section 1

Leaving the World Behind

Day 1: The Seven Deadly Sins

Opening Prayer

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Reflection on Dante and the Seven Deadly Sins

The *Inferno*, by Dante Alighieri, is perhaps his most famous work, but many people don't realize that it is only the first part of a greater work - the *Divine Comedy*. Dante, the author, writes himself into the story as the main character. In the *Inferno*, Dante the Pilgrim descends through the nine circles of hell where he encounters unrepentant sinners of all sorts, and ultimately Satan himself. Dante exits the depths of hell into the southern hemisphere of the earth where he finds himself at the base of the mountain of Purgatory.

As he ascends the slopes of the mountain of Purgatory, Dante once again encounters the souls of sinners, but these are the souls of repentant sinners who amended their lives and are now being purified from the stain of the sins they committed during their earthly lives. Purgatory consists of seven terraces each of which corresponds to one of the seven deadly sins. The repentant sinners are cleansed by a unique trial which is fitting for the cleansing of a particular sin.

The seven deadly sins are categorized by how they offend against love. The first three - pride, envy, and wrath - are sins of perverted love and are directed toward the harm of others. Sloth is deficient love, or failure to do the good as one ought. The final three, avarice or greed, gluttony, and lust, are those of disordered or misdirected love of good things. On each terrace, the souls who were guilty of each sin during their earthly lives undergo a unique punishment while meditating upon the virtue which is opposed to the sin being healed. As an aid to these souls, the Virgin Mary is depicted in art or song as the exemplar of the associated virtue.

We begin our journey toward consecration by reflecting upon how we fall short in each area, and how we may grow in virtue as a way to combat the effect of these sins in our lives. The virtues are arrows in our quiver, our spiritual weapons to wield against the evil one and his temptations. We look to the events from the life of Mary as inspiration for how to live out these virtues.

Spiritual Warfare and Prayer

Our greatest defense, and our greatest weapon in the battle against the evil one, is prayer. The Catholic Church offers us an inexhaustible treasury of resources for prayer. Throughout these 33 days, each day's reading will consist of a Marian prayer, a reflection, a spiritual warfare prayer, and a litany related to the topic for that section. This will help us to develop discipline in prayer while deepening our dedication to the Blessed Mother.



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 1: The Seven Deadly Sins

Whether we realize it or not, we are in a spiritual battle with the devil and his demons. When we sin, our defenses are weakened, and we open ourselves to spiritual attack. This is because sin is a rejection of the grace that God offers to us. Mary, however, is “full of grace” which means there is no crack in her armor for spiritual attack. The evil one is powerless against her because her will is fully aligned with the will of God. This is why exorcists rely on the treasury of Marian prayers offered by the church. Demons are powerless against her.

When Jesus gave Mary to us as our mother, he gave us access to her powerful intercession. Whenever we are under attack, we must turn to our mother and ask for her assistance. By developing a disciplined prayer life that includes devotion to our mother, we arm ourselves for the spiritual battle. All other spiritual weapons that we will bring to bear, will always be accompanied by prayer.

Pray

St. Michael Prayer
Litany of Humility



Day 2: Pride

Opening prayer – Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Reflection on Pride

In the book of Proverbs we hear, “Pride goes before disaster, a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Pr. 16:18). When Satan said to God, “Non servium (I will not serve),” it was a refusal to recognize God as God. It was the first instance of a creature’s denial of the creator. The creature said to the author of life, “I don’t need you. I will make my own way. I will create myself.” Pride is often called the chief sin of all the capital or deadly sins because every other sin that we commit has a component of pride within it. Sin is the creature saying to God, “My will be done.”

The devil tempts us to pride in subtle ways, causing us to think we are better than others because of our social status, possessions, abilities, achievements, knowledge, or position of authority over others. He uses our desires for good things against us. When we recognize a legitimate strength or talent in ourselves, the temptation is to believe that we excel because we are better, more deserving, or because we worked so hard to earn it.

One way in which pride manifests itself in our modern culture is in the obsession with self-improvement. The word “self” illustrates the potential for it to become a prideful, disordered obsession. We hate the way we look. We constantly compare ourselves to others. So we try to remake ourselves in our own image, ignoring the fact that we are each a beautiful, unique, unrepeatable creation that is the very image of God himself.

Striving to become better versions of ourselves is a worthy endeavor when coupled with a desire to become the people that God created us to be. Strengthening and caring for our bodies is a healthy pursuit, but it can easily slip into narcissism if it is not tempered with a recognition of our creatureliness and reliance on God.

Spiritual Weapon – Humility

To work against our prideful tendencies, the spiritual weapon we must employ is the virtue of humility. Humility is simply the recognition of things as they truly are. It is having a proper view of the world. When our world view is rightly ordered, we do not belittle ourselves or dismiss our gifts and talents as unimportant. We recognize that God is the source of all goodness, truth, and beauty in the world. We participate in and enjoy the good things of the world and give thanks to God, our creator. We do not demean ourselves, because we too, are God’s creation.

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.” (C.S. Lewis – Mere Christianity)

Example – Mary at the Annunciation

Our Blessed Mother shows us the proper response to God’s gifts. When the angel Gabriel announced that she would give birth to our Lord, in humility she responded,



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 2: Pride

“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” (Lk 1:38)

Mary recognized her place as a creature and through her response became exalted above all creatures.

How do we combat pride and exercise the virtue of humility?

- Recognize that God is God, and I am not.
- Show gratitude to God and to others.
- Give other people their due and strive to meet their needs.
- Accept ourselves as we are, as God made us.

Pray

St. Michael Prayer
Litany of Humility



Day 3: Envy

Opening prayer – Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Reflection on Envy

Envy goes beyond the mere recognition that other people possess something that we lack. Envy causes regret and sadness at the good fortune of others. When we recognize the gifts and talents of others, we don't merely wish to have what they have, but we want to take it away from them. In extreme cases, we may be even more concerned with ensuring the misfortune of someone else than with acquiring the good for ourselves.

Envy is not restricted to material possessions but extends also to the good fortune and happiness of others. In Canto XIV of the Purgatorio, lines 82-84, a suffering soul regretfully proclaims,

*"My blood was so afire with envy that,
when I had seen a man becoming happy,
the lividness in me was plain to see."*

Envy leads us to hatred of our fellow man, and it also leads us away from God. Motivated by feelings of regret at the good fortune of others, we are tempted to do them harm; to defame their character; to damage their reputation. We become suspicious of them and question how they came to be so fortunate. We lie in wait for any misfortune to befall them and use it to justify our dislike.

Envy, like all sin, does damage to our fellow man, to our relationship with God, and to ourselves as well. Proverb 14:30 states:

"A tranquil body gives peace to the body, but jealousy rots the bones."

Spiritual Weapon – Charity

Theodore Roosevelt famously quipped, "Comparison is the thief of joy." Jesus illuminates this truth in the parable of the landowner and the laborers. The master is generous with all the workers, giving them all the same wage. Those who were hired first are upset that those who only worked for an hour received the same wage. Despite their grumbling, those who worked all day were not diminished in any way by the landowner's generosity. His generosity took nothing from them, but was a pure gratuitous gift.

When we recognize the gifts and talents of others, rather than seeking their misfortune, we should instead seek their good and pray for them. We can combat the preoccupation with possessions and comparison by being generous with the possessions we have. True charity seeks the good of others and to put material goods to use for the good of others and the glory of God. It also forces us to set aside all feelings of envy, because charity is impossible without love and a concern for the other. And gifts given begrudgingly or out of obligation are not charity. Selfless, disinterested, detached love - *agape* in Greek - is willing the good of the other, for their own sake.



Example – Mary at the Wedding of Cana

In the Gospels, Mary is attending a wedding at Cana alongside Jesus and his disciples. Although the Gospel does not tell us much about the couple, it is safe to assume that it was a lavish affair, with much food and revelry, and that the couple and their family spared no expense for the party. Perhaps there would be much to envy about this couple. When they run out of wine, the envious heart may be tempted to laugh, to gossip, or to point out their embarrassment to others.

Mary's Immaculate Heart, however, is moved with pity at their misfortune and she appeals to Jesus to help them in their time of need. She does not revel in their embarrassment or engage in gossip. She looks to Jesus and asks him to perform his first miracle.

How do we combat envy and exercise the virtues of charity, kindness, and generosity?

- Transform “I’m so jealous,” into “I’m happy for you!”
- Give thanks to God for what we have and ask for God’s blessing on others.
- Give generously of our time, talent, and treasure, without expectation of repayment or personal gain.

Pray

St. Michael Prayer
Litany of Humility



Day 4: Wrath

Opening prayer – Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Reflection on Wrath

Wrath is uncontrolled, unchecked anger. It seeks revenge and is opposed to justice which belongs to God. Wrath leads to hatred and is opposed to forgiveness. It damages relationships and is harmful to oneself.

While we may not find ourselves driven into a murderous rage, how often do we raise our voices, swear and curse, lash out verbally at people? How do we react when someone cuts us off in traffic? When we act out in anger, we not only risk bringing harm to others, but we also damage our own psyche and build habits of wrathful behavior. How quickly and easily a curse comes to our tongue if left unchecked. We become hateful, spiteful, angry people and turn much more readily to negativity.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2302-3) differentiates between neutral anger and wrath. Anger can be a tool of self-preservation, but becomes sinful when directed at an innocent person, when it is long lasting, or when it desires revenge against another.

People often cite the episode of Jesus cleansing the temple and point to his righteous anger. Jesus certainly was not gentle - he braided a whip of cords and used it to good effect. For us, we must be very careful in attempting to justify ourselves and our anger in this way. It is a dangerous and prideful exercise to compare ourselves to God in an attempt to excuse our actions. Jesus warns us in the Gospel of Matthew (5:22):

“Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment.”

Spiritual Weapon – Meekness

The antidote to wrath is meekness. It is important that we understand the meaning of this word. It does not mean to be spineless, or a coward, or to back down in the face of superior power. Jesus tells us to turn the other cheek, to walk the extra mile, to give our tunic as well as our cloak. This is not spineless behavior.

Meekness means having a thoughtful, measured response. It is strength, under control. Rage is fueled by pride, but restraint is the response of humility.

Example – Mary and Joseph Finding Jesus in the Temple.

When Jesus was about twelve years old, he traveled to Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph. When they departed from there, after three days, they discovered that Jesus was not with them. Returning to the temple, they found Jesus in the temple amongst the teachers.



In this situation, many parents would be angry to the point of planning some sort of extreme punishment. Jesus wonders why they were looking for him, and how they did not know that he would be in His Father's house doing His work. Mary listened to her son, and meekly accepted the words of Jesus, just as she accepted the Word of God into her heart, and into her womb. She pondered these words in her heart, just as she did throughout her entire life. Jesus returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and was obedient to them.

- How can I put the virtue of meekness into action?
- In which situations do I react emotionally rather than in a controlled, measured way?
- When I am angry, is it at the service of someone else, or is it motivated by selfishness?

