

1. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, CHOSEN DAUGHTER OF ISRAEL

Gen 12:1–7 or 2 Sam 7:8b–11, 16 ; Mt 1,1-17

"God keeps His promises through humble hearts."

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a family discovered an old chest in their attic containing letters written by their great-grandparents. As they read them, they realised that promises made generations earlier had shaped the lives they were living today. God's promises are like that: they are never forgotten, and they unfold across generations until they reach their fulfilment.

In the First Reading, if we hear the call of Abraham, God promises that through his descendants all nations will be blessed. *(OR if 2 Sam is chosen as reading: God promises King David an everlasting kingdom, a promise ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, born of David's line through Mary.)*

In the Gospel, Saint Matthew presents the genealogy of Jesus, showing that through every generation—despite human weakness and failure—God remained faithful to His covenant until His Son entered the world.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary, Chosen Daughter of Israel. In her, the faith and hope of God's chosen people blossom into their fullest fruit, and through her faithful "Yes," God's ancient promises become reality for the salvation of the world. As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for His mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You fulfilled the promises made to Abraham through the obedience of Mary. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You entered our human family to make us children of God. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us, like Mary, to trust completely in the Father's plan. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *God Keeps His Promises Through Humble Hearts*

There is an old story about a father who planted an olive tree on the day his daughter was born. Every year they would stand beside it and watch it grow. When the little girl was five, she asked, "Daddy, when will it give us olives?" The father smiled and replied, "Not yet. Olive trees take time. But one day, perhaps your own children will enjoy its fruit." Years later, long after the father had died, the tree produced a rich harvest, and the daughter remembered his words. Some of the greatest gifts in life require patience. The one who plants the seed may never see the harvest, but the promise is fulfilled in God's own time. Today's readings tell us that God's promises are like that. They unfold over centuries, yet they never fail.

The first reading, whether we listen to God's call of Abraham or His covenant with King David, speaks about divine promises. In Genesis, God asks Abraham to leave behind his homeland, his security and his future, and to trust solely in the Lord. God promises that through Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Abraham has no map, no certainty, and no visible guarantee. He has only God's word.

(If the alternative reading from 2 Samuel is chosen:, David wishes to build a temple for the Lord, but instead God makes an astonishing

promise to him: "I will establish your kingdom forever." At that moment, neither Abraham nor David could have imagined how those promises would be fulfilled. They simply believed. Their trust became the foundation upon which God built His plan of salvation).

The Gospel may seem at first to be nothing more than a long list of unfamiliar names. Many people are tempted to skip over the genealogy of Jesus. Yet for Matthew, this genealogy is like a great bridge connecting the Old Testament with the New.

Every name represents another step in God's faithful journey with His people. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Ruth, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Zerubbabel—generation after generation, century after century, God quietly continues His work. There are saints and sinners, faithful kings and corrupt rulers, foreigners and ordinary people. Human history is messy, but God's faithfulness remains constant. Matthew is telling us that God writes straight even with crooked lines.

Someone once held up the back of a beautifully woven carpet before a group of children. They saw only knots, loose threads and tangled colours. Then the teacher turned the carpet around, and suddenly a magnificent picture appeared. "This," she said, "is how God sees your life."

We often see only the tangled side of our own story. We experience disappointments, illnesses, unanswered prayers, broken relationships and unexpected losses. We wonder why certain things happen. Yet God sees the whole picture. He is weaving together every thread, even the painful ones, into something beautiful. That is exactly what happened throughout Israel's history. There were wars,

exiles, failures and sins, but none of them could destroy God's promise.

It is in this long history that we meet Mary. The Church honours her today as the Chosen Daughter of Israel. This beautiful title reminds us that Mary did not appear out of nowhere.

She is the flowering of centuries of faith. Everything that Israel hoped for, prayed for and longed for reaches its fulfilment in her.

She is the faithful daughter of Abraham who believes God's promise. She is the daughter of David through whom the eternal King comes into the world.

She is the daughter of Zion, representing all God's people waiting for the Messiah.

When the angel came to Nazareth, all the hopes of Israel seemed to rest in the heart of one humble young woman. Her answer was simple: "Let it be done to me according to your word." With that humble "Yes," the promises made to Abraham and David began their final fulfilment.

There is a moving story about a monk who spent many years illuminating manuscripts by hand. One day a visitor asked him, "Why do you spend months decorating a page that very few people will ever notice?" The monk replied, "Because God notices." Mary lived that same hidden life. For thirty years she lived quietly in Nazareth. There were no crowds, no miracles, no applause.

She cooked, cleaned, prayed, cared for Joseph and Jesus, and remained faithful in ordinary things.

Yet those hidden years were precious in God's eyes because greatness is measured not by public recognition but by faithful love.

Our own lives may seem ordinary, but if they are lived with faith, they become part of God's extraordinary plan.

St. Teresa of Calcutta understood this well. Once a journalist asked her whether she believed she could change the world. She answered, "No. I can only love one person at a time. God does the rest." She knew that holiness begins with small acts of fidelity.

Abraham simply took the first step.

David simply trusted God's promise.

Mary simply said "Yes."

None of them knew the full consequences of their obedience.

Yet through those simple acts of faith, God transformed history.

The same is true for us.

Every prayer we say, every act of forgiveness we offer, every Rosary we pray, every child we teach about Christ, every lonely person we visit, every act of generosity that nobody notices becomes another thread in God's tapestry of salvation. Sometimes we become discouraged because we cannot see immediate results.

Parents pray for children who seem to have drifted away from the faith.

Grandparents worry about the future of their families.

Priests and catechists wonder whether their work bears fruit.

People pray for years for healing or reconciliation without seeing an answer.

Today's readings encourage us not to lose heart. God often works across generations. Abraham never saw all the nations blessed.

David never saw the eternal kingdom. Even Mary stood beneath the Cross before she witnessed the glory of the Resurrection. Faith

means trusting God's promises even when we cannot yet see their fulfillment.

There is a beautiful legend about three stonecutters working on the same construction site. When someone asked the first what he was doing, he replied, "I'm cutting stones." The second answered, "I'm earning my living." The third looked up with a smile and said, "I'm building a cathedral." All three were doing the same work, but only one saw the larger purpose.

Our daily lives may seem filled with ordinary tasks—

raising children, caring for ageing parents, going to work, preparing meals, visiting the sick, praying quietly in church. Yet when these are done with faith, we are helping God build His kingdom. Like Mary, we become collaborators in His plan.

As we celebrate Mary, the Chosen Daughter of Israel, let us ask for her faith. She teaches us that God's promises are always reliable, even when they take longer than we expect. She teaches us that humility is stronger than pride, trust stronger than fear, and obedience stronger than self-reliance. Above all, she teaches us that God delights in working through ordinary people whose hearts are open to Him.

Let me conclude with one final story. During the restoration of a medieval cathedral, workers discovered a small stone hidden high in the roof beams. On it was carved the name of an unknown mason together with the words: "Seen by God." No visitor had ever noticed that stone. For hundreds of years it remained invisible. Yet the mason had carved his name there, believing that if no human eye ever saw his work, God certainly would. Mary lived her entire life with that conviction. She did not seek recognition; she sought only to do

God's will. Because of her humble faith, the promises made to Abraham and David became flesh in Jesus Christ. May we, too, live each day content to be "seen by God," trusting that our hidden fidelity will become, in His time, a blessing for generations to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the God who is always faithful to His promises, let us bring before Him our prayers.

1. For the Church: that, following the example of Mary, the Chosen Daughter of Israel, she may faithfully proclaim Christ and lead all peoples to trust in God's promises. Lord, hear us.
2. For world leaders: that they may govern with justice, integrity and compassion, respecting the dignity of every human person and working for lasting peace. Lord, hear us.
3. For the Jewish people, our elder brothers and sisters in faith: that God's covenantal love may continue to bear fruit in mutual understanding, dialogue and respect among all peoples. Lord, hear us.
4. For our families and parish community: that, like Mary, we may respond generously to God's call, persevere in faith during times of uncertainty, and become instruments of hope to others. Lord, hear us.
5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying, and for all our faithful departed: that the Lord may strengthen those who suffer, grant eternal rest to those who have died, and comfort all who mourn with the hope of the Resurrection. Lord, hear us.

Heavenly Father, You fulfilled Your ancient promises through the faith of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Hear these prayers which we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Trusting in God's unfailing promises and following the faith of Mary, the Chosen Daughter of Israel, let us now offer our lives with these gifts, and pray, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Through Jesus Christ, the promised Son of Abraham and the eternal King from the house of David, we have become children of God. United with Mary, the Chosen Daughter of Israel, and trusting completely in our Father's faithful love, let us pray with confidence:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and, as You faithfully fulfilled Your promises
through Abraham, David and the Blessed Virgin Mary,
graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Father's promises
and came into the world through the humble faith of Mary,
the Chosen Daughter of Israel, look not on our sins, but on the faith
of your Church, and graciously grant her peace
and unity in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, the eternal King promised to Abraham and David and given to us through Mary, the Chosen Daughter of Israel; behold him who takes away the sins of the world.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose Abraham and remained faithful to His promises throughout the generations, fill your hearts with unwavering trust. Amen.

May the Son, born of Mary, the Chosen Daughter of Israel, strengthen you to walk faithfully in His saving way. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin Mary and accomplished God's plan of salvation, make you steadfast in faith, joyful in hope and generous in love. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, confident that God is always faithful to His promises, and like Mary, say "yes" to His will each day.

2. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Is 7:10-14; 8:10c; Lk 1:26-38

God's greatest works begin with one generous 'Yes.'

INTRODUCTION

A young violin student once dreamed of performing before a great audience. When the opportunity finally came, she was terrified and almost refused. Her teacher quietly said, "You do not have to be perfect. You only have to say yes, and let the music do the rest." That simple "yes" changed her life forever. God's greatest miracles often begin with an ordinary person's willingness to trust Him.

Isaiah announces God's promise of Emmanuel—God-with-us—a sign that even when human beings hesitate, God remains faithful to His plan. In the Gospel, the angel Gabriel invites Mary into that divine plan, and her humble "Let it be done to me according to your word" opens the door for the Saviour to enter our world.

Today we celebrate The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Annunciation of the Lord. The Annunciation is not simply the announcement of Jesus' birth; it is the celebration of Mary's faith-filled response. In her "Yes," heaven and earth meet, and God's promise becomes flesh among us. Today the Lord continues to ask each of us for our own generous "yes."

As we recognise the times we have resisted His will or delayed our response to His call, let us ask His mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You came into the world through the willing obedience of the Virgin Mary. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You invite each of us to trust God's plan even when we do not understand it. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You remain Emmanuel, God-with-us, faithful to Your people forever. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: "God's greatest works begin with one generous 'Yes.'"

A famous story is told about a young firefighter who had just completed his training. One night, the alarm rang. A family was trapped in a burning house. The young firefighter froze for a moment. He had trained for months, but now the danger was real. His captain looked at him and said only one sentence: "Courage is not knowing everything; courage is taking the first step." The young man climbed the ladder, rescued the family, and later admitted that he had been frightened the entire time. Looking back, he said, "My life changed because I said yes before I knew how everything would turn out." That is very much the story of the Annunciation. Mary did not know every detail of God's plan. She simply trusted God enough to take the first step. God's greatest works begin with one generous "Yes."

The first reading takes us to a difficult moment in Israel's history. King Ahaz is frightened because powerful armies threaten Jerusalem. Through the prophet Isaiah, God invites him to ask for a sign. Yet Ahaz refuses. On the surface, his words sound humble: "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test." But in reality, he has already decided to rely on political alliances instead of trusting God. God, however, does not abandon His people. He gives a sign anyway: "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call him

Emmanuel." Even when human beings hesitate, God remains faithful. Human fear cannot cancel God's promises.