Pray

St. Michael Prayer

Litany of Humility



Day 5: Sloth

Opening prayer – Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Reflection on Sloth

When thinking of sloth, certain images may come to mind. An overweight couch potato; clad in an ill-fitting t-shirt and sweat pants; basking in the glow of the television; crumpled soda cans and empty Cheetos bags strewn about; the very image of laziness and lack of activity. While this type of behavior is extremely unhealthy and harmful to our bodies, it is not intrinsically sinful. But spiritual laziness can be much more harmful to ourselves.

Sloth, also called acedia, goes beyond lack of physical action. The sin of sloth is when we fail to perform the good in the world that we are called to do. This includes good works directed toward our families, communities, and society. It also includes our obligations to God.

St. Thomas Aquinas called sloth “the sorrow at spiritual good.” Another way to say this is that sloth is deficient love, or love unrealized. It is the failure to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Other sins are acts of commission - things that we do that are wrong. But sloth is a sin of omission, the avoidance of responsibility, a failure to do what is right.

Dante described sloth as failure to love God with all one’s heart, mind, and soul. This is precisely opposed to the greatest commandment which Jesus identifies in the Gospels.

Spiritual weapon – Zeal (diligence or fortitude)

To avoid the sinful tendency toward sloth, we must develop true zeal for God and his church. We can also exercise zeal in our home and work. We should not put on a false air of enthusiasm, but we should instead joyfully put ourselves at the service of others. Service of this sort can take on many forms. An active participation in a new activity or engaging with someone in a new way may be called for. It may be something behind the scenes or even taking on a private prayer or penance for the good of someone else.

Growing in zeal is something that takes practice. But anything worth doing requires repetition and discipline.

Example – Mary Visits Elizabeth

After Mary gave her consent to God’s plan for her to become the mother of Jesus, the angel Gabriel told her that Elizabeth, her relative, was now 6 months pregnant. Mary left in haste to visit her. It was Mary’s zeal that led her to visit and tend to Elizabeth who was in need. It would have been easy for Mary to excuse herself from this service to Elizabeth. After all, she is now pregnant herself and in a rather difficult situation. But Mary shows us the example of how the Christian life is to be lived out. Mary did not sit idle. She did not make excuses. She responded selflessly out of love.



How can we exercise zeal in our homes and community?

- Serve a member of our family in a new way.
- Volunteer for a new ministry.
- Make a holy hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament or the tabernacle.

Pray

St. Michael Prayer
Litany of Humility



Day 6: Avarice

Opening prayer – Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Reflection on Avarice

In contrast to envy discussed a few days ago which is concerned with others and their possessions, avarice is an inordinate love of riches. Avarice is not so much directed at others, but is the preoccupation with material goods themselves. These can be good or morally neutral, but the sin comes into play within the human heart. When possessions and wealth become an end in and of themselves, or the sole object of our desire, they displace God and his primacy in our lives.

Preoccupation with and excessive attachment to earthly goods leads us down a path of selfishness. Hoarding and wastefulness are both results of selfishness and are opposed to true charity. Avarice is love directed toward things, but charity is love directed toward people.

God made the earth and all things in it as a gift of love for his creation. All of creation is made for man and for his use. A properly ordered respect for and love of created material goods should point us back to their ultimate source - God. A heart that is filled with gratitude is a sign that we own our possessions and they do not own us.

Spiritual weapon – Poverty of spirit, detachment

We can overcome the spirit of the world by being satisfied with our place in the world. We should strive to be detached from material things and to live out the Beatitude to be “poor in spirit.” Poverty of spirit is not measured by wealth or its lack. It is measured in our hearts. It is possible to live as one who is poor in spirit regardless of the size of our homes, bank accounts, or the number of our possessions.

St. Ignatius of Loyola makes this clear in his First Principle and Foundation which is found at the beginning of his Spiritual Exercises:

“All the things in this world are gifts of God, presented to us, that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.

...

We should not fix our desires on health or sickness, wealth or poverty, success or failure, a long life or a short one. For everything has the potential of calling forth in us a deeper response to our life in God.”

(As paraphrased by David Fleming, SJ)

Example – Mary at the Nativity.

When Mary gave birth to Jesus, she brought Him into a world of poverty. He was born in the humblest of circumstances; in a stable; wrapped in swaddling clothes; placed in a manger. We all desire to provide the comforts of the world to our children, but Mary and Joseph were not able to provide worldly comforts to



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 6: Avarice

Jesus. When Jesus was presented at the temple, the gift was the modest offering of a poor family - two turtledoves.

How do we overcome our inclinations toward avarice?

- How can I follow the example of Mary, and live out poverty of spirit and detachment?
- Identify my favorite possessions and meditate on how important they are to my life.
- Compare my concern with my family's comfort with my concern for their salvation.
- Identify something I don't need that could be donated.

Pray

St. Michael Prayer
Litany of Humility



Day 7: Gluttony

Opening prayer – Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Reflection on Gluttony

Food, water, clothing, and shelter are the four necessities of life. Eating is not a merely utilitarian exercise. Beyond mere sustenance, food can bring delight to the senses, especially when shared in communion with family and friends. Dining together at holidays are occasions where we indulge, sometimes beyond the point of meeting our basic needs. But overindulgence of this sort is not intrinsically sinful. We have all continued to eat, even when we are no longer hungry, just to enjoy the taste of a favorite dish or dessert.

The sin of gluttony is the excessive love of bodily pleasures - overindulgence in things of the world which are not intrinsically evil but are not put to their proper use. Gluttony with regard to food is eating with an unrestrained appetite, merely for the sake of the feeling it gives us. Selfishness is intrinsic to gluttony because it is a self-serving pursuit of one's own pleasure. It is contrary to the virtue of temperance.

St. Thomas Aquinas, in question 148, article 4 of the Summa Theologiae, expands upon the basic definition and separates the sin of gluttony into 5 different categories, each of which illustrate unique ways that we can sin when it comes to food. We can eat too soon, too extravagantly, too daintily, too much, and too immoderately. The key consideration in whether our appetites are sinful regarding eating is whether we are satisfying the natural appetite, or the sensitive appetite - that is, the appetite of the senses. If we are eating merely for the feeling that it gives us, we are too picky, overeat, or eat only expensive foods, these behaviors are all gluttonous because they are designed to appeal only to the senses and not to the needs of the body.

(Source: <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3148.htm>)

Spiritual weapon – Temperance

Temperance, in contrast to gluttony, is the moderated use of food for its intended purpose. Growing in temperance helps us along the road to self-mastery which allows us to rule over our passions, rather than being ruled by them. Practicing control in our consumption of food and drink trains us to assert this control in other areas of our lives.

When we act with temperance, it allows us to see beyond our own selfish desires and to notice the needs of others. It brings us into balance with the goods of the world when we use them for their intended purpose, for our own good, and the good of others.

Food and drink are gifts from God, intended for the good of we who are made in his image, for the nourishment of our bodies. There are many occasions in the bible where feasting is called for, especially in the context of community.

In Canto XXIV of the Purgatorio, Dante illustrates balanced temperance as follows:



“Blessed are they who are so illumined by grace that the love of food does not kindle their desires beyond what is fitting.” (Canto XXIV)

Example – Mary at Cana

Once again the actions of the Virgin Mary at the wedding feast at Cana show us that food and drink have a proper use. Mary's temperance shines forth because she focuses not on her own needs, but on the needs of the guests - “They have no wine.” Her selflessness contrasts with selfish gluttony, and reminds us that mindfulness in consumption is a path to deeper satisfaction.

- How do we grow in temperance?
- Where do we aim our desires?
- Do we give thanks to God for the gift of food, drink, nourishment, and community?
- Do we seek to meet the needs of others; to share the gifts we have?

Pray

St. Michael Prayer
Litany of Humility



Day 8: Lust

Opening prayer – Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace...

Reflection on Lust

The sin of lust runs rampant in our society. For many, especially men, fighting against sexual temptation is a constant battle. It is difficult to avoid exposure to impure material, even just walking around in public. American culture is obsessed with sex. It is pushed in movies, television, and advertisements. Immodest dress seems to be the norm. Pornography of all types is readily available on the internet.

The sexual revolution and the birth control pill have had devastating consequences on the family. The result has been rampant divorce, infidelity, pornography, and human trafficking. In his encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, “On Human Life,” Pope Paul VI spoke prophetically about the negative ramifications of artificial birth control. Among these are an increase in marital infidelity, a lowering of moral standards, disregard for the dignity of women, and the use of other people as merely instruments of one’s own pleasure.

(Source: https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html)

Lust is the sin of excessive erotic love, disordered to one’s own gratification, often at the expense of others. There are many ways in which we can fall into the sin of lust. Among these are fornication - sex outside of marriage, infidelity - sex with someone other than one’s spouse, prostitution, pornography, masturbation, and rape. Beyond these extreme examples, there are many more subtle ways of committing the sin of lust, such as looking too long, taking a second look, fantasizing, allowing one’s thoughts to wander.

As Jesus said, “But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:28)

Spiritual weapon – Chastity

“Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.” (CCC2337)

Chastity takes on a different character depending on our state of life. For some it means consecrated virginity or celibacy. In the context of marriage, it means committed, lifelong fidelity to one’s spouse. For those who are single, dating, or engaged, it means continence.

Within marriage, there are two mutually supporting purposes for the marital act; unity of the spouses and the conception of children. When the possibility of conception is artificially removed from sex, it causes a rupture. Spouses who use each other for their own individual pleasure and deny the beauty of creation that is the other person, will ultimately grow apart. The thwarting of procreation results in a wedge being driven between them.



Our sexuality is good. The continuation of the species depends on it. But without an integrated understanding of our sexuality, it easily degenerates into a selfish pursuit of pleasure, self-abuse, and the use of other people.

Chastity sets us free to be the people that God made us to be. It is not prudishness. It is not a denial of our sexuality. It is a virtue that when practiced, makes us more fully alive and more fully human.

(Source:https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_three/section_two/chapter_two/article_6/ii_the_vocation_to_chastity.html)

Example – Mary, perpetual virgin

At the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel tells Mary that she will bear the Son of God, she says in reply, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” Mary is a virgin at the time of the conception of Jesus, and she remains a virgin after his birth, and for the rest of her life. Mary has been held up as the model of purity and chastity ever since. She was able to do this by a particular grace from God, and because her will was always aligned with the will of God.

Pray

St. Michael Prayer
Litany of Humility



Section 2

Growing in Self Knowledge and Virtue

Day 9: Cardinal and Theological Virtues

Opening Prayer – Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary...

What is a virtue?

The Catechism states that a virtue *is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good*. The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God (CCC 1803). In a nutshell – virtues are good habits that enable us to “give the best of” ourselves to the people in our lives and to all that we do.

The concept of virtues was first developed 500 years before Jesus walked the earth in Athens, Greece. Philosophers like Aristotle studied human behavior in order to draw a correlation between how people acted and how successful and happy their lives were. What they found was the people who behaved in certain ways tended to have more friends, more success and more happiness. Those behaviors were identified as virtues. Those behaviors that led to loneliness, failure and sadness were called vices.

A virtue lies in the center (the virtual mean) of a line with vices on either end. The vice to the left is a deficiency of the virtue and the vice to the right is an excess of the virtue. Consider the virtue of courage below, a deficiency of courage leads to cowardice while an excess of courage leads to recklessness.



Cardinal and Theological Virtues

The four primary natural virtues include prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. These four virtues are called the Cardinal virtues. Cardinal comes from the Latin *Cardio* which means “hinge” as all other virtues (and there are many) fall underneath one of these four Cardinal virtues. Natural virtues, like muscles on the human body, can be exercised and strengthened. According to St. Thomas Aquinas:

- Prudence governs the intellect. It is the intellectual virtue that guides practical decision-making and helps us discern the right course of action in any given circumstance. Aquinas referred to it as "right reason in action".
- Justice governs the will. It is a moral habit that perfects the rational appetite (the will) and directs it to consistently give God and others their due.



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 9: Cardinal and Theological Virtues

- Fortitude governs the *irascible* passions. These passions deal with difficult or challenging goods, such as facing fear in the face of danger. Fortitude helps us to act with courage and constancy in pursuing the good despite these obstacles.
- Temperance governs the *concupiscible* passions. These passions deal with sensible pleasures, such as those related to food, drink, and sex. Temperance moderates the attraction to these pleasures and ensures the will maintains mastery over its desires.

At our Baptism, we received three additional theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. When we were baptized, not only did we receive the theological virtues, but our natural virtues were given a supernatural boost! The theological virtues enable us to believe, hope and love at a supernatural level.

Over the next seven days we will explore these virtues and identify areas in our character and personality in which we exhibit strong virtue and those that could use some strengthening.

Fasting and Mortification

Jesus said to his followers, ‘Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself’ (Matt. 16:24). Acts of self-denial, also known as mortifications, are a foundational element of becoming a more virtuous person. Jesus demonstrated the value of fasting during his 40 days in the desert. We too as Catholics are called to heightened levels of fasting and mortification during the season of Lent. *By the solemn forty days of Lent the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert (CCC540).*

We put our old self to death by *mortification*. Mortification comes from two Latin words, *mortem* and *facere*. Together they mean “to bring about death.” It consists of the practice of measured denial of our lower appetites and desire for sensual pleasure. To mortify ourselves brings liberation. Indeed, the *Catechism* calls self-denial one of *the preconditions of all true freedom (CCC2223).*

One of the most basic and traditional forms of mortification is fasting. Fasting has been a standard practice for Catholics for over 2000 years! The people of Israel followed the principles of fasting before that. Some people can fast quite rigorously. Others have more difficulty. For them, some creativity may be necessary. One should never fast to the point that it causes physical danger to them or to others. Know your limits and do not exceed them.

Practicing penance is not an end in and of itself. The Church prescribes penance because it reminds us of our own mortality. The displeasure that comes with fasting makes us *feel* our dependence on God. It also makes our prayer that much more real because it is prayer made with both the body and the mind.

(Source: <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/why-self-denial-is-part-of-lent>)

Ideas for fasting and mortification:

- Fast from the snooze button or sleeping in
- Fast from judging others
- Fast from snacking between meals
- Fast from alcohol, caffeine, and sugary drinks
- Fast from TV and social media
- Take a cold shower



Pray

Litany of the Holy Spirit



Day 10: The Cardinal Virtue of Prudence

Opening Prayer – Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary...

Natural Prudence

Being considered a virtuous person is a good thing – it even sounds good in most cases.

“He is such an honest man.”

“Mrs. Smith dedicated her whole life to acts of charity and loving those that society had cast out.”

Now try that with prudence. It is different, isn't it? Nobody wants to be called a “prude”. A prude is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as “a person who is or claims to be easily shocked by matters relating to sex or nudity.” Obviously, being a person who is easily shocked by matters relating to sex or nudity is not something that the Catholic Church would put forth as virtuous behavior. Therefore, the virtue of prudence must have a different meaning that has been maligned by our culture.

The natural virtue of prudence is a virtue that *disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it (CCC1806)*. Prudence is not to be confused with fear or timidity, nor with deceitfulness or concealing of one's true thoughts. It is called the Charioteer of the Virtues as it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgement of conscience and determines and directs a person's conduct in accordance with that judgement. Prudence allows us to apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and evil to avoid.

A prudent person utilizes this virtue whenever a decision is made. Whether it is buying a new car or a new home or simply deciding what to eat for dinner, prudence can help us to determine what is the *true good* in every circumstance.

In the sacrament of Baptism, we became adopted sons and daughters of God the Father, our sins were washed away, Sanctifying graces were bestowed upon us, and we received the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Another attribute of our baptism is that our natural virtues or moral virtues are supercharged with the Holy Spirit. That natural virtue of prudence becomes a supernatural virtue of prudence.

The supernatural virtue of prudence makes us organize everything striving toward one goal – everlasting life with Jesus in Heaven. All our actions and activities, all our desires and resources, our time, our money, our behaviors are all targeted at heaven.

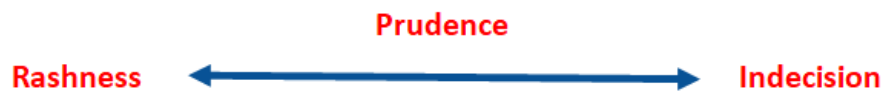
At times this may cause tension between what is considered a natural prudent act and a supernatural prudent act. For example, you are having lunch with some coworkers and the subject comes up that contradicts your moral beliefs. To speak the truth on issues like abortion, artificial birth control, and euthanasia in this setting may cause the boat to rock with those I am interacting with. Some might believe that simply being silent would be the prudent thing to do at that moment. While natural prudence



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 10: The Cardinal Virtue of Prudence

may incline one to not “rock the boat”, supernatural prudence – aimed at everlasting life for us and for others – dictates that going along to get along – is not always prudent. Sometimes we are put into positions that require us to call the truth for what it is -- The Truth!

How do I measure up?



How do I measure up on the scale of prudence?

- Am I a prudent person or do I tend to lack prudence? Do I make snap decisions that or say things that I later regret?
- Do I find it difficult to make decisions, to commit to a course of action?

Pray

Litany of the Holy Spirit



Day 11: The Cardinal Virtue of Justice

Opening Prayer – Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary...

Natural Justice

Life is not fair! I have heard that many times in my life. A great sense of fairness is embedded in our human nature. Whenever we feel we or someone we care about has been dealt with unfairly – it can bring about a very impassioned response.

Our deep sense of fairness seems to surface early in our lives. It seems like one of the first 10 sentences that a child learns to speak is “That’s not fair!” Each of us feels a deep sense of loss when we are cheated or treated unfairly.

We carry this sense of fairness with us to adulthood. Whenever we have elections – we all appreciate how important it is to have fair elections. Some can become quite impassioned when they believe there may have been some miscalculations made. In our culture today there is a great desire for fairness in opportunities and sometimes even in outcomes.

Justice is one of the four cardinal virtues and along with the virtue of prudence affects the human intellect.

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good (CCC1807).

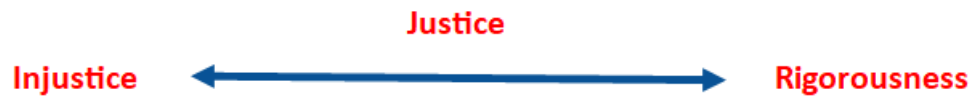
God is not simply just – God is Justice. We are required to give God reverence and respect. This is most obvious in our speech and in our actions. We are called to give God what is due to Him, and we call that religion. This sense of religion or giving to God what is due, is embedded in our human nature. That would explain why every culture in the world, no matter how isolated from the rest of the world, develops some type of religion. They figure out that there must be a higher being who is in control and offer some form of worship to that being.

Justice to our neighbor means giving them what they have a right to. So, what do others have a right to? We live in a world of great injustice. Never before has there been a greater chasm between the haves and the have nots. Jesus challenges us in the Gospels by declaring, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Mt 25:40)

Over the past 125 years the Catholic Church has established teachings and published volumes of information for believers to read the area of Social Justice. From that we can discern what our neighbors are due.



How do I measure up?



How do you measure up on the scale of justice?

- Am I perfectly just or do I tend to lack a sense of justice when it comes to God and my neighbor?
- Do I find myself applying strict rules, demanding effort, or maintaining exact standards to a process or activity that simply are not necessary?

Pray

Litany of the Holy Spirit



Day 12: The Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude

Opening Prayer – Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary...

Natural Fortitude

Living in fear can be debilitating. We have so many options when it comes to things to be fearful of. Have you ever been afraid of rejection? Does it keep you from doing certain things in your life? How about a fear of failure? Is God calling you to do something, but you are not willing to answer the call out of fear of failure? We fear all kinds of things, don't we? There can be a fear of losing control or a fear of the unknown. For many, the greatest fear is pain, suffering, and ultimately, death.

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. (CCC 1808)

After Jesus died on the cross, the Apostles felt a great deal of fear, trepidation, and doubt. They hid in the upper room – the same room in which they had eaten the last supper with Jesus. The same room in which Jesus shared his very Body and Blood with them – the first Mass. They hid from the Jewish authorities who had turned Jesus over to the Romans who tortured and crucified him. They feared a similar fate awaited them.

After Jesus rose from the dead and sent the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, they were transformed. Peter and John walked into the Temple in Jerusalem. They encounter a man who has been lame since birth begging. In the name of Jesus Christ, Peter healed the man.

As you might imagine the sight of this man who was born lame and has been begging outside the temple most of his life, now dancing by the Beautiful Gate causes a bit of a stir and draws a crowd. So, Peter begins to preach about Jesus Christ risen from the dead and how this man had been cured in the name of Jesus Christ!

Well, this does not go over well with the Chief Priests, scribes and the Pharisees. So, they have Peter and John arrested and thrown in jail. The next day Peter and John are brought before the Sanhedrin and questioned about what had happened. The Chief Priest asked Peter and John, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

Peter's response lit up the room. He stated in part,

"Leaders of the people and elders: If we are being examined today, about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed. (Acts 4:9)



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 12: The Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude

Whoa! What happened to Peter? Wasn't he the guy who a few weeks prior was cowering in fear in the upper room and full of doubt that Jesus had risen from the dead? Now he stands in front of the Jewish leaders, the people he feared most, forcefully proclaiming Jesus Christ Risen from the Dead – something he initially doubted.

On the day of Pentecost, the Apostles received the gifts of the Holy Spirit that included not only a supercharging of the natural virtue of fortitude, but the gift of courage. We also receive these gifts at our baptism, and they are strengthened in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

St. Thomas Aquinas identified two separate acts of courage: endurance and attack.

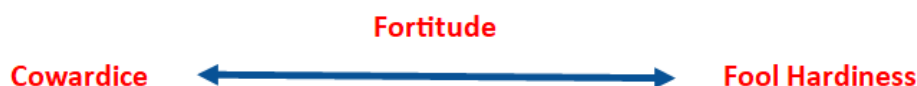
When we bear our struggles in life by tempering our fears so that they do not control us, we are acting with endurance. There are times when we must take a stand, to act in some way that is brave, yet prudent. That is when we are in the attack mode of courage.