Centuries later, that prophecy finds its fulfillment in a small village called Nazareth. Unlike Ahaz, Mary does not refuse God's invitation. She is surprised, even troubled, and she asks a sincere question: "How can this be?" There is a great difference between the question of unbelief and the question of faith. Ahaz questioned because he did not want to trust. Mary questioned because she wanted to understand how she could cooperate with God's will. Once Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit would accomplish what seemed impossible, Mary uttered one of the most beautiful sentences ever spoken: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word."

Notice that Mary never says, "Now I understand everything." She does not ask for guarantees. She does not request a detailed plan of her future. She simply entrusts herself to God. She knows that saying yes will change her life forever. She will have to explain her mysterious pregnancy to Joseph. She may face misunderstanding, rejection, even danger. Yet she believes that if God calls, God will also provide the grace needed for the journey. Faith is not seeing the whole road; faith is trusting the One who knows the road.

There is a beautiful story about St. Teresa of Calcutta. A volunteer once visited her house in Calcutta and was overwhelmed by the endless line of sick and dying people. He said, "Mother Teresa, I could never do what you do." She smiled and answered, "Neither could I. I simply do what God asks me today." That was Mary's secret as well. She did not carry the whole weight of the future. She accepted today's invitation. She said yes today, and tomorrow she

would say yes again. Holiness is usually not one heroic decision. It is thousands of faithful decisions repeated every day.

The Annunciation reminds us that God often works through ordinary people in ordinary places. Nazareth was not an important city. Mary was not a queen, a scholar or a famous person. She was a young woman living a hidden life. Yet God delights in choosing the humble. Throughout Scripture we see the same pattern. He chooses Abraham, an old man without children; Moses, who stammered; David, the youngest shepherd boy; the fishermen of Galilee; and now Mary of Nazareth. God does not ask first whether we are capable. He asks whether we are available.

Someone once asked a master violin maker how he selected the wood for his instruments. He replied, "I look for wood that is willing to resonate." Not every piece of wood produces beautiful music. The finest violin is made from wood that allows the vibrations to pass through it. Mary became the most beautiful instrument in God's hands because she allowed His grace to flow freely through her life. She did not seek attention for herself. Like every good instrument, she pointed to the beauty of the composer. Every Christian is called to become such an instrument, allowing Christ to be heard and seen through us.

Sometimes we think God's call must be something extraordinary. We imagine missionaries crossing oceans or saints performing miracles. Yet for most of us, God's invitation comes quietly. It comes when parents patiently care for their children after a sleepless night. It comes when a husband or wife chooses forgiveness instead of resentment. It comes when a young person refuses dishonesty because of conscience. It comes when an elderly person, suffering

illness, offers that suffering in union with Christ for the salvation of others. These simple acts rarely make the headlines, but in heaven they are immense. Every faithful act is another "yes" that allows Christ to enter the world.

Pope Benedict XVI once observed that Mary became the Mother of God because she first listened. Before she conceived Christ in her womb, she conceived Him in her heart through faith. Listening is becoming a rare virtue in our noisy world. We are surrounded by endless voices—social media, advertisements, opinions, worries and distractions. Yet God still speaks softly. He spoke to Elijah in the gentle breeze, to Samuel in the silence of the night, and to Mary through the angel's greeting. If we never make time for silence, we may never hear the invitation that could change our lives.

Every Mass is, in a sense, another Annunciation. Once again God comes to dwell among His people. The same Jesus whom Mary received into her womb now comes to us under the humble signs of bread and wine. Before Holy Communion, the priest lifts up the Eucharist, and we answer, "Amen." That single word means, "Yes, I believe." It is our own response to God's invitation. Mary's "Let it be done to me" finds its echo in our "Amen." We welcome Christ not only into our hands or onto our lips but into our hearts, our homes, our work, and our relationships.

A traveller once came across three stonecutters at work. He asked the first, "What are you doing?" The man replied, "I'm cutting stones." The second answered, "I'm earning a living." The third smiled and said, "I'm building a cathedral." All three were doing the same work, but only one saw God's greater purpose. Mary saw God's purpose. She realised that her simple "yes" was part of something infinitely

greater than herself—the salvation of the whole world. We may never know how our own daily acts of faith, kindness and obedience will touch other lives. A word of encouragement, a quiet prayer, a hidden sacrifice, a forgiving heart—God can use these to build His Kingdom in ways we cannot imagine.

As we leave this Eucharist today, perhaps the Lord is asking each of us for one simple "yes." It may be the courage to forgive someone, to return to prayer, to reconcile with a family member, to answer a vocation, to become more generous, or to trust Him through a difficult trial. Like Mary, we do not need to know everything before we answer. We only need to trust the One who calls us. For the God who fulfilled His promise through the humble Virgin of Nazareth continues to accomplish great things through ordinary people who dare to say with her: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word." May that prayer become the prayer of our lives, because God's greatest works still begin with one generous "Yes." Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the God for whom nothing is impossible, and inspired by the faith of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us bring our prayers before Him.

1. For the Church: that, like Mary, she may faithfully proclaim Christ to the world and courageously respond to every call of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may seek God's wisdom, promote justice and peace, and protect the dignity of every human life from conception to natural death, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For young people and all discerning their vocation: that they may listen with open hearts to God's voice and generously respond to His call, following Mary's example of trust and obedience, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that each of us may renew our daily "yes" to God through faithful prayer, loving service, and joyful witness to the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that the Lord, Emmanuel, may comfort those who suffer, grant strength to their carers, and welcome the departed into the fullness of His heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, You chose the humble Virgin Mary to become the Mother of Your Son and the model of faithful discipleship. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence, and grant that our lives may always echo her generous "yes." We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, like Mary, we may offer our lives with these gifts to God, and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Through generations God remained faithful to His promise until His Son was born of the Virgin Mary.

As children of the same heavenly Father, and trusting in His unfailing love, let us pray in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and strengthen us with the faith that sustained Abraham,
the prophets, Joseph, and above all the Blessed Virgin Mary.
As You fulfilled Your promise in the coming of Emmanuel,
keep us steadfast in hope
as we await the glorious coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, through Your coming into the world
You fulfilled the Father's ancient promise
and became our Emmanuel, the Prince of Peace.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,
inspired by the trusting obedience of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Graciously grant Your Church peace and unity
in accordance with Your will,
who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

This is Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, in whom the long
history of God's promise reaches its fulfilment.
Blessed are we who are invited to receive Emmanuel, God-with-us,
in the Holy Eucharist.
Happy are those who welcome Him with the faith and openness of
Mary.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who remained faithful to His promises throughout
the generations, strengthen you in hope and make your lives a living
witness to His unfailing love.
Amen.

May the Son, born of the Virgin Mary as Emmanuel, God-with-us,
dwell always in your hearts and lead you in the way of faithful
discipleship.
Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin Mary and
brought forth the Saviour of the world, fill you with courage to say
"yes" to God's will each day and make you joyful bearers of Christ to
others.
Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and with Mary's faithful "yes," bring Christ to the world.

3. THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Zeph 3:14–18 (or Song of Songs 2:8–14); Lk 1:39–56

Joy shared in service brings God to others.

INTRODUCTION

A little girl once asked her grandmother, "When did you know God loved you the most?" The elderly woman smiled and replied, "Not when someone gave me a gift, but when someone came to my house simply because I needed them." Sometimes the greatest expression of love is not what we say but the journey we willingly make for another.

The first reading rejoices because God Himself comes to dwell among His people, filling them with gladness and removing every fear. (*OR: The Song of Songs poetically describes the coming of the beloved, a passage the Church has long seen as reflecting Mary's joyful journey, carrying Christ, the Divine Bridegroom, to His people.*)

The Gospel shows how that promise is fulfilled when Mary carries Christ to Elizabeth, and two mothers rejoice because God has visited His people.

The title of today's Mass, The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrates much more than a family visit. It reminds us that wherever Mary goes carrying Christ, homes become holy places, hearts are filled with joy, and lives are changed through humble service.

As we gather around this altar, let us ask whether we bring Christ to others or keep Him only for ourselves. Let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for His mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You came to visit Your people and fill them with lasting joy. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You teach us through Mary that true greatness is found in humble service. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You continue to visit us in Your Word and in the Holy Eucharist. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: "*Joy Shared is Joy Multiplied*"

Several years ago, after a devastating flood, volunteers arrived in a small village carrying food and medicine. An elderly widow refused to take her parcel immediately. Instead, she pointed to her neighbour's house and quietly said, "Go there first. She has children." The volunteer asked, "But what about you?" She smiled and answered, "If she is cared for, I shall be happy too."

That widow understood something the world often forgets: genuine joy grows when it is shared.

Today's feast, the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is a feast of shared joy. It is not simply about one relative visiting another. It is about heaven visiting earth through a young woman who carried Jesus in her womb.

After the Annunciation, Mary could easily have remained at home. She had every reason to think about herself. She had just received the greatest news in history. She needed time to understand God's mysterious plan.

Instead, the Gospel tells us that Mary "set out in haste."
She did not hurry because she was anxious.
She hurried because love never walks slowly.

The road from Nazareth to the hill country of Judah was nearly 150 kilometres. There were no comfortable roads, no cars, no trains. Yet Mary travelled for days, probably with a caravan, simply to help Elizabeth.

Love always travels.
Faith always moves.
Joy always goes out to meet others.

The first reading from Zephaniah announces:
"The Lord your God is in your midst."
The people are told to rejoice because God has come to dwell among them.

Luke tells us exactly how that prophecy is fulfilled.
God comes hidden within Mary's womb.
She becomes the first tabernacle.

Where Mary goes, Jesus goes.
Where Jesus goes, joy follows.
Elizabeth immediately recognises this mystery.
"The child in my womb leapt for joy."

Even before birth, John the Baptist begins his mission of pointing people towards Christ.
Notice something remarkable.

Jesus has not yet spoken a single word.
He has performed no miracle.

He has preached no sermon.
Yet simply by His presence, lives are already changing.

Sometimes we think we must have perfect answers before we can evangelise.

The Visitation teaches something different.
Our first mission is not to speak about Christ.

It is to carry Christ.
People often meet Jesus through our kindness before they hear Him through our words.

St Teresa of Calcutta once said that the greatest poverty is to feel unwanted. She and her sisters did extraordinary things, yet she insisted that every act began with a smile. She said, "Peace begins with a smile."

Mary teaches exactly that lesson.
She brings no wealth.
She carries no gifts.
She simply brings Jesus. That is enough.

(If the alternative first reading from the Song of Songs is chosen:
It beautifully describes the beloved coming over mountains with eagerness. Christian tradition has often seen Mary reflected in those poetic words. She comes like spring itself.
Where Christ arrives, winter ends. Hope blossoms again).

Elizabeth had spent many years carrying disappointment.
She had prayed for a child without success.
Now, in her old age, God fulfils His promise.
Mary enters that house not as someone seeking attention but as someone ready to serve.

Luke quietly tells us that Mary remained with Elizabeth for about three months.

Think about that.

The Gospel gives only one verse about the journey.

Only one conversation.

But three whole months of hidden service.

We often celebrate dramatic moments.

God treasures ordinary faithfulness.

Changing water.

Preparing meals.

Cleaning the house.

Helping during pregnancy.

Praying together.

Listening patiently.

These simple acts became holy because they were done with love.

There is an old story about St Francis of Assisi.

One day a young friar asked him, "Brother Francis, shall we go into the town and preach?"

They walked through the streets greeting people, helping an old man carry wood, comforting a crying child, visiting a sick person and sharing food with beggars.

Hours later they returned home.

The young friar asked, "When shall we preach?"

Francis replied, "We already have."

Whether historically exact or not, the story beautifully illustrates today's Gospel.

Mary preached without standing in a pulpit.

She preached by arriving.

How many people today are waiting for a visitation?

Perhaps an elderly neighbour waiting for someone to knock at the door.

Perhaps parents longing for a phone call.

Perhaps a friend silently carrying depression.

Perhaps someone sitting alone after losing a spouse.