Courage moderates our fears in two ways:

It gives us the might to stand up and attack difficulties when we should do so. It also gives us the strength to endure difficulties and suffering and not to withdraw from the good we are pursuing.

Heroic courage is rarely needed in our lifetimes. But we encounter the need for fortitude and courage in the everyday circumstances of life; like keeping the three pillars of the Fishermen. Remember, the word disciple and discipline have the same root!

How do I measure up?



How do you measure up on the scale of fortitude?

- Am I perfect?
- Do I tend to back away when I am challenged?
- Do I find myself in situations where I am acting foolishly or with a sense of false bravado?

Pray

Litany of the Holy Spirit



Day 13: The Cardinal Virtue of Temperance

Opening Prayer – Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary...

Natural Temperance

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines temperance as follows:

“Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will’s mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion.” (CCC 1809)

Dr. Edward Sri provides a great example of how acting intemperately can actually reduce our pleasure in life. He describes going to a Mexican restaurant that provides a large bowl of warm tortilla chips with salsa while you wait for the main course. Well, I don’t know about you, but those chips taste darn good with that salsa and a beer and inevitably the waitress is asking if I want more chips before the main course has been served. By the time the main course is served, I have lost my appetite.

So, it is in life. If we are not careful to moderate our attraction to these sensory pleasures, we will fill ourselves up with them and not be able to enjoy the “main course” in life. That is, life’s highest goods such as truth, beauty, goodness, friendship, and love.

Aristotle called the lack of temperance a “childish fault”, for it makes a person act like a child. A toddler does not use reason to determine the best good. He simply reacts to the feelings in his stomach. St. Augustine found that the more he gave into a lustful desire, the less power he had to resist it. “When I gave in to lust, habit was born, and when I did not resist the habit, it became a necessity.” St. Thomas Aquinas calls intemperance the most disgraceful of vices. First, because it is most opposed to our dignity as human persons. Like animals we have a need for food, water and sex. But unlike animals, we are not meant to be enslaved by these desires.

As Fishermen, we are called to temper our passions and desires so that we are free to love others. When we are addicted to pleasures in our life, we are not truly free. Those pleasures take us away from those who really need us like our family and our friends. That time spent in front of the video game screen, watching endless hours of sports, or mindless surfing on our smart phones make us less virtuous and more centered on ourselves.

Temperance not only applies to what we eat and how we spend our time. Are we temperate with our money? Are we living within our means or are we paying interest on credit cards? Are we temperate with our jobs or businesses or are we consumed with thoughts about work from sunup to sundown? Are we temperate with our appearance or do we spend an inordinate amount of time and money on fashion and gym memberships?



How do I measure up?



How do you measure up on the scale of temperance?

- Am I perfect?
- Do I tend to over indulge at times with my time, money or food?
- Or do I find myself in a constant state of denial to the point where I am not able to enjoy any of the sensible goods in creation?

Pray

Litany of the Holy Spirit



Day 14: The Theological Virtue of Faith

Opening Prayer – Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary...

Natural Faith

Natural faith is defined as “*the complete trust or confidence in someone or something.*” Author John Garvey in his book The Virtues uses Einstein's theory of relativity as an example of natural faith.

Most people don't understand the details of relativity. One of the consequences of Einstein's theory is that mass and energy are equivalent as described by the famous equation, $E=mc^2$. Do you believe that it is true? I never traveled near the speed of light, and I don't have the mathematical background to verify their calculations, but because Albert Einstein and other smart physicists came up with it, I am inclined to believe it. I trust them!

So it is with how most of us came to our first understanding of our faith in God. We believe what we believe because of a trusted source, oftentimes our parents, who shared the Gospel with us. Because they are our parents and we trust them, we believe them.

Supernatural Faith

Is our faith a gift of grace from God or is it an act of the will? Faith is both. We receive the theological virtue of Faith at our baptism, so it is a grace that we receive. At the same time, believing the Gospel requires an act of the will. Paragraphs 153-155 of the Catechism provide an expanded explanation.

Faith is a gift of grace: When St. Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this revelation did not come "from flesh and blood", but from "my Father who is in heaven". Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him. "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and 'makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth.' (CCC 153)

Faith is a human act: Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves and their intentions, or to trust their promises (for example, when a man and a woman marry) to share a communion of life with one another. If this is so, still less is it contrary to our dignity to "yield by faith the full submission of... intellect and will to God who reveals", and to share in an interior communion with him. (CCC 154)

In faith, the human intellect and will co-operate with divine grace: "Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace." (Dei Filius – CCC 155)



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 14: The Theological Virtue of Faith

Natural faith and reason can bring us to the threshold of believing in God, but absolute belief, the kind that we are willing to give our life for – is Supernatural. Supernatural Faith is saying “Yes” to God in both our intellect and our will.

St. Luke writes,

“And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” The Lord replied, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to [this] mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. (Lk 17:5-6)

Jesus did not ask his followers to have faith. He asked them to believe. Jesus called his apostles and each one of us to believe in the Gospel message. That faith, that belief is demonstrated in how we choose to live our lives. Are we living in accordance with what the Catholic Church teaches, or do we pick and choose the areas that we conform ourselves to?

Note on the scale of virtue below, for theological virtues there is no vice associated with excess. We can never have *too much* faith, hope, or charity.

How do I measure up?



How do you measure up on the scale of faith?

- Am I willing to die to myself for my love of God?
- Do I have doubts?
- Do I trust God to the point where I am ready to surrender my life to be directed totally by Him?
- Do I hold back in certain areas?

Pray

Litany of the Holy Spirit



Day 15: The Theological Virtue of Hope

Opening Prayer – Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary...

Natural Hope

We hope for many things. Some hope for good weather while others hope for good health. On Sundays during the fall season many are hoping that their football team will win. Natural hope is a human longing for a good that is possible but difficult to achieve.

We can develop a hope for a particular outcome based upon our own logical reasoning or by witnessing another achieve something that we now hope we can achieve as well. Hope fuels our imagination and can inspire us to put forth a great effort to achieve great things.

Supernatural Hope

In contrast, supernatural Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our **trust** in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. (CCC1817)

It responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity. (CCC1818)

While our natural hope is normally fixated on particular outcomes, Author Mitch Finley ([The Catholic Virtues](#)) states that Supernatural Hope enables us to live for the future without knowing what the future may bring. While optimism believes that nothing but good is just around the corner, hope, on the other hand, believes that life is worth living whatever is around the corner.

He goes on to write that hope allows a husband and wife to see beyond the present moment and to see their marriage in the larger context of their entire lives. Hope makes it possible to endure the hardships, difficulties, anguish and outright suffering that the present may bring. Hope whispers to us – “This too shall pass”. Hope is most authentic when there is no basis for it. Hope gets a grip based on faith – the heart’s conviction that God is trustworthy even when there is no earthly evidence to support such a claim.

For many, to hope for no particular outcomes, but simply that the will of God the Father is done in our lives is a big stretch. That type of mindset can seem a million miles away. Why is that?

It could have something to do with how much we trust that God the Father has our best interests at heart. At the conclusion of World War II, German soldiers marched long distances to surrender to American soldiers instead of Russians – why? Because they trusted that the Americans would accept



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 15: The Theological Virtue of Hope

their surrender and treat them with dignity. They were equally certain that the Russian would not. They did not trust the Russian soldiers and therefore would not surrender to them.

Likewise, we cannot surrender our will to the Will of the Father unless we trust him! Jesus calls out to each one of us in His Divine Mercy to trust. At the bottom of the Divine Mercy image are the words, “Jesus I Trust in You”. Our supernatural hope is dependent upon our trust in God.

How do I measure up?



How do you measure up on the scale of Hope?

- Do I hope that God’s will be done in my life without hoping for any particular outcomes?
- Do I trust that God has my best interests at heart?
- Or do I have doubts?
- Do I presume that I am going to heaven?

Pray

Litany of the Holy Spirit



Day 16: The Theological Virtue of Charity

Opening Prayer – Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary...

Natural Love

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, “to love is to will the good of the other person” which is about as concise a definition you will find. Note that there is no need to “like” a person in order to “love” them. Loving our neighbor is not always easy, some people are just plain hard to love. Like our neighbors who let their dog loose on our lawn or our co-worker who always talks and never does his job or that lady at the parish who comes to meetings with ideas of what we can do in the parish but never seems to have time to actually do any of it.

Mitch Finley ([The Catholic Virtues](#)) states that most of us grasp the importance of love – we want to love and we want to be loved, but most of the time we just want to be loved.

C.S. Lewis in his book *The Four Loves* analyzed the word “love”. The author uses four Greek words to describe different kinds of love: eros, storge, philia, and agape.

Eros denotes the love we have for something that fulfills our needs to something we delight in. When we say we love “good” coffee – it is because it either fulfills a need we have or we simply delight in it. The love of good food, good music, good bourbon... would all fall under eros.

Eros is self-centered because it is based on personal desires. There is nothing wrong with eros – but it should not be the basis of our relationships. There must be something beyond eros if we expect relationships to last.

Storge is the second type of love identified by C.S. Lewis and is one of the most important and effective elements of human existence – it is the loyalty to family, relatives, or a cause. Patriotism and loyalty to the Catholic Church are examples of storge love.

According to Father Benedict Groeschel ([The Virtue Driven Life](#)) storge love applies to family. Before the 20th century most marriages everywhere were arranged with a goal to ensure the continuance of the family or the tribe. There were wider interests at stake other than the couple being married. That did not mean there was no love between the spouses or that love could not develop in time. In the 20th century a more romantic view of marriage has evolved and gained acceptance. People are now more focused on the idea of friendship being a cornerstone of marriage than a bigger picture in their marriage decision.

Philia is a mutual friendship, or brotherly love and it may not last. Philadelphia “the city of brotherly love” gets its name from philia. The commitment in philia is relatively low so when things become difficult between friends, they oftentimes simply part ways. Philia is much less committed than storge.

Selfism or selfishness can play a role in the destruction of friendships. Today, many choose to focus first on the need to fulfill all their many needs for pleasure and if anyone else’s rights stand in the way of my rights, I must put mine first. They live with a deep-seated belief that the world owes it to me to fulfill all



my needs. Selfism is alive and well in America and does not appear to be weakening. If we look at those who are lifted up in our culture – they are the film stars, rockstars, and TV stars who lead totally dissolute, ego centric lives. Who would want to be friends with that type of person?

Supernatural Love

Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. (CCC1882)

How do we love God above all things? Where do we start with that? What do you give to God who literally has everything? The answer is our time in prayer and the love we show to others in our life. Jesus stated, “This is my commandment to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn 15:9)

C.S. Lewis’ fourth and final type of love is called agape, which is related to the Latin term *caritas* from which we derive the word charity. Agape is a selfless, self-giving love; completely opposed to *eros* which is a self-serving love. St Mother Theresa of Calcutta is held up as an example of agape because of her selfless service to the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta, India.