The greatest missionary journey may begin only a few houses away.

The Magnificat, Mary's great hymn, then bursts forth.

She praises God, not herself.

Every sentence begins with what God has done.

"My soul magnifies the Lord."

Humility is not thinking less of ourselves.

It is thinking more about God.

Mary knows that everything is grace.

That is why she becomes the model disciple.

Someone once asked the famous violinist Jascha Heifetz what made a violin extraordinary.

He answered, "It is not the wood. It is what passes through it."

The same is true of every Christian.

Our greatness does not come from ourselves.

It comes from allowing Christ to pass through our lives.

Mary is the perfect instrument because nothing blocks God's music.

She lets Him work freely.

The Visitation also reminds us that Christian communities should become places of encouragement rather than competition.

Notice what happens when Mary and Elizabeth meet.
Neither envies the other.
Neither compares herself.
Neither seeks attention.
Each recognises God's work in the other.
Elizabeth blesses Mary. Mary praises God.
Joy multiplies because each celebrates the other's vocation.
Imagine how different our families, parishes and workplaces would become if we rejoiced more in another person's blessings than in our own achievements.

The Visitation calls us to become visitors of hope.
Not people who spread gossip.
Not people who carry criticism.
But people who carry Christ.

Every Eucharist prepares us for another visitation.
Soon we shall receive Jesus into our own hearts.
For a few precious moments, like Mary, we become living tabernacles. Then the Mass ends with the words, "Go."
Why? Because Christ is never given merely to stay with us.
He is given so that we may carry Him into the world.

A hospital chaplain once visited a dying man who had no family.
The priest expected to comfort him.
Instead, the sick man smiled and whispered, "Father, thank you for coming. Now I know God has not forgotten my address."

That is the mystery of today's feast.
God always knows our address.
He came to Elizabeth through Mary.
He comes to us through one another.

He comes to us today in Word and Sacrament.
May everyone who meets us be able to say, as Elizabeth did,
"The Lord has visited His people."
And may our lives become joyful visitations that bring Christ wherever we go. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered in joy with Mary and Elizabeth, let us present our prayers to God, who continues to visit His people with love.

1. For the Church: that, following Mary's example, she may carry Christ joyfully to every nation and become a sign of hope for all people, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may visit the suffering with compassion, protect the vulnerable, and work tirelessly for justice and peace, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For families, expectant mothers, and all who care for others: that they may be strengthened by Mary's loving service and find joy in generous love, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that nourished by the Eucharist, we may become joyful witnesses who bring Christ's presence into every home, workplace, and neighbourhood, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying, and for all our faithful departed: that Christ, who visited His people in mercy, may comfort the suffering, grant healing according to His will, and welcome the dead into the joy of His heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, You filled the house of Elizabeth with joy through the coming of Your Son. Hear the prayers we place before You and make us faithful bearers of Christ to the world.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Let us now place our gifts upon the altar with generous hearts, as Mary offered herself completely to God's saving plan and brought Christ into the home of Elizabeth, and pray that they may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Filled with the same Spirit who inspired Mary's joyful praise and trusting obedience, let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Saviour Himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
we may hasten to bring the presence of Christ
wherever there is loneliness, fear, or despair.
As we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You brought peace and joy into the house of Elizabeth
through the loving visit of Your Mother.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her the peace and unity of Your Kingdom,
so that, carrying You into the world,
we may become instruments of reconciliation and hope.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who comes to visit His people
and fill every faithful heart with lasting joy.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who rejoiced over His people and fulfilled His promises through the coming of His Son, fill your hearts with lasting hope. Amen.

May the Son, whom the Blessed Virgin Mary carried with joy to the house of Elizabeth, make you faithful bearers of His presence wherever you go. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who filled John the Baptist with joy and inspired Mary's song of praise, strengthen you to serve others with humility, generosity, and love. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and let your life become a joyful visitation of Christ to the world.

4. HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Galatians 4:4–7; Luke 2:15b–19

Mary leads us to live as God's children.

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, after a devastating earthquake, rescuers found a young mother who had died shielding her little baby beneath her body. When they lifted her, they discovered the child alive and smiling. In the baby's blanket was a note: *"If you survive, remember that I love you."* That child never knew the full sacrifice of his mother, but he lived because she gave everything for him. Every true mother points beyond herself to life.

In today's first reading, St Paul tells us that when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, so that we might no longer be slaves but beloved sons and daughters of God. Through Mary's "yes," we receive the gift of divine adoption.

In the Gospel, the shepherds find Mary, Joseph and the Child. While others speak with amazement, Mary silently treasures every event in her heart, teaching us to recognise God's presence even in the ordinary moments of life.

As we celebrate Holy Mary, Mother of God, we honour the woman through whom the eternal Son truly became one of us. Because she is Mother of Christ, who is God, she is rightly called the Mother of God, and she continues to care for all who belong to her Son.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for those times when we have failed to welcome Christ into our hearts and homes.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You were born of the Virgin Mary so that we might become children of the Father: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You gave us Your Mother to guide us always to You: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us to treasure Your word as Mary treasured all things in her heart: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary teaches us to welcome Christ and to live as God's beloved children.*

A missionary once visited a poor village where he noticed a small wooden sign hanging above the entrance of nearly every home. Curious, he asked what it meant. An elderly woman smiled and replied, "Every morning before we leave the house, we touch that sign and remember that Christ lives here." It was a simple reminder that every home becomes holy when Jesus is welcomed into it.

That is exactly what happened in Nazareth over two thousand years ago. A humble house became the dwelling place of God because Mary welcomed Him completely. Today's feast celebrates not only Mary's greatness but God's astonishing closeness. The eternal God entered our human family through the loving faith of a young woman.

Some people wonder why Catholics honour Mary so much. The answer lies in today's first reading. St Paul writes, "God sent His Son, born of a woman." He could simply have said, "God sent His Son." But he deliberately adds those four important words: "born of a woman."

Those words tell us something extraordinary. God did not merely appear on earth. He truly became one of us. He had a real mother. He received His human nature from Mary. Because the Child she bore is truly God and truly man, the Church has always called her Mother of God.

This title does not make Mary greater than God. Rather, it protects the truth about Jesus. If Jesus is God from the first moment of His existence, then the woman who gave birth to Him is rightly called the Mother of God. Nearly sixteen centuries ago, at the Council of Ephesus, Christians celebrated this truth with joyful processions through the streets because they knew that defending Mary's title was really defending the divinity of Christ.

There is a beautiful story from that time. After the bishops proclaimed Mary as Mother of God, the ordinary people of Ephesus waited outside through the night carrying torches. When the bishops emerged, the crowd erupted with joy, singing hymns to Mary. They understood something profound: if Mary is truly Mother of God, then God has truly entered our world.

Today's Gospel is remarkably simple. The shepherds arrive at Bethlehem. They see the Child lying in the manger. They tell everyone what the angels had announced. Most people marvel. But St Luke says something different about Mary.

"Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart." Mary does not speak very much in the Gospels. She listens. She observes. She reflects. She allows God's mystery to grow within her.

Modern life often teaches us the opposite. We rush from one activity to another. We react before reflecting. We fill every silence with noise.

Someone once asked Mother Teresa why she spent so much time in silent prayer before serving the poor. She answered, "If I did not first listen to Jesus, I would have nothing to give to others."

Mary teaches the same lesson. Before she became the Mother of believers, she first became the woman who listened.

There is an old Jewish saying: "God gave us two ears and one mouth because we should listen twice as much as we speak."

Mary certainly lived that wisdom.

The first reading also reminds us that Christ came so "that we might receive adoption as sons and daughters."

Imagine a child living in an orphanage, uncertain whether anyone truly wants him. One day a family arrives. They kneel before him and simply say, "We have chosen you. Come home."

Everything changes—not because the child earned anything, but because he was loved.

That is what God has done for us. Through Christ we are no longer spiritual orphans. We belong to God's family. And if God is our Father, Mary becomes our Mother.

That is why Christians throughout the centuries have instinctively turned to Mary in moments of difficulty.

A sailor once explained why there was always an image of Mary on his ship. He said, "When storms become too strong and I lose sight of the shore, I look at her, and she always reminds me where home is."

Mary never keeps our attention on herself. Like every good mother, she points us to her Son.

Notice something else in today's Gospel. The first visitors to Bethlehem are shepherds—the poorest and least respected people of society.

God does not wait for the powerful. He welcomes the humble. Mary receives them without fear or prejudice. Her heart is already as open as God's own heart.

How much our families need that openness today. Homes are often divided by arguments, misunderstandings and busy schedules. Yet the home of Nazareth teaches another way.

It was not wealthy.

It was not famous.

It had its share of hardships.

Yet it was filled with love because Christ was at its centre.

A grandfather once gave each of his grandchildren a small candle. He lit one candle and then used it to light all the others. "Look," he said. "The first candle loses nothing by giving its light."

Mary is like that first candle. She received Christ, the Light of the World, and continues to share Him with countless people without ever losing His light.

Our vocation is exactly the same. Every Christian is called to carry Christ into workplaces, schools, hospitals, homes and neighbourhoods. People should encounter something of Jesus simply because they have encountered us.

As we celebrate Mary, Mother of God, perhaps we should ask ourselves three simple questions.

Do I truly welcome Christ every day?

Do I treasure His word in silence as Mary did?

Do I help others discover that they too are beloved children of God?

Let me conclude with one final story:

During the Second World War, a family fleeing violence carried only one treasured possession—a small statue of Our Lady. Years later, when peace returned, the children asked their father why he had risked his life carrying something so fragile.

He answered, "Because every time I looked at her, I remembered that God had not abandoned us. If He could entrust His Son to Mary, I could entrust my family to her."

That is the invitation of today's feast.

Mary does not ask us to stop at her.

She gently takes us by the hand, just as every loving mother would, and leads us to Jesus. She teaches us to welcome Him with generous hearts, to treasure Him with faithful love, and to live each day as joyful sons and daughters of our heavenly Father.

May we leave this Eucharist carrying Christ into our homes, our families and our world, so that through Mary's loving example, others too may discover the joy of belonging to the family of God. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered as God's beloved children and trusting in the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of God, let us present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Holy Church: that she may faithfully proclaim Christ to the world and, like Mary, always lead people to her Son.

Let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that they may protect the dignity of every human life, promote peace among nations, and work for justice with compassion. Let us pray to the Lord.

3. For all mothers and families: that Mary, Mother of God, may strengthen parents in love, guide families in unity, and help every home become a dwelling place of Christ. Let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that we may treasure God's word in our hearts and become living witnesses of His love in our daily lives.

Let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the elderly, those burdened by loneliness, and for all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the suffering, comfort to those who mourn, and eternal joy to those who have died.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, You sent Your Son, born of the Virgin Mary, so that we might become Your beloved children. Hear the prayers we offer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary freely offered her whole life to God's saving plan and brought Christ into the world, let us now place upon the altar our gifts, our lives and our hearts, and pray that they may become an offering acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Through the Son born of Mary, we have received the grace of becoming sons and daughters of God. With confidence, let us pray in the words our Saviour Himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.

Through the loving intercession
of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
keep us faithful in welcoming Christ into our hearts,
so that, secure in the hope of Your kingdom,
we may joyfully await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,

You came into our world through the humble faith of Mary
to reconcile heaven and earth.

Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity according to Your will,
that every family may become a home
where Your love dwells and Your peace reigns forever.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
the Son of Mary and the eternal Son of the Father,
who takes away the sins of the world.
Happy are we who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother of His eternal Son, fill your hearts with the joy of His fatherly love. Amen.

May God the Son, who was born of the Virgin Mary for our salvation, remain always at your side and make you faithful witnesses of His Gospel. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary and formed Christ within her, help you to treasure God's word in your hearts and bring Christ's love to all whom you meet. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, welcoming Christ as Mary did, and live as God's beloved children.

5. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF THE SAVIOUR

Isaiah 9:1–3, 5–6; Luke 2:1–14

Mary, Mother of our Saviour,

leads us to Christ, the Light of the world

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, during a fierce snowstorm in the Alps, a family lost their way in the darkness. As hope faded, they noticed a small light shining through the window of a lonely mountain cottage. That single light guided them safely home. One small light was enough to overcome the darkness.

Isaiah announces that light to the world: *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."* God answers humanity's deepest longing by giving us not merely a prophet or a king, but a Child who is Prince of Peace.

In today's Gospel that promise becomes reality. Mary gives birth to Jesus, the Saviour of the world. The eternal Son of God enters human history through the loving faith and humble obedience of His Mother.

Today's Mass honours Mary as Mother of the Saviour. By giving her "yes" to God, she became the doorway through which salvation entered the world.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge the times when we have preferred darkness to the light of Christ, and ask His mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You are the Light that shines in the darkness, yet we have often chosen our own ways instead of Yours.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, You bring peace to every searching heart, yet we have allowed fear and division to rule our lives. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, Son of Mary and Saviour of the world, You continue to come among us in humility and love; forgive us whenever we have failed to welcome You. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary, Mother of the Saviour: Welcoming the Light*

Several years ago a journalist visited a refugee camp just before Christmas. Among the tents stood a tiny wooden crib built by the children. It was simple—made of broken timber and scraps of cloth. When he asked one little girl why she had placed a candle beside the manger, she answered, "Because every baby deserves to arrive where there is light."

Those simple words capture the message of today's feast. Every baby deserves light. Yet the Child born in Bethlehem came not because He needed our light but because we desperately needed His.

Today's readings tell one magnificent story. Isaiah announces hope to a people living in darkness. Luke shows us that hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Between these two readings stands Mary—the Mother through whom God's promise became flesh.

Isaiah speaks of people walking in darkness. Darkness is not simply the absence of sunlight. It is fear, loneliness, violence, confusion and despair. Every generation knows that darkness.

We see it in families divided by misunderstanding. We see it in young people searching for meaning. We see it in wars that continue to wound innocent lives. We see it in hearts that have everything materially yet remain empty spiritually.

God's answer is surprising. He does not send an army. He sends a child.

There is an old Jewish story about a rabbi who asked his students, "When does night end and day begin?"

One answered, "When you can distinguish a sheep from a dog."

Another said, "When you can recognise a tree from far away."

The rabbi smiled and replied, "Night ends when you can look into the face of another person and recognise your brother or your sister. Until then it is still night."

Jesus came to teach humanity exactly that—to recognise every person as beloved by God. Mary made that possible. Imagine the trust required of this young woman from Nazareth. She did not know every detail of God's plan. She knew only that God had asked, and she had answered, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

History often celebrates great conquerors, inventors and rulers. Yet the greatest turning point in history depended upon the quiet faith of one humble woman.

St Teresa of Calcutta once said, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love."

Mary's life seemed outwardly small. She lived in an obscure village. She never ruled a nation. She wrote no books. Yet through her simple faith the Saviour entered the world.

A priest once visited an elderly woman living alone. Her house was poor, but every evening she placed a candle in the window. "Who is it for?" he asked. She replied, "Maybe someone passing by needs to know that there is still a little light left in the world."

Mary became that light. Not because she drew attention to herself, but because she pointed everyone to Christ. The shepherds teach us another lesson. They were ordinary people, not religious leaders or wealthy citizens. Yet they became the first to hear the angels' message. God delights in revealing Himself to humble hearts.

Pope Francis often reminds us that God never tires of drawing close to ordinary people. Bethlehem itself is proof. God chose simplicity over splendour.

There is another beautiful detail. Luke tells us that Mary "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart." Mary did not understand everything immediately. She reflected. She prayed. She trusted. Our world wants instant answers. Mary teaches patient faith.

Sometimes parents pray for years for a son or daughter who has drifted from the Church. Sometimes spouses pray for healing within

a marriage. Sometimes we pray for peace but still encounter suffering.

Mary reminds us that God's promises often grow quietly before they blossom.

Think of a seed planted beneath the soil. For weeks nothing appears above the ground. Yet unseen roots are growing.

God often works that way in our lives.

There is an African proverb: "However long the night, the dawn will break."

Isaiah proclaimed exactly that. Luke witnessed its fulfilment. The Child of Bethlehem is the dawn. Because of Him, darkness never has the final word.

Mary, Mother of the Saviour, teaches us how to receive that light. She teaches us humility instead of pride. Trust instead of fear. Hope instead of despair. Love instead of selfishness.

She never keeps Christ for herself. Every title given to Mary ultimately points beyond her to Jesus. She is Mother of the Saviour because He is the Saviour. She is blessed because God is faithful. She is honoured because she first honoured God.

There is an old Christmas tradition in some villages. Before the Midnight Mass, every family extinguishes every light in the house.

Then one child carries home a flame from the church candle and lights every lamp again. The whole house gradually fills with light from one small flame.

That is what happened in Bethlehem.

One Child.

One Mother.

One humble stable.

Yet from that manger came a light that has illuminated every century since.

As we celebrate this Mass, we ask Mary to help us become bearers of that same light.

Perhaps someone in our family needs forgiveness.

Perhaps a neighbour needs encouragement.

Perhaps a lonely person simply needs someone to listen.

The Saviour who once came through Mary now wishes to reach others through us.

A little boy once asked his grandmother, "If Jesus is the Light of the World, why doesn't everyone see Him?" She smiled and answered, "Because sometimes He chooses to shine through people instead." May that be true of us.

And when others meet us, may they discover what the shepherds discovered in Bethlehem, what Isaiah foretold centuries before, and what Mary treasured forever in her heart—that God has truly visited His people, and His light continues to shine in every heart willing to welcome the Mother who brings us always to her Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ, the Light born of Mary for the salvation of the world, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Holy Church, that she may faithfully proclaim Christ, the Light of the nations, and, like Mary, bring His saving presence to every people, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For leaders of nations, that the Prince of Peace may inspire them to work for justice, reconciliation and lasting peace among all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For mothers and fathers, especially those expecting a child or facing difficulties in family life, that Mary, Mother of the Saviour, may strengthen them in faith, hope and generous love, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For those who live in the darkness of loneliness, anxiety, poverty or loss of faith, that the light of Christ may renew their hope through the kindness of His disciples, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For our sick, especially those burdened by chronic illness or nearing death, and for all our departed brothers and sisters, that Christ, who conquered the darkness of death, may grant healing to the living and eternal joy to the faithful departed, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of light, You sent Your Son into the world through the loving faith of the Virgin Mary. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence and grant them through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary offered to the Father the One who is His greatest gift to the world, let us now place upon this altar our lives, our hopes and our sacrifices, asking that, united with Christ, they may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Child born of Mary has made us sons and daughters of the same heavenly Father. With confidence and gratitude, let us pray in the words our Saviour Himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, as Mary welcomed the Prince of Peace into our world,
we too may welcome Him into our hearts.
Strengthened by Your mercy,
keep us free from sin and safe from every anxiety
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary as the Prince of Peace,
You came to reconcile heaven and earth.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity according to Your will.
May Your peace dwell in our homes,
heal divided hearts and make us instruments of Your love,
for You live and reign for ever and ever.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
the Son whom Mary brought into our world as our Saviour.
Happy are we who are invited to the banquet of His love,
where the Light of the world strengthens us for our journey
to the Father's house.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who in His infinite love sent His Son into the world through the Blessed Virgin Mary, fill your hearts with His light and hope. Amen.

May God the Son, born of Mary as the Saviour of the world, strengthen you to bear His peace, His mercy and His joy wherever you go. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary and formed Christ within her, help you to welcome the Lord each day and faithfully bring Him to others. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL:

Go in peace, bringing the light of Christ to others, as Mary brought the Saviour to the world.

6. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Is 60:1-6; Mt 2,1-12

Through Mary, all nations come to Christ, the Light of the world.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, sailors crossing the oceans depended on lighthouses to guide them safely through dangerous rocks and stormy waters. The lighthouse never became the destination; it simply pointed travellers towards the safe harbour. Mary is like that lighthouse. She never points to herself but always leads us to Jesus, the Light of the world.

The prophet Isaiah announces that God's light will rise upon Jerusalem, drawing kings and nations from every corner of the earth. God's glory is meant for everyone.

In today's Gospel, the Magi faithfully follow a star until they find the Child with Mary his Mother. Their long journey ends not before a palace but before a humble family where the true King is revealed.

Today's Mass honours The Blessed Virgin Mary and the Epiphany of the Lord. Mary quietly presents her Son to the nations, becoming the first witness who leads every searching heart to Christ.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for those times when we have hidden Christ instead of revealing Him to others.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, Light of the nations, You came to reveal the Father's love to every people: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, You welcome all who sincerely seek You: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us to become lights that lead others to You: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary: The Mother Who Leads Every Seeker to Christ*

In a small village stood an old church famous for its stained-glass windows. One afternoon a little girl asked her grandmother, "Who are the saints?" The grandmother pointed to the colourful windows through which sunlight streamed into the church. "The saints," she said, "are people through whom the light of God shines."

That simple answer captures today's celebration. Mary is the greatest of all saints because no one has ever allowed God's light to shine through them as perfectly as she did. Like the stained-glass window, she does not create the light. She lets Christ shine through her.

Isaiah proclaims, "Arise, shine, for your light has come." These words were first addressed to Jerusalem, but they reach their fullest meaning in Mary. She became the living Jerusalem where God truly dwelt among His people. Through her, the Light entered the darkness of our world.

The Gospel beautifully describes the arrival of the Magi. They represent all nations, all cultures, all peoples searching for truth.

Their journey reminds us that every human heart is restless until it finds Christ.

Notice something very beautiful. St Matthew says the Magi found "the child with Mary his mother." Jesus is always mentioned first, but Mary is always there beside Him. Even at the beginning of Christ's public manifestation, Mary quietly accompanies Him.

There is an old African proverb: "The moon has no light of its own; it reflects the light of the sun." Mary is like the moon. Everything beautiful about her comes from Christ. The more we look at Mary, the more we discover Jesus.

The Magi also teach us something about faith. They travelled hundreds of kilometres without knowing exactly where they would arrive. Sometimes the star disappeared. Sometimes they had questions. Sometimes they even took the wrong road by stopping in Jerusalem.

How similar this is to our own lives. There are moments when God's guidance seems clear, and there are moments when the sky appears empty. Yet faith means continuing the journey even when we cannot see the next step.

A missionary once told the story of visiting an elderly woman in a remote village. Her house contained only one treasured possession—a worn Bible whose pages had almost fallen apart. She explained, "Every evening I read one page before sleeping. Sometimes I understand it; sometimes I don't. But every page reminds me that God is leading me home." She was following her own little star.

The Magi also teach us humility. They were educated scholars. They had wealth, influence and knowledge. Yet they were willing to kneel before a tiny child in a poor house. Their wisdom reached its fulfilment only when it became humility.

Pope Benedict XVI once observed that true wisdom begins when we are willing to kneel before God.

Today's world often admires intelligence but not humility. We collect information but sometimes lose wisdom. The Magi possessed both because they allowed their knowledge to become worship.

Another detail deserves attention.

Matthew says they opened their treasures.

Faith always leads to generosity.

Gold symbolised Christ's kingship.

Frankincense proclaimed His divinity.

Myrrh foretold His suffering and death.

Yet perhaps the greatest gift they offered was themselves.

An old priest once remarked, "God has never needed our gifts as much as He desires our hearts."

Mary understood this long before the Magi arrived. She had already offered herself completely when she said, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

Every Christian is invited to imitate both Mary and the Magi.

Like Mary, we receive Christ.

Like the Magi, we adore Christ.

Like Mary, we carry Christ.
Like the Magi, we proclaim Christ.