Why was St. Mother Theresa so popular in the culture? Though many people disagreed with most of what she believed and spoke about; they still admired her because of her selfless love. The human heart admires and responds to charity. Agape, or love for people with no expectation of return, is a powerful force in the world. Thomas Merton wrote, “True happiness is found in unselfish love, a love which increases in proportion – as it is shared.”

First and foremost, the virtue of charity is about loving God. When we love God, we enter into friendship with him. Theologians call charity the form of all the virtues and St. Paul writes that without charity we are nothing.

How do I measure up?



How do you measure up on the scale of love?

- Do I love God with all my heart, all my mind, all my soul, and all my strength?
- Do I love my neighbor as myself?
- Do I have a selfish or a selfless love for my family?
- How do I show that?

Pray

Litany of the Holy Spirit



Section 3

Growing Closer to Mary

Day 17: The Seven Sorrows of Mary; Sacramentals and Devotions

Opening Prayer – Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy...

The Seven Sorrows Devotion

The Seven Sorrow Devotion can be traced back to the early church, back to St. John himself who stood with Mary at the foot of the cross. The devotion grew in popularity and during the 13th century the Order of the Servants of Mary, or the Servites, were formed to spread devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows. Pope Pius VII approved the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows for the universal church in the early 1814. It is observed on September 15th each year.

The devotion itself consists of praying the Hail Mary seven times while meditating on each of the sorrows that Mary experienced during her life. She, more than any other person in the history of humanity, suffered greater anguish. This suffering stems from her unique closeness to Jesus – both as His mother, and His first disciple. When she assented to give birth to the Son of God, she also gave her consent to suffer along with him.

When we draw close to Mary in her suffering, she draws us close to Jesus and His suffering. St. Bridget of Sweden was given seven promises by Mary for those who pray daily the Seven Sorrows with faith and devotion.

1. "I will grant peace to their families."
2. "They will be enlightened about the Divine Mysteries."
3. "I will console them in their pains, and I will accompany them in their work."
4. "I will give them as much as they ask for as long as it does not oppose the adorable will of my Divine Son or the sanctification of their souls."
5. "I will defend them in their spiritual battles with the infernal enemy and I will protect them at every instant of their lives."
6. "I will visibly help them at the moment of their death. They will see the face of their Mother."
7. "I have obtained this grace from my divine Son, that those who propagate this devotion to my tears and dolors, will be taken directly from this earthly life to eternal happiness since all their sins will be forgiven and my Son and I will be their eternal consolation and joy."

Typically, this devotion is prayed all at once, but for our purposes over the upcoming seven days, we will take them one at a time and meditate on each sorrow individually.

Source: (<https://www.catholiccompany.com/pages/the-seven-sorrows-of-mary>)



Spiritual Weapon – Sacramentals and Other Devotions

A sacramental is a physical item which may be used by the faithful to draw us closer to God. A sacramental is not a talisman. It does not have any power in and of itself. It is by the grace of God and by virtue of our prayer and the intercession of the Church that grace is obtained. Sacramentals can be powerful defenses against evil spirits, as well as a method to grow in our strength and relation with God. Each time we use a sacramental, it helps us to grow in faith and devotion to God. Sacramentals focus our attention on God, help us prepare to receive the sacraments, sanctify aspects of our daily lives, provide actual graces, receive forgiveness of venial sins, and dispose us to receive other temporal favors. All of these reasons should encourage the faithful to incorporate and increase the use of sacramentals into our daily lives.

The sacred vessels used at Mass, the liturgical vestments worn by the clergy, statues and sacred art displayed in the sanctuary, candles, holy oils, and the altar, are all sacramentals that the church uses to confer grace upon the faithful. Outside the liturgy, items such as the rosary, prayer cards, medals, and sacred art are approved for use by the church. Among these, the Holy Rosary has pride of place along with the Miraculous Medal, the Saint Benedict Medal, the Brown Scapular, blessed and exorcized oil, candles, water, and salt.

Outside of liturgical prayer which includes the Holy Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, the Catholic Church has a treasury of devotions that are recommended and approved for the use of the faithful. These devotions are typically prayers that have been revealed to saints throughout the history of the church. Some devotions use a sacramental such as a rosary, chaplet, or icon to assist in prayer.

Praying the rosary is by far the most popular devotion among Catholics. The Divine Mercy devotion has increased in popularity in the last 25 years since St. John Paul II instituted Divine Mercy Sunday and canonized St. Maria Faustina Kowalska in the year 2000. The Divine Mercy chaplet, novena, and image were all revealed to St. Faustina by Jesus over the course of many years. Other devotions include reparations to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and First Fridays given to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary and First Saturdays, given during the apparitions at Fatima to Lucia dos Santos.

There are many other devotions that have been given to individuals in private revelations. While the church has approved and even recommends these devotions, there is no requirement placed upon Catholics to take up any of them. In fact, there is not even a requirement that anyone must believe in apparitions or visions that were given to another.

With such a wealth of popular piety available to us, it may seem overwhelming. So how do I choose which devotions to take on? Choose the ones that resonate with you and be faithful to them. Ultimately, devotions are designed to orient our souls to God and not to become just another task to perform.

Pray

Litany of Loreto



Day 18: Simeons' Prophecy

Opening Prayer – Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy...

Reflection – First Sword of Sorrow: The Prophecy of Simeon

With grateful thanksgiving for their newborn Son, Mary and Joseph present Jesus in the temple as required by the Mosaic law. It is here that Mary's first sorrow is encountered in the prophecy received there from the old man, Simeon. Simeon told Mary that "you yourself a sword will pierce". It was not a physical sword but a figurative one. Mary is known as the Queen of All Martyrs because she encountered this suffering for many years after this prophecy was revealed to her. The saints received consolation from Jesus during their physical pain, but Mary had inconsolable suffering because the source of her suffering was the love she had for her son.

From the Gospel according to Luke (2:22-35):

When the days were completed for their purification according to the law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, just as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord," and to offer the sacrifice of "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons," in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and devout, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord. He came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to perform the custom of the law in regard to him, he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:

"Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."

The child's father and mother were amazed at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Pray

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the affliction of your tender heart at the prophecy of the holy and aged Simeon. Dear Mother, by your heart so afflicted, obtain for me the virtue of humility and the gift of the holy fear of God.

Hail Mary...



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 18: Simeons' Prophecy

Let Us Pray:

Let intercession be made for us, we beseech You, O Lord Jesus Christ, now and at the hour of our death, before the throne of Your mercy, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother, whose most holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of Your bitter Passion. Through You, O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Litany of Loreto



Day 19: Flight Into Egypt

Opening Prayer – Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy...

Reflection – Second Sword of Sorrow: Flight of Jesus to Egypt

After the birth of Jesus and the subsequent visit of the Magi, Mary and Joseph depart for Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod. Joseph received a warning in a dream to take Mary and Jesus and go to Egypt. Mary endured suffering and fear during the journey, but also showed her resilience and trust in the Lord while the Holy Family was in exile. This is a model for believers because although God allowed this suffering in her life, Mary followed God's guidance and received His protection during this time. We likewise should rely on God's guidance and pray for his protection as we strive to follow His will in all things.

From the Gospel according to Matthew (Chapter 2):

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." 14 Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. 15 He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the



time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.”

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazorean.”

Pray

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the anguish of your most affectionate heart during the flight into Egypt and your sojourn there. Dear Mother, by your heart so troubled, obtain for me the virtue of generosity, especially toward the poor, and the gift of piety.

Hail Mary...

Let Us Pray:

Let intercession be made for us, we beseech You, O Lord Jesus Christ, now and at the hour of our death, before the throne of Your mercy, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother, whose most holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of Your bitter Passion. Through You, O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Litany of Loreto



Day 20: The Loss of Jesus in the Temple

Opening Prayer – Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy...

Reflection – Third Sword of Sorrow: Loss of Jesus in the Temple

Mary and Joseph felt keenly the loss of their son when he was left behind in Jerusalem. The three days that Mary was looking for Jesus were a foreshadowing of the three days he would lay in the tomb. This may have been her greatest sorrow, because during her other sorrows, she had Jesus with her. She also knew the causes of the other sorrows, but she did not know the cause of the absence of her Son. Origen says that the loss of Jesus caused more suffering for Mary than any martyr ever suffered at death. Mary suffered uniquely because she was accustomed to the sweet presence of Jesus always with her. Do we suffer as Mary suffered when we remove ourselves from the presence of God?

From the Gospel according to Luke (2:39-52):

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced [in] wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

Pray

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in those anxieties which tried your troubled heart at the loss of your dear Jesus. Dear Mother, by your heart so full of anguish, obtain for me the virtue of chastity and the gift of knowledge.

Hail Mary...

Let Us Pray:



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 20: The Loss of Jesus in the Temple

Let intercession be made for us, we beseech You, O Lord Jesus Christ, now and at the hour of our death, before the throne of Your mercy, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother, whose most holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of Your bitter Passion. Through You, O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Litany of Loreto



Day 21: Meeting Jesus on the Way of the Cross

Opening Prayer – Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy...

Reflection – Fourth Sword of Sorrow: Mary Meets Jesus Carrying His Cross

What sorrow Mary must have felt when she encountered Jesus during his Passion, on the way to Calvary. It is at this moment, when she sees her son, that she must turn away from her own desires for her own well-being or that of her son. She has to let go of those things in order for this sacrifice to be completed. There was a perfect dying to herself in that moment. How are we dying to ourselves in this life and where can we increase this sacrifice to be more in line with His will?

From the Gospel according to John (19:16-18):

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So, they took Jesus, and carrying the cross himself he went out to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.

Pray

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the consternation of your heart at meeting Jesus as He carried His Cross. Dear Mother, by your heart so troubled, obtain for me the virtue of patience and the gift of fortitude.

Hail Mary...

Let Us Pray:

Let intercession be made for us, we beseech You, O Lord Jesus Christ, now and at the hour of our death, before the throne of Your mercy, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother, whose most holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of Your bitter Passion. Through You, O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Litany of Loreto



Day 22: The Crucifixion

Opening Prayer

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy...

Reflection – Fifth Sword of Sorrow: Mary Standing Beneath Jesus on the Cross

Mary, steadfast until the end, stood beneath the cross, and was present to him as he died. The one who was there at the very beginning, was there at the very end. Reflecting on Mary at Calvary, we see the manifestation of the greatest excellence in all of creation, aside from Christ. The excellence was magnified because she stood at the foot of the cross in perfect, sinless virtue.

From the Gospel according to John (19:28-30):

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I thirst." There was a vessel filled with common wine. So, they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth. When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished." And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Pray

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the martyrdom which your generous heart endured in standing near Jesus in His agony. Dear Mother, by your afflicted heart obtain for me the virtue of temperance and the gift of counsel.

Hail Mary...

Let Us Pray:

Let intercession be made for us, we beseech You, O Lord Jesus Christ, now and at the hour of our death, before the throne of Your mercy, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother, whose most holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of Your bitter Passion. Through You, O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Litany of Loreto



Day 23: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Opening Prayer – Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy...