A story is told of Blessed Carlo Acutis. His friends admired his computer skills, but Carlo would often tell them, "People are born as originals but many die as photocopies." He encouraged everyone to become saints by allowing Jesus to shine through their unique lives. Although he lived centuries after the Magi, he followed the same star.

Today's feast also challenges our parishes. Visitors should be able to encounter Christ among us just as the Magi encountered Him in Bethlehem.

Do people who enter our churches experience welcome?

Do strangers discover kindness?

Do those burdened by sorrow find hope?

Do children see joy?

Do the poor encounter compassion?

If the answer is yes, then we continue Mary's mission of presenting Christ to the world.

There is another beautiful lesson.

The Magi returned home "by another way."

Nobody who truly encounters Christ remains exactly the same.

Our destination may be the same.

Our address may remain unchanged.

Our job may continue. But our hearts travel home differently.

The Eucharist we celebrate today is our Bethlehem. The same Jesus whom the Magi adored comes among us under the humble signs of bread and wine.

Mary is here spiritually, inviting us once again: "Look at Him. Listen to Him. Love Him." May every Mass become our Epiphany.

May every Communion deepen our worship.

May every home become another Bethlehem where Christ is welcomed.

An elderly lighthouse keeper was once asked whether he ever grew tired of lighting the great lamp every evening. He smiled and answered, "Ships I will never see depend on this light."

Mary spent her entire life like that faithful lighthouse keeper. She quietly kept pointing to Christ. Millions whom she never met have found Him because of her witness.

May we do the same. We may never know whose life will be changed because of one act of kindness, one word of faith, one invitation to Mass, one prayer, one example of hope.

Like Mary, may we never seek to be the light ourselves, but always help others find the true Light, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all nations. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ, the Light of the nations, and inspired by the faith of Mary and the Magi, let us confidently present our prayers to the Father.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully proclaim Christ to every nation and become a welcoming home where all people may encounter the Saviour, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may seek the wisdom that comes from God and work tirelessly for justice, peace and the dignity of every human person, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For missionaries, catechists and all who proclaim the Gospel: that, like Mary, they may always lead people to Christ and never to themselves, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that, following the example of the Magi, we may seek Christ with sincere hearts, worship Him with joyful faith and generously offer Him the gifts of our lives, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the lonely, those nearing death and all our faithful departed: that the light of Christ may strengthen the suffering, comfort the grieving and lead the departed into the everlasting light of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of all nations, You revealed Your Son as the Light of the world. Hear the prayers we place before You through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As the Magi placed their treasures before the Christ Child, let us now place upon this altar not only bread and wine but also the gifts of our hearts, and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Guided by the same heavenly Father who led the Magi by the star and revealed His Son to all nations, let us pray with confidence in the words Jesus Himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray,
from every darkness that keeps us
from recognising the light of Christ.
Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
guide Your Church safely on her pilgrimage,
strengthen us in hope
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You are the Light that no darkness can overcome. As You gathered people of every nation before the manger at Bethlehem,
unite the human family in the peace that only You can give.
Through the maternal care of Mary,
help us become instruments of Your reconciliation and love,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, the Light revealed to all nations.
Blessed are those who, like the Magi,
come with humble hearts to adore Him
and who now receive Him in this Holy Communion.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who called the nations to the light of His Son,
fill your hearts with the radiance of His truth. Amen.

May God the Son, revealed to the world through the loving care of
the Blessed Virgin Mary, remain your unfailing Light and guide every
step of your life's journey. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit make you faithful witnesses of Christ, so
that, like Mary and the Magi, you may lead others to the Saviour by
the example of your lives. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, ✠
and the Holy Spirit, ✠ come down on you and remain with you for
ever. Amen. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, following Mary's example, and lead others to Christ, the
Light of the world.

7. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

Malachi 3:1–4; Psalm Ps 24:7, 8, 9,10; Luke 2:27–35

With Mary, we offer Christ and ourselves to the Father.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once noticed his grandmother placing a treasured family Bible into the hands of his father. "Why are you giving away something you love so much?" he asked. Smiling, she replied, "Love is proved not by what we keep, but by what we are willing to give." True love always learns to let go.

In the first reading, the prophet Malachi announces the coming of the Lord into His Temple, where hearts will be purified and made worthy to offer pleasing sacrifices to God.

In today's Gospel, Mary and Joseph bring the Infant Jesus to the Temple, faithfully offering Him to the Father. Simeon recognises the Child as the promised Saviour and foretells that Mary's own heart will one day be pierced by a sword.

Today's Marian Mass honours the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Presentation of the Lord. Mary teaches us that every disciple is called to present Christ to the world by first offering his or her own life completely to God.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask for God's mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You are the Light revealed to all nations, yet we have often preferred darkness to Your truth. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You were lovingly presented in the Temple, yet we have often failed to offer ourselves generously to the Father. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You strengthened Mary to remain faithful beneath the Cross; strengthen us whenever faith requires sacrifice. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary at the Presentation: Offering All to God*

Several years ago an elderly violin maker completed what he believed would be the finest instrument of his life. Friends assumed he would keep it for himself, but instead he quietly placed it into the hands of a gifted young musician. When someone asked why he had given away his masterpiece, he answered, "A violin fulfils its purpose only when it is played. Beauty is meant to be offered, not hidden."

That simple story helps us understand today's feast. The Presentation of the Lord is not merely about bringing a Child to the Temple according to Jewish custom. It is about offering. It is about placing into God's hands what is most precious.

Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to Jerusalem because faithful people know that every blessing ultimately belongs to God. They come without fanfare. There are no crowds, no music, no earthly honours. Yet heaven recognises what is happening. The Lord suddenly comes into His Temple, just as Malachi had foretold centuries earlier.

The prophet tells us that the Lord comes not simply to visit but to purify. Gold becomes beautiful only after passing through fire. Silver shines only after impurities are removed.

The same is true for us. Many people ask God to remove difficulties from their lives. Sometimes God answers by removing the difficulties. Often, however, He removes the impurities that difficulties reveal.

A blacksmith once explained that steel becomes stronger only after repeated heating and hammering. If the metal could speak, it would probably complain about the process. But without it, the steel would remain weak. Faith grows in much the same way.

Mary herself enters this purification. Simeon's joyful song suddenly changes into a prophecy of suffering. "A sword will pierce your own soul too."

Imagine hearing those words while holding your tiny baby in your arms. Mary does not understand every detail. Yet she does not protest. She simply continues trusting.

One of the greatest lessons Mary teaches us is that obedience does not require complete understanding. It requires confidence in God's goodness.

There is an old story about a mountain guide leading travellers through a thick fog. The visitors became anxious because they could no longer see the path ahead. The guide smiled and said, "You don't have to see the whole road. You only need to stay close to the one who knows it."

Mary walked exactly that way. She could not foresee Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Calvary and Easter as one complete picture. She simply took one faithful step after another.

That is also how Christian life unfolds. Sometimes parents present their children to God at Baptism with overflowing joy. Years later they watch those same children make difficult choices, struggle with illness, disappointments or broken dreams. They discover that presenting a child to God is not something done only once at the font. It becomes a lifelong offering of trust.

A mother once said after praying for her son for nearly twenty years, "I realised that he was never really mine. He always belonged to God. My task was simply to love him faithfully."

Mary understood that from the beginning. She presents Jesus not because she is losing Him but because she knows He belongs first to the Father.

The feast therefore asks each of us a very personal question: What have I truly offered to God? Many people offer God an hour on Sunday, an occasional prayer, or some spare time. But God asks for something deeper. He asks for our hearts.

Saint John Henry Newman once wrote that to be a Christian means "to give ourselves entirely to Him who first gave Himself entirely for us." That offering is not always dramatic.

It is the husband who remains faithful when marriage becomes difficult.

It is the wife who patiently cares for her sick spouse.
It is the young person who chooses honesty over popularity.
It is the priest who continues serving even when unnoticed.
It is the elderly person who quietly unites daily suffering with Christ's Cross.
Every hidden sacrifice becomes another presentation in the Temple.

Simeon is another beautiful example. He waited his entire life. Many people grow impatient when prayers seem unanswered. Simeon teaches us that waiting with God is never wasted.

There is a touching story of a gardener who planted an oak tree. A neighbour laughed and said, "You'll never sit in its shade." The gardener replied, "Perhaps not—but someone will." Faith often plants seeds whose fruits others will enjoy.

Simeon waited for decades before finally holding the Messiah in his arms. Yet when that moment arrived, every year of waiting suddenly made sense.

Anna too spent years praying in the Temple. The world probably considered her unimportant. Heaven considered her indispensable.

God often entrusts His greatest revelations not to the powerful but to the faithful. Our society measures success by achievement, possessions and recognition. God measures faithfulness.

Mary, Simeon and Anna possessed very little by worldly standards. Yet they became witnesses to one of salvation history's greatest moments.

Every Eucharist is another Presentation of the Lord.
Christ again offers Himself completely to the Father.
We too are invited to come forward—not only to receive Him—
but to place our own lives upon the altar.
Our fears.
Our families.
Our hopes.
Our disappointments.
Our future.
Everything.

When bread and wine are offered, our own lives should be offered
with them. Only what is offered can be transformed.

The elderly violin maker understood that.
The violin fulfilled its purpose only when placed into another's hands.
So too our lives become most beautiful not when we cling to them
but when we entrust them to God.

Mary teaches us that offering never diminishes love—it perfects it.
She offered Jesus in the Temple.
Years later she offered Him again beneath the Cross.

And because she never stopped offering, she became the Mother of
all believers.

May we leave this celebration asking for the same generous heart.
Like Mary, may we place everything into God's loving hands.
Like Simeon, may we wait patiently for His promises.
Like Anna, may we remain faithful in prayer.
And one day, when our earthly pilgrimage is complete, may we too

rejoice because we have spent our lives offering to God the greatest
gift we possess—ourselves. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the loving providence of God, to whom Mary faithfully
offered her Son, let us now present our prayers with confidence.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully present Christ to every
nation as the Light of the world and lead all people to holiness, let us
pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may seek justice, protect the dignity of
every human life and work for peace among all peoples, let us pray
to the Lord.
3. For parents and families: that, inspired by Mary and Joseph, they
may lovingly dedicate their children to God and nurture them in faith
and charity, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For all of us gathered here: that we may joyfully offer our lives
each day to God and remain faithful even when discipleship requires
sacrifice, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the elderly, the dying and our departed brothers and
sisters: that the Lord may strengthen those who suffer, comfort those
who mourn and welcome the faithful departed into His eternal
Kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, receive the prayers we place before You through
the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We ask this
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary presented her Son in the Temple with a generous and trusting heart, let us now present these gifts and offer ourselves together with Christ, and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Christ, whom Mary first offered to the Father and who now offers Himself for us in this Eucharist, let us pray with confidence in the words He has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
As You sustained the Blessed Virgin Mary in faithful obedience,
strengthen us to entrust our lives completely to Your loving will.
As we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Light revealed to all nations
and the Prince of Peace. Through the intercession of Mary,
who faithfully presented You in the Temple
and stood steadfast beneath Your Cross,
grant us the peace that springs from trusting in the Father's will.
May Your peace unite our families,
our communities and the whole world,
where You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, presented in the Temple
as the Light of the nations and now given to us as the Bread of Life.
Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who accepted the loving offering of His Son in the Temple, fill your hearts with steadfast faith. Amen.

May God the Son, the Light revealed to all nations, guide your steps
and make you a joyful witness to His Gospel. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who strengthened the Blessed Virgin Mary
to remain faithful in every trial, help you to offer your lives generously
each day in love and service. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for
ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, following Mary's example, and lead others to Christ, the
Light of the world.

8. OUR LADY OF NAZARETH (I)

Gal 4:4–7; Ps 131; Lk 2:22, 39–40 (or Lk 2:41–52)

With Mary, ordinary life becomes holy.

INTRODUCTION

A tourist once visited Nazareth expecting to find magnificent monuments. Instead, he found narrow streets, simple homes, and an ordinary village. Disappointed, he asked his guide, "Is this all?" The guide smiled and replied, "Sometimes the greatest miracles happen in the quietest places." God chose not a palace but a humble home to begin the salvation of the world.

St Paul reminds us today that, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son so that we might no longer be slaves but beloved sons and daughters, heirs through Christ.

In the Gospel, Jesus grows quietly in the home of Nazareth, or, in the longer version, reveals in the Temple that his first duty is to his Father's will while returning to Nazareth in loving obedience.

Today's Marian Mass honours Our Lady of Nazareth. Mary shows us that holiness is built not only through extraordinary deeds but through daily faithfulness, humble service, and loving family life.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask forgiveness for the times we have failed to make our homes places where God is welcomed.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you sanctified the ordinary life of Nazareth by living among Mary and Joseph. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you call us to become children of the Father and members of your holy family. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you invite us to grow in wisdom, faith, and love each day. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *The Hidden Greatness of Nazareth*

There is an old story about a famous violin maker. Visitors admired the beautiful instruments displayed in his workshop and asked which one was his masterpiece. Instead of pointing to an expensive violin, he led them to a tiny workbench worn smooth by decades of patient labour. "This," he said, touching the bench, "is where greatness begins—not in applause, but in faithful daily work."

Nazareth was God's workbench. No miracles are recorded there. No crowds gathered there. No sermons were preached there. Yet nearly thirty years of Jesus' earthly life unfolded in that small village under the loving care of Mary and Joseph. If God considered those hidden years important enough to occupy most of Jesus' earthly life, perhaps we too should discover the holiness hidden within ordinary life.

Saint Paul tells us that "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son." God did not simply send a teacher. He sent a Son, born of a woman. Mary's motherhood became the doorway through which God entered human history.

Because Jesus became one of us, we became children of God. That is the astonishing message of today's first reading. Christianity is not merely about obeying rules. It is about belonging to a family. We can call God "Abba"—Father.

Mary first taught Jesus the words of human language, while Jesus teaches us the language of heaven: "Our Father."

The Gospel presents the quiet years at Nazareth or, in the longer version, the episode of Jesus remaining in the Temple.

Imagine Mary's anxiety. Every parent who has briefly lost sight of a child knows that terrible feeling. For three days Mary and Joseph searched everywhere. When they found Jesus, Mary asked the simple question every mother would ask: "Why have you done this to us?"

Jesus' answer seems surprising: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Already Jesus gently teaches that every earthly relationship must ultimately lead us to God. Yet immediately afterwards we hear something equally beautiful. "He went down with them and was obedient to them."

The Son of God obeyed Mary and Joseph. Think about that. The One through whom the universe was created learned to saw wood from Joseph and learned prayer from Mary. Holiness grows through humility.

There is a lovely story about St Thérèse of Lisieux. Before entering the convent she longed to perform heroic deeds for Christ. Yet in religious life she discovered that holiness was found in sweeping

floors, washing dishes, smiling at difficult sisters, and doing small things with great love. That became her "Little Way." Nazareth was the first "Little Way."

Mary never preached a sermon. Joseph never wrote a book. Jesus spent most of His earthly years doing ordinary work. God transformed ordinary life into extraordinary holiness. How different our world would become if every Christian family rediscovered Nazareth.

A teacher once asked children to draw where they thought God lived. Most drew churches. One little girl drew her own kitchen. The teacher asked why. She answered, "Because every evening Mum and Dad pray together there before dinner." That child understood Nazareth. Our homes become holy whenever Christ is welcomed.

Today's Psalm says beautifully, "I have calmed and quieted my soul like a child resting in its mother's arms." Our restless world desperately needs this peace. We live in a culture of constant noise. Phones buzz.

Televisions shout.

Social media demands attention.

Yet God often speaks in silence.

Nazareth teaches us that spiritual growth usually happens quietly.

A young journalist once interviewed Mother Teresa.

He expected dramatic spiritual secrets.

Instead, Mother Teresa simply said, "If you want to change the world, go home and love your family." Those words sound remarkably like Nazareth.

Mary loved her family.
Joseph loved his family.
Jesus loved His family.
That hidden love changed history.
Many people think their lives are insignificant because they are not famous. But heaven measures greatness differently.
A mother patiently caring for a disabled child.
A father honestly earning bread for his family.
Grandparents praying daily for their grandchildren.
Children helping their parents without being asked.
These hidden acts may never appear in newspapers, but they delight the heart of God.

Blessed Charles de Foucauld spent years living in Nazareth, meditating on the hidden life of Jesus. He realised that the greatest years of Christ's earthly life were not the public ministry but the silent years of loving obedience. Inspired by Nazareth, he chose a life of hidden service among the poor.

Sometimes we think holiness requires extraordinary gifts. Nazareth says otherwise. It requires extraordinary love expressed through ordinary duties.

Every meal prepared with love.
Every forgiveness offered.
Every prayer shared.
Every act of patience.
Every unnoticed sacrifice.
These become stones from which God builds His Kingdom.

Our Lady of Nazareth invites us today to ask a simple question:
Is my home becoming another Nazareth?
Do people find peace there?
Do they hear prayer there?
Do they experience forgiveness there?
Do they discover Christ there?
If the answer is yes—even imperfectly—then God's work continues.
If the answer is not yet, today is the perfect day to begin.

The Eucharist we celebrate today is itself another Nazareth.
Here Christ comes quietly.
There are no spectacular displays.
Only simple bread and wine.
Yet heaven touches earth.
The hidden God continues to dwell among His people.
Let us welcome Him into our homes, our workplaces, our families, and especially into our hearts.

There is a beautiful legend about a traveller who asked an old monk where he might find God. The monk pointed to a small lamp burning before a simple crucifix and said, "Where love quietly remains faithful, God is already there." That is Nazareth. That is Mary's lesson.

May every one of us leave this church determined to make our homes places where Christ is welcomed, where love grows quietly, and where ordinary life becomes extraordinary because God lives there. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered as God's beloved sons and daughters, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that, like Mary of Nazareth, she may faithfully bring Christ to the world through humble service, joyful witness, and loving care for every family, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that they may promote peace, protect family life, defend the dignity of every child, and work for justice among all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For our families: that our homes may become places of prayer, forgiveness, kindness, and mutual respect, reflecting the peace of Nazareth, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For young people: that, following the example of Jesus growing in wisdom and grace, they may discover God's plan for their lives and generously respond to their vocation, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the lonely, the elderly, and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to those who suffer, comfort to those who mourn, and eternal joy to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, through the loving intercession of Our Lady of Nazareth, hear these prayers and grant them according to your holy will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary offered her whole life to God's saving plan and Joseph offered the work of his hands, let us now place upon the altar our gifts, our families, our daily work, and our hearts, and pray that they may be pleasing and acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

In the home of Nazareth, Jesus taught us by his life to trust God as our loving Father. United as one family in Christ, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from everything that divides our families, disturbs our hearts, and weakens our faith.

Through the loving intercession of Our Lady of Nazareth, help us to grow in wisdom, peace, and obedience to your will, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
in the quiet home of Nazareth
you blessed family life with your presence
and filled Mary and Joseph with your peace.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant us the peace and unity of your kingdom,
where you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who once dwelt in the humble home of Nazareth and now comes to dwell within us in the Holy Eucharist. Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the humble home of Nazareth for his beloved Son, bless your homes with faith, hope, and love. Amen.

May the Son, who grew in wisdom, age, and grace under the loving care of Mary and Joseph, strengthen you to follow him faithfully each day. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit make your families living homes of prayer, peace, and joyful service. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and let your family reflect the love, peace, and faith of Nazareth.

8. OUR LADY OF NAZARETH (II)

Col 3:12–17; Mt 2:13–15, 19–23

With Mary, holiness grows in everyday life.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a tourist visited the tiny village of Nazareth. Expecting magnificent monuments, he was surprised by its simplicity. An elderly Christian guide smiled and said, "The greatest things God has ever done often happened in the smallest places." That is the mystery of Nazareth—a hidden village where the Saviour of the world grew up under the loving care of Mary and Joseph.

In today's first reading, St Paul describes the virtues that make every Christian home a place where Christ dwells: compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness and, above all, love.

In the Gospel, we see the Holy Family returning to Nazareth after their exile in Egypt, where Jesus would grow "hidden" in wisdom and grace under the care of Mary and Joseph.

Today we honour **Our Lady of Nazareth**, whose ordinary daily life became extraordinary because she welcomed God into every moment.

As we ask her to make our homes places where Christ is loved and served, let us first acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you chose the humble home of Nazareth to reveal the holiness of ordinary life. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us Mary as the perfect model of loving obedience and faithful trust. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to build families and communities rooted in your peace and your love. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: "Nazareth: Where God Lives in Ordinary Homes"

A teacher once asked her students, "Where do you think God is happiest?" One child answered, "In church." Another said, "In heaven." Then a little girl quietly replied, "God is happiest in a home where people love each other." The teacher smiled and said, "You have understood Nazareth."

Nazareth was not famous. It had no palace, no university, no great temple. It was a small, unnoticed village. Yet it became the most important home in human history because Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived there. The Son of God spent about thirty hidden years there—far longer than the three years of his public ministry.

God wanted to tell the world something important.

Holiness is not found only in extraordinary miracles.

Holiness is born in ordinary faithfulness.

Our first reading from St Paul could almost be called

"The Rule of Life for Nazareth."

"Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience."

Imagine Mary living these words every day.

Imagine Joseph practising them while working in his carpenter's shop.

Imagine Jesus learning human love within such a home.

Their home was holy not because it was free from problems, but because love filled every difficulty.

Someone once asked Mother Teresa how to change the world. She answered simply, "Go home and love your family."

Those few words capture the spirit of Nazareth.

Our world often looks for success through money, influence and recognition.

God began saving the world in a quiet family home.

There is an old story about a monk who spent years searching for the perfect monastery where everyone was holy. Every monastery disappointed him. Finally an elderly monk told him, "The perfect monastery exists wherever one person begins loving perfectly."

The same is true for families. People often dream of the perfect husband, wife, parents or children. God asks something different. Become the person who loves first. That is exactly what Mary did.

The Gospel tells us that Joseph brought the Holy Family back to Nazareth after their dangerous exile in Egypt. Imagine Mary's life. She had fled as a refugee with her Child.

She had travelled through deserts.

She had lived in a foreign land.

Now she returns home.

Nazareth itself had not changed.

The streets were the same.
The houses were the same.
The neighbours were the same.
But Mary herself had changed.

Every experience had deepened her trust in God.
Sometimes we think peace comes from having an easy life.
Mary teaches us something different.
Peace comes from trusting God wherever we are.

There is a touching story from the Second World War.
A family lost everything when their home was destroyed by bombing.
Later the father found his little daughter smiling while arranging three broken bricks beside the road.

"What are you doing?" he asked.
She replied, "I'm making our new home."
The father later said, "I realised then that a home is not made of walls but of love."

Nazareth was never famous because of its buildings.
It was famous because love lived there.

St Paul tells us today, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts."
Notice that he does not say, "Let everything go perfectly."
He says, "Let Christ rule."

There is a difference. Every family has misunderstandings.
Every community has disagreements.
Every parish has weaknesses.
The question is not whether problems exist.

The question is: Who rules our hearts?
Christ? Or pride?
Christ? Or anger?
Christ? Or selfishness?

A little boy once watched his grandmother sewing.
From underneath the table all he could see were tangled threads.
"It looks like a mess," he said.
His grandmother asked him to come upstairs.
Looking from above he suddenly saw a beautiful pattern.
Our lives often look like tangled threads.
Mary teaches us to trust the One who sees the whole design.
Nazareth reminds us that God is always working even when we see only confusion.

Pope St Paul VI visited Nazareth in 1964 and spoke unforgettable words. He called Nazareth "the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus." He said Nazareth teaches silence, family life and work.