Reflection – Sixth Sword of Sorrow: Mary Receives into Her Arms the Body of Jesus Taken Down from the Cross

Mary first received her precious son into her arms when he was a tiny, helpless, newborn baby. Now, his lifeless body is taken down from the cross and once again she receives Him into her arms. She accepts her sacrifice as complete by embracing her son's death completely. This is Mary's equivalent of Jesus stating "*Consumatum est.*" ("It is consummated," or "It is finished.") How are we sacrificing for God in a way that would reflect Mary's sacrifice?

From the Gospel according to John (19:38-42):

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So he came and took his body. Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom. Now in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by.

Pray

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the wounding of your compassionate heart, when the side of Jesus was struck by the lance before His Body was removed from the Cross. Dear Mother, by your heart thus transfixed, obtain for me the virtue of fraternal charity and the gift of understanding.

Hail Mary...

Let Us Pray:

Let intercession be made for us, we beseech You, O Lord Jesus Christ, now and at the hour of our death, before the throne of Your mercy, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother, whose most holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of Your bitter Passion. Through You, O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Litany of Loreto



Day 24: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Opening Prayer

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of mercy...

Reflection – Seventh Sword of Sorrow: Mary Helps Place the Body of Jesus in the Tomb

The final and most devastating sorrow of Mary – placing her precious child into the tomb. What was Mary reflecting on while laying her son in the tomb? *Finite est*. Mary knows that all the pains and sufferings that God has asked of her are finally finished. All that she learned from Simeon in the prophecy has come to pass. In all of Mary's sorrows there were no physical wounds. She did not resist the pain or the suffering. Mary fully embraced every sacrifice and every painful sword, never once counting the personal cost. We must always strive to not count the personal cost of our sacrifices to God and what He is asking of us.

From the Gospel according to Matthew (27:57-61):

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. Taking the body, Joseph wrapped it [in] clean linen and laid it in his new tomb that he had hewn in the rock. Then he rolled a huge stone across the entrance to the tomb and departed. But Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remained sitting there, facing the tomb.

Pray

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, for the pangs that wrenched your most loving heart at the burial of Jesus. Dear Mother, by your heart sunk in the bitterness of desolation, obtain for me the virtue of diligence and the gift of wisdom.

Hail Mary...

Let Us Pray:

Let intercession be made for us, we beseech You, O Lord Jesus Christ, now and at the hour of our death, before the throne of Your mercy, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother, whose most holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of Your bitter Passion. Through You, O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Litany of Loreto



Section 4

Growing Closer to Christ

Day 25: The Seven Last Words of Christ; Surrendering to the Father

Opening Prayer – The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

Reflection on the Seven Last Words of Christ

In this final section, we look at the seven last words or sayings of Christ while hanging on the Cross. It is worth noting that Mary, standing at the foot of the Cross, heard these words, and as she did throughout her life, pondered them in her heart.

We will use Venerable Fulton Sheen's short book "[The Cross and the Beatitudes](#)" as our guiding light. In this book Archbishop Sheen makes a correlation between the seven last words of Christ and the seven beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. The 8th beatitude is "Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This beatitude and its result are the sum and total of all the other beatitudes. Saint Thomas Aquinas says that the eighth beatitude "is a confirmation and a declaration of all those that precede. Because from the very fact that one is confirmed in poverty of spirit, meekness, and the rest, it follows that no persecution will induce him to renounce them. Hence the eighth beatitude corresponds in a way to all the preceding seven." Essentially, anyone who is willing to suffer for the sake of the kingdom is already living out the other Beatitudes and will never compromise any of them.

Spiritual Warfare – Surrender to the Will of the Father

As Jesus surrendered to the Will of God the Father, so too are we called to surrender ours. Surrendering one's will is never easy as it requires complete trust. Do we trust that our Father in Heaven truly has our best interests at heart? Or do we at times believe that our own way is better?

Adam and Eve did not believe that God had their best interests at heart in the Garden of Eden. Satan convinced them that God was holding out on them, and they fell. Ultimately, it was their lack of trust in God that led to their downfall. So it is in our life. We too are tempted to believe that our ideas and methods are the best.

For that reason, we will spend the last nine days of our preparation praying the Surrender Novena repeating the simple and powerful prayer "Jesus, I surrender myself to you. Please take care of everything". This simple prayer of surrender will provide unbelievable graces and healing of our fears, doubts, and anxieties.



Pray

The Surrender Novena – Day 1

Why do you confuse yourselves by worrying? Leave the care of your affairs to me and everything will be peaceful. I say to you in truth that every act of true, blind, complete surrender to me produces the effect that you desire and resolves all difficult situations.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 26: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Day 26: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Opening Prayer – The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

Beatitude

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.”

Reflection

Meekness is not a virtue that the world holds up with great honor, quite to the contrary. To the world, meekness equals weakness. The world holds up power, aggression, and vindictiveness as manly virtues.

Meekness is not cowardice or an easy-going temperament. It is not being spinelessly passive like a door mat that everybody walks on. Meekness is the virtue that controls the combative and violent powers of our nature and enables each of us to achieve our own potential; to become the men that we were created to be.

A meek person is not one who shrinks away from a fight when principle is at stake. They will not fight, however, when it is simply a matter of their ego. For a meek person righteousness, not selfishness, is the guiding principle.

Jesus Christ was the perfect model of meekness especially during His Passion. The Roman soldiers, the Pharisees, and the people lining the streets hurled vicious insults at him and beat him mercilessly. How did he respond? “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” At the same time, he accepted his cross and with great courage and strength endured his execution.

We are called to be meek, to show great courage and strength when defending our families, our faith, and our communities while at the same time showing great humility when we ourselves are attacked.



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 26: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Pray

The Surrender Novena – Day 2

Surrender to me does not mean to fret, to be upset, or to lose hope, nor does it mean offering to me a worried prayer asking me to follow you and change your worry into prayer. It is against this surrender, deeply against it, to worry, to be nervous and to desire to think about the consequences of anything.

It is like the confusion that children feel when they ask their mother to see to their needs, and then try to take care of those needs for themselves so that their childlike efforts get in their mother’s way. Surrender means to placidly close the eyes of the soul, to turn away from thoughts of tribulation and to put yourself in my care, so that only I act, saying, “You take care of it.”

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart



Day 27: “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Opening Prayer – The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

Beatitude

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

Reflection

The Venerable Fulton Sheen defines mercy from the Latin *miserum cor*, a sorrowful heart. It is a compassionate understanding of another’s sadness. A person is merciful when he feels the misery of another as if it were his own. Mercy is not just about pardoning those who sin against us, but also using those instances as opportunities to build trust and love.

Mercy was one of Jesus’ favorite topics when he shared parables. In the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15 contains three popular parables: the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son. All of these parables show the length, breadth, and width of God’s mercy for us. Through these parables, Jesus exhibited the extraordinary depth of God’s mercy.

Jesus also exhibited this divine mercy while hanging on the cross. Promising the repentant thief on his right-hand side, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

In our everyday lives there are two facets of mercy – giving and receiving. We are all called to give mercy or to be merciful. That requires us to let go of the hurt, let go of the anger, let go of the memories that plague us over those who have hurt us. Sometimes those hurts can last a lifetime and cause untold misery to the one who holds back mercy. Father Mike Schmitz stated that not forgiving someone with the thought that it is causing them pain is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to get sick. My inability to forgive only affects one person – me.

The other facet of mercy is with regard toward those whom we have hurt. Calling that person or writing them a letter or a card simply saying, “I am sorry,” and taking responsibility for your actions and asking them to forgive you can bring peace. While not everyone will forgive us for the pain we have caused them (see the above paragraph), true healing can begin once sorrow for one’s actions has been expressed.

Asking mercy of those we have hurt applies to God as well. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is the most powerful exorcism in the Church. It heals us from the damage we caused by our sinfulness and strengthens us to go forward and sin no more. Fishermen are challenged to make a monthly Confession on First Friday.

We live in a world that does not know mercy. The culture is wrapped up in justice and what is due to me as opposed to mercy and sharing of the bountiful gifts from God. Being merciful is a powerful virtue for every man. It makes us like God!



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 27: “Today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Pray

The Surrender Novena – Day 3

How many things I do when the soul, in so much spiritual and material need, turns to me, looks at me and says to me, “You take care of it,” then closes its eyes and rests. In pain you pray for me to act, but that I act in the way you want. You do not turn to me, instead, you want me to adapt to your ideas. You are not sick people who ask the doctor to cure you, but rather sick people who tell the doctor how to. So do not act this way but pray as I taught you in the Our Father: “Hallowed be thy Name,” that is, be glorified in my need. “Thy kingdom come,” that is, let all that is in us and in the world be in accord with your kingdom. “Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven,” that is, in our need, decide as you see fit for our temporal and eternal life. If you say to me truly: “Thy will be done,” which is the same as saying: “You take care of it,” I will intervene with all my omnipotence, and I will resolve the most difficult situations.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart



Day 28: “Woman, behold thy Son,” ... “Behold thy mother.”

Opening Prayer – The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

Beatitude

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

Reflection

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” (John 19:26-27)

Jesus spoke these words from the cross to his beloved disciple John and his Mother and at that moment the Virgin Mary evolved from the Mother of God to become the Spiritual Mother of each one of us. The Virgin Mary is the embodiment of spiritual and physical purity. Her purity was revealed by her being conceived without sin (Immaculate Conception) and her perpetual virginity. Her purity signifies an undivided heart completely dedicated to God, making her a model for believers and a symbol of the Church's purity as Christ's "bride".

The Venerable Fulton Sheen wrote that purity is the virtue of moral and spiritual cleanliness and includes:

- Chastity - the proper integration of one's sexuality in his/her vocation,
- Modesty - upholding one's dignity as adopted sons/daughters of God the Father in thoughts, words, and actions,
- Purity of heart - aligning one's desires, intentions, and free will with God's holiness focusing on charity and truth.

The Church provides two pathways for men and women to achieve purity of heart and holiness. The first is through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. In marriage, the man and wife, who were previously primarily focused on themselves are called now to die to themselves (practice selflessness) in order to give themselves completely to their spouse. In the same manner that Jesus Christ suffered and died for his Bride the Church, husbands and wives are called to die to themselves for their spouse and family.

Of course, this is not easy. That is why the failure rate for marriages in the world is so high. The Church provides supernatural Graces through the Sacraments to help the couple overcome humanity's brokenness due to concupiscence. Couples who actively participate in their faith, attend Mass together, and seek healing through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation find true happiness and fulfillment in their marriage.

The second pathway provided by the Church is chastity. While our culture lampoons virginity as a sign of failure for adult men and women, this virtuous lifestyle shines a light in the darkness of the culture as an



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 28: “Woman, behold thy Son,” ... “Behold thy mother.”

example of true dignity and lasting joy as opposed to the fleeting pleasure and lasting shame inspired by the world. Few truly understand what chastity is and why it is important.

The man or woman who takes a vow of chastity, take it not to avoid the sacrifices that marriage demands, but to detach himself from the ties of the flesh in order that he may be free for greater service.
(page 41)

Made in the image and likeness of God, we as Fishermen are called to extoll the virtue of purity and chastity in our vocation. This is reflected in how we act, what we say, and how we live.