Silence.
How desperately our world needs silence.
Many homes are filled with television, phones, constant messages and endless noise.
But love grows best when people truly listen.

Family life.
Not perfect family life. Faithful family life.
Where forgiveness is offered quickly.
Where meals are shared.

Where prayers are said together.
Where people carry one another's burdens.

Work.

Jesus spent most of His earthly life working with Joseph.
This tells us that every honest occupation can become holy.

A carpenter's bench.

A kitchen.

A classroom.

A hospital.

An office.

A farm.

A workshop.

All can become Nazareth when Christ is present.

Mary teaches us that no task done with love is ever small.
A mother once complained that her daily routine seemed meaningless.

Cooking.

Cleaning.

Washing clothes.

Looking after children.

An elderly priest smiled and said,
"That is exactly what Mary did for Jesus."

Suddenly the ordinary became sacred.

Every act done with love becomes an offering to God.

Today's Psalm says, "How lovely is your dwelling place."
Ultimately, God's favourite dwelling place is not made of stone.

It is the human heart that welcomes Him.
It is the family that prays together.
It is the parish that forgives one another.
It is the community where Christ is loved.

Let us ask Our Lady of Nazareth to transform our homes.

Not into perfect homes.

But into homes where kindness speaks louder than criticism.

Where forgiveness comes before resentment.

Where prayer comes before anxiety.

Where Christ is always welcome.

A guide once took pilgrims through Nazareth. They expected to see magnificent treasures. Instead, he pointed to a simple home and quietly said, "Perhaps it looked something like this."

The pilgrims stood in silence. Then one whispered, "So God really does love ordinary places." Yes. And He still does.

Every home can become another Nazareth.

Every family can become another Holy Family.

Every heart can become another dwelling place of God—
if, like Mary, we simply say every day,

"Let it be done to me according to your word." Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered as God's family and inspired by the example of Our Lady of Nazareth, let us confidently present our prayers to our loving Father.

1. For the Church: that she may become ever more a welcoming home where faith, charity and unity flourish under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For families throughout the world: that parents, children and grandparents may imitate the love, patience and faith of the Holy Family of Nazareth, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For refugees, migrants and all who are forced to leave their homes: that, like the Holy Family during their flight into Egypt, they may find safety, compassion and hope, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that our homes may become places of daily prayer, forgiveness, mutual respect and joyful service, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the elderly, those who suffer in body or spirit, and for all our departed brothers and sisters: that Christ may strengthen the living with his healing grace and welcome the faithful departed into the eternal home of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of love, through the prayers of Mary of Nazareth, make our hearts and our homes worthy dwelling places for your Son. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary offered her whole life to God's saving plan in the humble home of Nazareth, let us now place upon the altar our gifts, our families, our daily work and our hearts, and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At Nazareth, Jesus learned to call God his Father and revealed that we are all members of God's family.

United with Mary, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord,
from everything that divides our homes and our hearts.
Through the loving intercession of Our Lady of Nazareth,
grant us peace, patience and mutual forgiveness,
so that, we may live as one family in your love.
awaiting the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ,

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
in the quiet home of Nazareth
you sanctified family life by your presence.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant peace to our families,
our communities and the whole world
in accordance with your will,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who made his home among us
and now invites us to the banquet of his love.
Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who chose the humble home of Nazareth for his beloved Son, fill your homes with his love. Amen.

May the Son, who sanctified family life by living with Mary and Joseph, remain always at the centre of your hearts. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who formed the Holy Family into a living sanctuary of God, strengthen you in faith, hope and charity all the days of your life. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, living the quiet holiness of Nazareth each day.

9. OUR LADY OF CANA

Ex 19:3–8a; Ps 119; Jn 2:1–11

With Mary, trust in Christ brings joy.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once noticed that whenever visitors came unexpectedly, his mother never seemed worried. "How do you always know what to do?" he asked. Smiling, she replied, "A mother notices what everyone else misses." At Cana, Mary noticed the silent embarrassment of a young couple before anyone else did, and quietly brought their need to Jesus.

In the first reading, God invites Israel into a covenant of loving obedience, calling his people to trust him wholeheartedly and walk in his ways.

In today's Gospel, Mary notices the family's need and, with complete confidence in her Son, gently leads the servants—and all of us—to Jesus, who transforms ordinary water into the finest wine.

Today we celebrate Our Lady of Cana, the Mother who teaches us to bring every human need to Christ and to trust his timing and power. She also reminds us of the simple but profound secret of discipleship: "Do whatever he tells you."

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you transform the ordinary lives of those who trust in you. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through the loving intercession of your Mother, you reveal your glory to the world. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to do whatever you ask so that your grace may renew our lives. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"Do Whatever He Tells You"*

A violin maker once displayed two violins in his workshop. One looked magnificent, polished to perfection, while the other was old, scratched and worn. A visitor naturally admired the beautiful one. The craftsman smiled, picked up the old violin, and began to play. Within moments the workshop was filled with music of extraordinary beauty. "The value of a violin," he said, "is not how it looks, but whose hands it is in."

That is exactly the lesson of today's Gospel. Six large stone jars stood quietly at the wedding feast. They contained nothing extraordinary—only water. But once they were placed into the hands of Jesus, the ordinary became extraordinary. Water became the finest wine.

Who made that miracle possible? Surprisingly, it was Mary. The Gospel never tells us that Mary asked for a miracle. She simply noticed a need. "They have no wine."

What a beautiful description of motherhood! Mothers notice things others overlook.

A parish priest once recalled visiting a large family. While everyone was laughing and talking, the mother quietly disappeared into the kitchen. The priest later asked why she had left. She answered, "I noticed my youngest hadn't eaten." No one else had seen it. That is Mary at Cana.

She notices not only empty wine jars but empty hearts, broken families, discouraged marriages, lonely elderly people, anxious young people and those who have almost given up hope. She notices us.

The first reading helps us understand why Cana is much more than a wedding story. God forms Israel into his covenant people and asks them to answer with trust and obedience. "Everything the Lord has spoken we will do."

Notice how beautifully this echoes Mary's words to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you."

The whole Bible can almost be summarized in these two responses. God speaks. His people obey.

Mary herself lived that obedience from the Annunciation until Calvary. Cana simply reveals that she continues leading others along the same path.

There is an old story about a mountain guide leading climbers through thick fog. One inexperienced climber kept asking, "Can you actually see the summit?" "No," answered the guide. "Then how do you know where to go?" "I don't need to see the summit. I only need to see the next step."

Faith often works exactly like that. Mary did not know how Jesus would respond. She simply trusted him. She teaches us not to understand everything before obeying.

Many Christians wait until everything becomes clear before following Christ. Mary teaches the opposite. Trust first. Understanding follows.

The servants at Cana become wonderful models of discipleship. Imagine what they must have thought.
Fill huge stone jars with water?
Carry them to the chief steward?
What if everyone laughed?
Yet they obeyed without argument.

Sometimes God's instructions seem just as strange.
Forgive the person who hurt you.
Visit someone forgotten.
Pray for an enemy.
Remain faithful in suffering.
Tell the truth when lying would be easier.
Serve without recognition.
Like the servants, we may not immediately understand why.
But obedience opens the door for miracles.

St John Henry Newman once wrote that God has created each person for a particular purpose known fully only to him. Like the servants at Cana, we often discover that purpose only by faithfully carrying the water entrusted to us.

There is another detail that often goes unnoticed.
The miracle happened quietly.

No dramatic announcement.
No applause.
Only the servants knew exactly what had happened.

Many of God's greatest miracles are equally hidden.
A father quietly working long hours to provide for his family.
A daughter patiently caring for her ageing mother.
A teacher encouraging one struggling student.
A priest faithfully celebrating Mass day after day.
A religious sister praying unnoticed for the Church.
These hidden acts of love become fine wine in God's kingdom.

The wine itself carries another message.
Throughout Scripture, abundant wine symbolizes the joy of God's salvation.
Jesus did not merely solve an embarrassing social problem.
He announced that the long-awaited Messianic age had begun.
The old purification jars become vessels of new life.
Law gives way to grace.
Expectation gives way to fulfilment.
Water gives way to wine.
Fear gives way to joy.

Mary stands quietly between the old and the new.
She introduces humanity to Christ.
That is why the Church continues asking her intercession today.
She never keeps attention for herself.
Everything about her points to Jesus.

Someone once asked a famous sculptor why every statue of Mary seemed to direct people's eyes toward Christ. He replied, "Because if people admire Mary without finding Jesus, I have failed as an artist."

Mary herself would certainly agree.

Every Marian devotion should end with a deeper love for Christ.

Every Rosary should strengthen our obedience.

Every Marian feast should renew our discipleship.

Perhaps today each of us has an empty jar.

A relationship that has grown cold.

A marriage under strain.

Financial worries.

A sick family member.

A hidden grief.

A weakening faith.

Mary notices those empty jars before we even speak.

She gently brings them to Jesus.

Then she quietly whispers the same words she spoke two thousand years ago: "Do whatever he tells you."

A missionary once described a village where drinking water had to be carried every morning from a distant spring. One young girl faithfully made the long journey every day. Someone asked her whether she ever grew tired of carrying heavy buckets. She smiled and answered, "I don't carry water. I carry life."

That is what the servants unknowingly did at Cana. They thought they were carrying water, but they were carrying the beginning of

Christ's public ministry. They thought they were performing an ordinary task, but they were becoming witnesses of God's glory.

Every act of loving obedience is like that. When our lives are placed into the hands of Christ through the loving guidance of Mary, our ordinary water becomes extraordinary wine. Our weakness becomes strength, our fear becomes courage, our emptiness becomes abundance, and our daily lives become signs of God's glory. May Our Lady of Cana teach us always to notice the needs of others, to trust her Son without hesitation, and to live each day by her timeless words: "Do whatever he tells you." Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ, who reveals his glory through the loving intercession of his Mother, let us confidently present our prayers.

1. For the Church: that she may always lead people to Christ with Mary's gentle faith and invite all to live the Gospel through loving obedience. Lord, hear our prayer.
2. For world leaders: that they may recognise the needs of those entrusted to them and work with wisdom, justice and compassion. Lord, hear our prayer.
3. For married couples and families: that, through the intercession of Our Lady of Cana, their homes may be filled with faith, forgiveness, joy and lasting love. Lord, hear our prayer.
4. For all who feel that the wine of hope has run out in their lives: that Christ may renew their courage, strengthen their faith and fill them with the joy of his presence. Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For the sick, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may comfort those who suffer, grant healing according to his will, and welcome the deceased into the eternal wedding feast of heaven. Lord, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, hear the prayers we place before you today. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as Mary entrusted the needs of the wedding feast to her Son, we too may place our lives upon this altar, and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At Cana, Mary taught the servants to trust completely in Jesus. With that same confidence as God's beloved children, let us pray in the words our Saviour himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Our Lady of Cana, help us to trust your providence
even when our own resources seem exhausted,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
at the wedding feast of Cana you transformed water into wine
and brought joy where disappointment threatened.
Look kindly upon your Church and upon our world.
Renew hearts divided by hatred, strengthen families wounded by
conflict, comfort those burdened by fear, and grant us the peace that
only you can give, who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who fills every empty heart with the new
wine of his grace. Happy are those who accept Mary's invitation to
trust in her Son and are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who called his people into a covenant of faithful
love, keep you steadfast in his grace. Amen.

May God the Son, who revealed his glory at Cana through the faith
of his Mother, fill your hearts with the joy of his presence. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit strengthen you to do whatever Christ asks
of you and make your lives a sign of his transforming love. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, trusting Christ and doing whatever He tells you.

10. HOLY MARY, DISCIPLE OF THE LORD

Sirach 51:13–18, 20–22; Lk 2:41–52

With Mary, we seek, hear, and follow Christ.

INTRODUCTION

A young violin student once travelled many kilometres every week just to learn from a famous master. When someone asked why he made such a sacrifice, he replied, "Because every lesson makes me love music more." Great disciples never stop learning because they never stop loving.

In the first reading, Sirach tells us that true wisdom is found by those who seek it with perseverance, humility, and love from their youth.

In today's Gospel, we meet Mary searching anxiously for Jesus and then quietly pondering His mysterious words in her heart. Even the Mother of God continues to learn as the first disciple of her Son.

Today we honour **Holy Mary, Disciple of the Lord**. Before she became the Mother who gave Jesus to the world, she was the woman who first listened, believed, and followed Him with an obedient heart.

As we prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for the times we have failed to be faithful disciples.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You call us to seek Your wisdom above every earthly treasure. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You teach us through Mary to treasure Your Word in our hearts. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You invite us every day to follow You as faithful disciples. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Seeking, Listening, Following*

A traveller once visited the workshop of an elderly sculptor. He noticed that there were two statues of an eagle standing side by side. They looked identical.

Curious, he asked, "Why do you have two exactly the same?"

The sculptor smiled and answered, "One is perfect. The other has a tiny crack in the wing."

"But I cannot even see it."

"I know," replied the sculptor, "but I learnt to see details because I spent years learning from my master."

The traveller left with one important lesson: the greatest masters never stop being disciples.

That is precisely what today's Marian Mass teaches us. Mary is honoured today not only because she gave birth to Jesus but because throughout her whole life she remained His disciple.

Many people think discipleship belongs only to Peter, John, or Paul. Yet before any apostle left everything to follow Christ, Mary had already said her lifelong "Yes." Before anyone preached the Gospel,

she had already listened to it. Before anyone believed in Jesus, she believed the angel's message. Mary's greatness lies first in her faith.

The Book of Sirach speaks beautifully about searching for wisdom. "I sought wisdom from my youth." Wisdom is not information. It is learning to see life through God's eyes.

There is an old Jewish story of a young rabbi who asked his teacher, "When does someone become wise?" The teacher answered, "When he begins asking God more questions than he asks himself."

Mary lived exactly that way.

At the Annunciation she asked, "How can this be?"

At Bethlehem she wondered.

In today's Gospel she searched.

At Calvary she remained silent.

Throughout her life she never stopped allowing God to teach her.

Luke tells us that after finding Jesus in the Temple, Mary did not fully understand His words.

That sentence should comfort every Christian.

Even Mary did not immediately understand everything.

Faith does not mean having every answer.

Faith means continuing to trust even when the answers are still coming.

Many parents recognise today's Gospel.

Who has never experienced losing sight of a child in a shopping centre for a few frightening minutes?

The panic, the searching, the relief.

Mary and Joseph searched for three days.

Yet there is a deeper message.

Every Christian sometimes loses sight of Jesus.

Not because He leaves us, but because our attention shifts elsewhere.

Work.

Money.

Success.

Entertainment.

An old priest once said, "When people tell me they cannot find God anymore, I always ask them where they last saw Him." That question changes everything.

Mary found Jesus where He always belongs—in His Father's house.

The same is true today.

When our faith grows weak, where do we find Him?

In prayer.

In Scripture.

In the Eucharist.

In the poor.

In His Church.

Mary teaches us never to stop searching.

Another beautiful detail appears at the end of today's Gospel.

"His mother treasured all these things in her heart."

She did not merely collect memories.

She reflected on them.

She prayed over them.

She allowed God's actions to mature inside her.

There is an African proverb: "The ear that listens patiently gathers more wisdom than the mouth that speaks quickly."

Modern life gives us little silence.

Our days are full of notifications, conversations and endless distractions.

Mary teaches us contemplation.

She listened before speaking.

She reflected before acting.

She allowed God time to work.

St Mother Teresa once admitted that many people asked how she knew what God wanted.

She answered very simply, "I listen."

Then she smiled and added, "And when they ask what God says, I tell them: He listens too."

Real discipleship always begins with listening. Mary listened.

That is why she became fruitful.

There is another lesson hidden in today's Gospel.

Jesus remained obedient to Mary and Joseph.

The Son of God Himself accepted learning within a family.

That tells us something beautiful.

Holiness grows in ordinary places.

The kitchen.

The workshop.

The classroom.

The family table.

Nazareth became the greatest school in history because Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived there. Discipleship is learned in everyday faithfulness.

An elderly woman once embroidered beautiful cloths for the altar. Someone complimented her remarkable work. She replied, "I simply put one faithful stitch after another."

That is also how saints are made.

Not by spectacular miracles every day.

But by countless faithful acts of love.

One prayer.

One act of forgiveness.

One sacrifice.

One visit to someone lonely.

One honest day's work.

One patient response.

One hidden act of charity.

Mary's whole life was like that.

One faithful "yes" after another.

Pope St Paul VI once called Mary "the perfect disciple of Christ."

Not because she possessed extraordinary privileges alone, but because she followed Jesus every step of the way.

From Bethlehem

to Egypt...

to Nazareth...

to Cana...

to Calvary...

to Pentecost. She never stopped walking behind her Son.

The Church invites us today
not merely to admire Mary but to imitate her.
Every disciple must keep learning.
Every disciple must keep searching.
Every disciple must keep listening.
Every disciple must keep saying "Yes."

Perhaps today's Mass invites us to ask ourselves three simple questions.

Do I still seek God's wisdom every day?
Do I still search for Jesus when I seem to lose Him?
Do I treasure His Word in my heart, or do I allow the noise of the world to drown it out?

Mary answers every question not with long speeches but with her life. She simply follows Jesus.

Let us conclude with another story.
A teacher once gave every student a candle before sunrise and asked them to climb a hill in silence.
When they reached the top, the sun slowly appeared over the horizon. The teacher then said, "Blow out your candles."
One student asked, "Why did we carry them all this way if we were only going to extinguish them?"
The teacher replied, "The candle helped you walk through the darkness, but once you saw the sun, you no longer needed its light."

Mary would never want us to stop with her.
Like every true disciple, she always points beyond herself to Christ.
She walks beside us while it is dark.

She encourages us when faith is difficult.
She teaches us to listen, to search, to trust and to persevere.

And when at last we see Christ face to face, the perfect Teacher, we shall understand why the greatest title of Mary is not only Mother of the Lord, but also **the faithful Disciple of the Lord**, who shows every generation how to follow Jesus all the way to the Father's house.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

As disciples gathered around Christ, and inspired by Mary, His first disciple, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that she may always listen attentively to the Word of God and faithfully lead all people to Christ, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may seek wisdom rather than power and promote justice, peace, and respect for every human person, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For parents, teachers, catechists, and all who educate the young: that, like Mary and Joseph, they may help children discover and follow God's will, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For all of us gathered here: that we may never cease seeking Christ, treasuring His Word, and growing as faithful disciples each day, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the elderly, those suffering in mind or body, and for all our faithful departed: that Christ may grant healing to the living and eternal joy to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of all wisdom, hear the prayers we offer through the loving intercession of Mary, Disciple of the Lord. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary offered her whole life to God's will with the heart of a faithful disciple, let us now place our gifts upon the altar, and pray that the Lord may transform also our lives and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Jesus, whom Mary sought, followed, and loved above all things, let us now pray with the confidence of God's children in the words our Saviour Himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, especially from the temptation to follow the wisdom of the world instead of the wisdom of Your Son.

Through the example and intercession of Mary, the faithful Disciple of the Lord, keep us steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and generous in love, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You formed Mary into the perfect disciple by filling her heart with Your peace.

Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with Your will. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who nourishes every disciple with the Bread of Life. Happy are those who come to this sacred banquet, following the example of Mary, who received Christ with faith, treasured Him with love, and remained faithful to Him always.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who called the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the first and most faithful disciple of His Son, strengthen you in the path of faith. Amen.

May God the Son, whom Mary sought, followed, and loved with all her heart, keep you always close to Himself and fill you with His wisdom. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who formed Mary into the perfect disciple, guide you each day to listen to God's Word and put it into practice. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, following Mary's example as faithful disciples of Christ.

11. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS I

Rom 8:31b–39; Jn 19:25–27

With Mary, faithful love stands beneath the Cross.

INTRODUCTION

A guide once took visitors through the ruins of an old cathedral destroyed during a war. Amid the shattered walls stood one statue that had survived almost untouched—a mother holding her child. Everything else had fallen, but the mother remained. One visitor quietly said, "When everything else collapses, a mother's love still stands." Today we meet Mary standing beneath the Cross when everyone else had fled.

In today's first reading, St Paul proclaims with unshakable confidence that nothing—not suffering, persecution, death, nor any power in heaven or on earth—can separate us from the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus.

In the Gospel, Mary stands faithfully at the foot of the Cross, sharing the suffering of her Son and receiving from Him a new mission as the Mother of all His disciples.

Today we honour **the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Foot of the Cross**. She teaches us that true love does not run away from suffering but remains faithful through it, trusting completely in God's saving plan.

Let us now acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for His mercy and forgiveness.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you remained faithful to the Father's will even unto death on the Cross. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us Mary as our Mother while you were offering your life for our salvation. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you strengthen all who suffer and fill them with the hope of your Resurrection. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"The Mother Who Never Walked Away"*

Many years ago, a hospital chaplain noticed an elderly woman sitting every day beside her son's hospital bed. The young man was unconscious for weeks. Doctors came and went. Nurses changed shifts. Friends gradually stopped visiting. Yet every morning the mother returned. One nurse finally asked, "Do you think he knows you're here?" The mother smiled and answered, "Perhaps he doesn't know I'm here—but I know he needs me here."

Love does not always remove suffering. Sometimes love simply stays. That is exactly what we see in today's Gospel. Mary does not perform a miracle. She does not protest against the soldiers. She cannot take Jesus down from the Cross. She simply remains there.

The Gospel tells us with remarkable simplicity:
"Standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother."

One word stands out—standing.
She is not collapsing in despair.
She is not running away in fear.
She is standing.

Standing means remaining faithful when every reason suggests leaving.

Throughout history, people have admired heroes who fought great battles. Yet perhaps the greatest courage is simply remaining faithful when life hurts.

There is an old story about a lighthouse keeper during a terrible storm. Huge waves crashed against the rocks. People urged him to abandon the lighthouse because it looked too dangerous. He answered, "I was not appointed to save the lighthouse. I was appointed to keep the light burning." Mary kept the light of faith burning when darkness covered Calvary.

Today's first reading from Romans is one of the most beautiful chapters in Scripture. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Paul is not saying Christians will never suffer. He himself experienced imprisonment, beatings, rejection and eventually martyrdom. Instead, Paul says something much deeper: Nothing can separate us from Christ's love.

Notice that Paul includes hardship, persecution, famine, danger and even death. Mary experienced almost every one of those sufferings spiritually.

She watched her innocent Son condemned.
She heard the insults.
She witnessed His agony.
She stood beneath the Cross.
Yet even there she never doubted God's love.

Many people think faith means avoiding suffering. The Gospel teaches something different. Faith means discovering that God remains with us in suffering.

There is a touching story from the Second World War. During heavy bombing, a frightened little girl clung tightly to her father as they ran toward a shelter. She cried, "Daddy, I'm afraid."
He replied, "I know. Hold my hand."
Later she said, "The bombs were still falling, but I wasn't afraid anymore because I knew Dad was holding me."

That is Christian hope.
Life's crosses do not disappear overnight.
But Christ never lets go of us.
Mary understood this better than anyone.
Standing beneath the Cross, she also receives a new vocation.
Jesus says, "Woman, behold your son."
Then to John, "Behold your mother."
At that moment Mary's motherhood becomes universal.
She becomes Mother not only of Jesus but of every disciple.

Whenever Christians suffer, Mary stands beside them.
Whenever someone feels abandoned, Mary quietly reminds them that Christ never abandons His people.

A priest once visited a widow who had lost her husband after sixty years of