Pray

The Surrender Novena – Day 4

You see evil growing instead of weakening? Do not worry. Close your eyes and say to me with faith: “Thy will be done. You take care of it.” I say to you that I will take care of it, and that I will intervene as does a doctor and I will accomplish miracles when they are needed. Do you see that the sick person is getting worse? Do not be upset, but close your eyes and say, “You take care of it.” I say to you that I will take care of it, and that there is no medicine more powerful than my loving intervention. By my love, I promise this to you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart



Day 29: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Opening Prayer – The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

Beatitude

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Reflection

What does it mean to be poor in spirit? The Venerable Fulton Sheen defined it as an interior “detachment from wealth, social position, and earthly knowledge that when God demands sacrifice, they are prepared to surrender all”.

Having great material wealth does not mean that a person lacks spiritual poverty. If one gives generously to the poor, gives generously to the Church, and shares the resources God has given to them with others, they are living with a spirit of poverty. Jesus came into the world as the son of a poor couple from Nazareth, being born in a stable, and living a simple life of a carpenter. He demonstrated detachment from the world and its goods throughout his life.

There are some who struggle with the need for social status; to be famous, to be popular, to be welcomed into the highest social circles. Whether they are born into high culture or doggedly aspire to it throughout their lives, this need to be recognized, admired, and respected by those around them is important.

Spiritual poverty calls us to reject these grandiose desires and follow the example of Christ who rejected the temptations of power and social status. Jesus was rejected by the most powerful people of his day in his hometown of Nazareth, by the Jewish leaders and teachers, and finally by the ruling class of Romans that put him to death.

Finally, we are called to intellectual humility. We must submit ourselves to faith in God instead of relying on human knowledge for all the answers in life. Jesus exclaimed from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This was the hardest reparation of all according to Venerable Fulton Sheen.

“It was not difficult to be economically poor; it was not so difficult to be socially poor and stripped of his friends. But it was hard to surrender divine consolation in a moment of agony to atone for the self-wise, the intelligentsia, the conceited who refuse to bow their heads to the wisdom of God, for the atheists who live without God, and for the godless who blot his name from the land of the living.”

Jesus emptied himself and demonstrated perfect spiritual poverty throughout his life. We need to focus on our own lives and identify areas where we lack spiritual poverty, where we need to grow in our likeness to Christ.



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 29: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Pray

The Surrender Novena – Day 5

And when I must lead you on a path different from the one you see, I will prepare you; I will carry you in my arms; I will let you find yourself, like children who have fallen asleep in their mother’s arms, on the other bank of the river. What troubles you and hurts you immensely are your reason, your thoughts and worry, and your desire at all costs to deal with what afflicts you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart



Day 30: “I thirst”

Opening Prayer – The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

Beatitude

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.”

Reflection

Justice is one of the four cardinal virtues that was covered previously. Justice is a natural virtue which means we are born with it. In our Baptism, we receive the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and our natural virtues are supercharged by the Grace of God. So it is with the virtue of justice.

Justice calls each one of us to give to our neighbor what is due to them and to give what is due to God. We call this the virtue of religion. As Catholics what do we believe is due to God? What does our Lord and Creator want from us? Jesus proclaimed it from the cross when he said, “I thirst.”

Jesus was not asking for a drink of water. In his book *33 Days to Morning Glory*, Father Michael Gaitley describes St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta’s understanding of the meaning of “I thirst.” Jesus was thirsting for love. He was thirsting for souls!

“I thirst” is something much deeper than Jesus just saying, “I love you.” Until you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you - you cannot begin to know who He wants to be for you. Or who He wants you to be for Him. (p 72)

Jesus is looking for a relationship with each one of us that is so much more than just showing up for Sunday Mass and making a yearly confession of our sins. Jesus does not want a relationship with us so that he can get to know us. He already knows who we are. He knows each one of us better than we know ourselves. Jesus wants a deeper relationship with each of us so that we can come to know Him! Jesus thirsts for us to spend time with him in prayer, in the sacraments, and in His Word – the Sacred Scriptures. When we reach out to Him in these ways, He will respond by drawing us closer to him and his Sacred Heart. We will come to know true love.

The cardinal virtue of justice demands that we give to God what is due to him. However, Jesus is thirsting for so much more! Give time to Jesus today in prayer and surrender to the Will of the Father. In this way we will begin to satiate the thirst of Jesus!



Pray

The Surrender Novena – Day 6

You are sleepless; you want to judge everything, direct everything and see to everything and you surrender to human strength, or worse—to men themselves, trusting in their intervention—this is what hinders my words and my views. Oh, how much I wish from you this surrender, to help you; and how I suffer when I see you so agitated! Satan tries to do exactly this: to agitate you and to remove you from my protection and to throw you into the jaws of human initiative. So, trust only in me, rest in me, surrender to me in everything.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart



Day 31: “It is finished”

Opening Prayer – The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

Beatitude

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God.”

Reflection

St. Augustine defined peace as *the tranquility of order*. How we yearn for peace: peace in our world, in our country, in our homes and families, and peace in our hearts. If we spend all our time tapped into social media, monitoring the news, and listening to political talking heads, our inner sense of peace can seem unattainable.

The world rejects the ideals set forth by Jesus. The world embraces power and wealth and looks upon the idea of virtue as something medieval. Peace in the world can only come from conquering our enemies and obtaining all the material wealth that we desire.

Jesus is called the Prince of Peace! When he was born, the angels proclaimed *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to people of good will!”* As his life was ending on the cross, He proclaimed, *“It is finished.”* The mission for which he came into the world had been accomplished. He had paid the price for man’s sinfulness and brought reconciliation between God and man. Jesus Christ came to bring peace that was different from the worldly peace which is simply the absence of war. The peace Jesus brings to each of us is an inner peace, a lasting peace, a deep consolation born of trust in Him!

Each of us is called to be a peacemaker in our marriages, in our families, in our communities, and in our parishes. The question for many of us is, how do we become peacemakers? The answer certainly begins with the repetitive theme of this preparation for consecration: develop a daily prayer life, participate in the sacraments, and read sacred scripture. More than that we must become men of virtue. We must take time to learn about the virtues, to determine areas that need improvement and then endeavor through our faith to grow closer to Christ.

Peace is attainable in our lives and in our families. We just need to stop seeking it in the world and look for the true peace that can only be found in Jesus Christ and in His Church! In our Baptism we come to partake of the Divine Nature and become beloved sons and daughters of God the Father. Then, by surrendering to the Will of our Father in heaven, we are drawn closer to Him and His Love.



Pray

The Surrender Novena – Day 7

I perform miracles in proportion to your full surrender to me and to your not thinking of yourselves. I sow treasure troves of graces when you are in the deepest poverty. No person of reason, no thinker, has ever performed miracles, not even among the saints. He does divine works whosoever surrenders to God. So don't think about it any more, because your mind is acute and for you it is very hard to see evil and to trust in me and to not think of yourself. Do this for all your needs, do this, all of you, and you will see great continual silent miracles. I will take care of things, I promise this to you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

*I always want to belong
completely to Jesus.*

The Litany of the Sacred Heart



Day 32: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

Opening Prayer – The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

Beatitude

“Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted.”

Reflection

Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; and when he had said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)

It is fitting that today, on the final day of our reflection on Christ’s seven last words and the culmination of our preparation for our consecration to Jesus through Mary, we should focus on our own last breaths.

With all the technological marvels introduced to the world over the past century and the amazing advancements in the treatment of diseases that plague many of us, the fact remains that we are all going to die someday. There will come a time that, like Jesus Christ, we will give up our spirit and breathe our last breath.

At that moment little about our life’s accomplishments will matter. We will not be wondering about the balance in our retirement fund or whether our fantasy baseball team will make it to the playoffs. We will not be worried about our weight, our missed workouts, or our appearance. We will be concerned about one thing – what’s next?

Jesus Christ gave his life and chose twelve apostles to build a Church here on earth that would reveal to mankind the love of God and the correct path for our life in order to be united for eternity with Him. We were created with an intellect to reason and a free will to choose. Jesus laid it out plainly: *“No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”*

Fulton Sheen states that if we choose to follow Christ in this life the world will make us mourn.

If we practice meekness, the world will try to provoke us to anger; if we are merciful, the world will accuse us of not being just; if we are clean of heart, the world will call us “Prudes”; if we hunger and thirst for justice, we shall not succeed; if we are peacemakers, the world will say we are cowards; if we are poor in spirit, the world will look down upon us. (p.87)

Jesus stated, *“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”* (Luke 12:48) As Catholic men we have been entrusted with everything! We must take our roles in our family, our Church, and our community seriously and follow Christ. We must mourn the evil in this world so that we can be raised with Him on the last day. If we choose God over mammon, then when we are preparing for our death, we can do so with great hope of an everlasting life of comfort with our Father in heaven.



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Day 32: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

Pray

The Surrender Novena – Day 8

Close your eyes and let yourself be carried away on the flowing current of my grace; close your eyes and do not think of the present, turning your thoughts away from the future just as you would from temptation. Repose in me, believing in my goodness, and I promise you by my love that if you say, “You take care of it,” I will take care of it all; I will console you, liberate you and guide you.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

The Litany of the Sacred Heart



Final Day

Consecration Preparation

Day 33: Final Preparation for Consecration

On this final day of preparation for consecration, let us take time to silently reflect on how far we have come, and what we have learned.

How have I allowed the lessons about sin and virtue to affect my behavior? My interactions with others?

Hail Mary...

How have I put the cardinal and theological virtues into practice? Where is there more room to grow?

Remember, Most Gracious Virgin Mary...

How has meditating on the suffering of Mary helped my understand suffering in the world and in my life?

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy...

How has meditating on the suffering of Mary helped my understand suffering in the world and in my life?

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary...

We ask God to help us surrender completely to his holy will as we complete our surrender novena.

The Surrender Novena – Day 9

Pray always in readiness to surrender, and you will receive from it great peace and great rewards, even when I confer on you the grace of immolation, of repentance, and of love. Then what does suffering matter? It seems impossible to you? Close your eyes and say with all your soul, “Jesus, you take care of it.” Do not be afraid, I will take care of things and you will bless my name by humbling yourself. A thousand prayers cannot equal one single act of surrender, remember this well. There is no novena more effective than this.

O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

Mother, I am yours now and forever.

Through you and with you

I always want to belong

completely to Jesus.

We close today by praying one of the following litanies:

Litany of Humility

Litany of the Holy Spirit

Litany of Loreto

Litany of the Sacred Heart



Consecration Day

Consecration Prayer

Mary, today I consecrate myself to you and your Immaculate Heart. I lay at your feet all my fears, needs, hopes, and prayers. I offer to you all the merits of the prayers and good works of my life and all the graces I receive now and in the future. Do with them as you will, for you know which of your children are in the most need.

Mary, full of grace, you were saved by Him who would be your Son, so that at the very moment of your Immaculate Conception, you were protected from the stain of original sin. Today, I take you as my guide, to protect me from all sin, especially the seven deadly sins.

Mary, exemplar of all virtue, throughout your life, you exemplified all Christian virtue. Today, I take you as my model of how to live a life of virtue.

Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, your heart was pierced by a sword, just as Simeon foretold. You suffered throughout your life, more than any person in all of history. In your suffering, you never wavered in your devotion to Jesus, and you never took your eyes off of Him. Today, I turn to you for help with all my sufferings, past, present, and yet to come. Help me to never let my gaze stray from Jesus.

Mary, Our Blessed Mother, you stood at the foot of the Cross. Jesus gave you as Mother to the Apostle John, the Church, and all of humanity. Today, I take you into my home and into my heart, just like John.

Mary, Queen of Heaven, I beg of you to intercede for me, that in this life I may strive always to do the will of God the Father, and to grow closer to Jesus, God the Son, and to open myself to the workings of God the Holy Spirit.

Mary, Mother of Mercy, at the hour of my death, I will stand before the throne of God empty handed. I beg of you to intercede for me that I may enter the joy of heaven, and that I may worship God with you and all the saints for all eternity.

Amen.



Appendix

Prayers

Marian Prayers

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Memorare

Remember, most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence we fly unto thee, oh Virgin or virgins, our mother. To thee do we come, before thee we stand sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not our petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer our prayers. Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope.

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.

To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning, and weeping, in this valley of tears.

Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us.

And after this, our exile, show unto us, the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us oh holy mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ! Amen.

Angelus

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary... *And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.*

Hail Mary...

Behold the handmaid of the Lord... *Be it done unto me according to thy word.*

Hail Mary...

And the Word was made flesh... *And dwelt among us.*

Hail Mary...

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God... *That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech thee, oh Lord, thy grace into our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ your son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.



Spiritual Warfare Prayers

St. Michael Prayer

St. Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray, and do thou, Oh Prince of the Heavenly Hosts, cast into hell, Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.*

*Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created,
and you shall renew the face of the earth.*

Let us pray:

*O God, who did instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit,
grant us in the same Spirit that we may be truly wise, and ever rejoice in His consolation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Seven Sorrows Devotion

Pope Pius VII approved the following series of prayers in honor of the Seven Sorrows for daily meditation in 1815:

O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me. Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

First Sword of Sorrow – Simeon's Prophecy

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the affliction of your tender heart at the prophecy of the holy and aged Simeon. Dear Mother, by your heart so afflicted, obtain for me the virtue of humility and the gift of the holy fear of God.

Hail Mary...

Second Sword of Sorrow – Flight into Egypt

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the anguish of your most affectionate heart during the flight into Egypt and your sojourn there. Dear Mother, by your heart so troubled, obtain for me the virtue of generosity, especially toward the poor, and the gift of piety.

Hail Mary...



Third Sword of Sorrow – Loss of Jesus in the Temple

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in those anxieties which tried your troubled heart at the loss of your dear Jesus. Dear Mother, by your heart so full of anguish, obtain for me the virtue of chastity and the gift of knowledge.

Hail Mary...

Fourth Sword of Sorrow – Meeting Jesus on the Way of the Cross

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the consternation of your heart at meeting Jesus as He carried His Cross. Dear Mother, by your heart so troubled, obtain for me the virtue of patience and the gift of fortitude.

Hail Mary...

Fifth Sword of Sorrow – The Crucifixion

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the martyrdom which your generous heart endured in standing near Jesus in His agony. Dear Mother, by your afflicted heart obtain for me the virtue of temperance and the gift of counsel.

Hail Mary...

Sixth Sword of Sorrow – Jesus is Taken Down From the Cross

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, in the wounding of your compassionate heart, when the side of Jesus was struck by the lance before His Body was removed from the Cross. Dear Mother, by your heart thus transfixed, obtain for me the virtue of fraternal charity and the gift of understanding.

Hail Mary...

Seventh Sword of Sorrow – Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

I grieve for you, O Mary most sorrowful, for the pangs that wrenched your most loving heart at the burial of Jesus. Dear Mother, by your heart sunk in the bitterness of desolation, obtain for me the virtue of diligence and the gift of wisdom.

Hail Mary...

Let Us Pray:

Let intercession be made for us, we beseech You, O Lord Jesus Christ, now and at the hour of our death, before the throne of Your mercy, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother, whose most holy soul was pierced by a sword of sorrow in the hour of Your bitter Passion. Through You, O Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, Who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.



Litanies

Litany of Humility

Rafael Cardinal Merry de Val (1865-1930)

O Jesus, meek and humble of heart... *Hear me.*

From the desire of being esteemed... *Deliver me, O Jesus.*

From the desire of being loved...

From the desire of being extolled...

From the desire of being honored...

From the desire of being praised...

From the desire of being preferred to others...

From the desire of being consulted...

From the desire of being approved...

From the fear of being humiliated...

From the fear of being despised...

From the fear of suffering rebukes...

From the fear of being calumniated...

From the fear of being forgotten...

From the fear of being ridiculed...

From the fear of being wronged...

From the fear of being suspected...

That others may be loved more than I... *Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.*

That others may be esteemed more than I...

That in the opinion of the world, others may increase and I may decrease...

That others may be chosen and I set aside...

That others may be praised and I go unnoticed...

That others may be preferred to me in everything...

That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should...

Litany of the Holy Spirit

God the Father of Heaven... **Have mercy on us.**

God the Son, Redeemer of the world...

God the Holy Spirit...

Holy Trinity, One God...

Divine Essence, one true God... **Have mercy on us.**

Spirit of truth and wisdom...

Spirit of holiness and justice...

Spirit of understanding and counsel...



Spirit of love and joy...
Spirit of peace and patience...
Spirit of longanimity and meekness...
Spirit of benignity and goodness...
Love substantial of the Father and the Son...
Love and life of saintly souls...
Fire ever burning...
Living water to quench the thirst of hearts...

From all evil... **Deliver us, O Holy Spirit.**
From all impurity of soul and body...
From all gluttony and sensuality...
From all attachments to the things of the earth...
From all hypocrisy and pretense...
From all imperfections and deliberate faults...
From our own will...
From slander...
From deceiving our neighbors...
From our passions and disorderly appetites...
From our inattentiveness to Thy holy inspirations...
From despising little things...
From debauchery and malice...
From love of comfort and luxury...
From wishing to seek or desire anything other than Thee...
From everything that displeases Thee...

Most loving Father... **forgive us.**
Divine Word... **have pity on us.**
Holy and divine Spirit... **leave us not until we are in possession of the Divine Essence, Heaven of heavens.**

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world... **Send us the divine Consoler.**
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world... **Fill us with the gifts of Thy Spirit.**
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world... **Make the fruits of the Holy Spirit increase within us.**

V. Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Thy faithful, **R.** And enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.
V. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created, **R.** And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.
Let Us Pray
God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit instructed the hearts of the faithful, grant us by the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever to rejoice in His consolation. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord,
Amen.



Litany of Loreto

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

Christ hear us.

Christ graciously hear us.

God, the Father of heaven... **have mercy on us.**

God the Son, Redeemer of the world...

God the Holy Spirit...

Holy Trinity, one God...

Holy Mary... **pray for us.**

Holy Mother of God...

Holy Virgin of virgins...

Mother of Christ...

Mother of the Church...

Mother of Mercy...

Mother of divine grace...

Mother of Hope, ...

Mother most pure...

Mother most chaste...

Mother inviolate...

Mother undefiled...

Mother most amiable...

Mother admirable...

Mother of good counsel...

Mother of our Creator...

Mother of our Savior...

Virgin most prudent...

Virgin most venerable...

Virgin most renowned...

Virgin most powerful...

Virgin most merciful...

Virgin most faithful...

Mirror of justice...

Seat of wisdom...

Cause of our joy...

Spiritual vessel...

Vessel of honor...

Singular vessel of devotion...

Mystical rose...



Tower of David...
Tower of ivory...
House of gold...
Ark of the covenant...
Gate of heaven...
Morning star...
Health of the sick...
Refuge of sinners...
Solace of Migrants...
Comfort of the afflicted...
Help of Christians...
Queen of Angels...
Queen of Patriarchs...
Queen of Prophets...
Queen of Apostles...
Queen of Martyrs...
Queen of Confessors...
Queen of Virgins...
Queen of all Saints...
Queen conceived without original sin...
Queen assumed into heaven...
Queen of the most holy Rosary...
Queen of families...
Queen of peace...

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world... **spare us, O Lord.**
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world... **graciously hear us, O Lord.**
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world... **have mercy on us.**

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord God,
that we, your servants, may enjoy perpetual health of mind and body;
and by the glorious intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin,
may be delivered from present sorrow, and obtain eternal joy.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Litany of The Sacred Heart

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven... **have mercy on us.**
God the Son, Redeemer of the world...
God the Holy Spirit...
Holy Trinity, one God...

Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father... **have mercy on us.**
Heart of Jesus, Formed by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mother...
Heart of Jesus, Substantially united to the Word of God,
Heart of Jesus, Of Infinite Majesty,
Heart of Jesus, Holy Temple of God,
Heart of Jesus, Tabernacle of the Most High,
Heart of Jesus, House of God and Gate of Heaven,
Heart of Jesus, Burning Furnace of charity,
Heart of Jesus, Vessel of Justice and love,
Heart of Jesus, Full of goodness and love,
Heart of Jesus, Abyss of all virtues,
Heart of Jesus, Most worthy of all praises,
Heart of Jesus, King and center of all hearts,
Heart of Jesus, In Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,
Heart of Jesus, In Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Divinity,
Heart of Jesus, in Whom the Father is well pleased,
Heart of Jesus, Of Whose fullness we have all received,
Heart of Jesus, Desire of the everlasting hills,
Heart of Jesus, Patient and abounding in mercy,
Heart of Jesus, Rich unto all who call upon Thee,
Heart of Jesus, Fountain of life and holiness,
Heart of Jesus, Atonement for our sins,
Heart of Jesus, Filled with reproaches,
Heart of Jesus, Bruised for our offenses,
Heart of Jesus, Made obedient unto death,
Heart of Jesus, Pierced with a lance,
Heart of Jesus, Source of all consolation,
Heart of Jesus, Our Life and Resurrection,
Heart of Jesus, Our Peace and Reconciliation,
Heart of Jesus, Victim for our sins,



Marian Consecration Readiness Conditioning – Litanies

Heart of Jesus, Salvation of those who hope in Thee,
Heart of Jesus, Hope of those who die in Thee,
Heart of Jesus, Delight of all the Saints,
Have mercy on us.

Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world... **Spare us, O Lord.**
Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world... **Graciously hear us, O Lord.**
Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world... **Have mercy on us.**

Jesus, meek and humble of heart,
Make our hearts like unto Thine.

Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, look upon the Heart of Thine most-beloved Son, and upon the praises and satisfaction He offers Thee in the name of sinners; and appeased by worthy homage, pardon those who implore Thy mercy, in Thy Great Goodness in the name of the same Jesus Christ Thy Son, Who lives and reigns with Thee, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen.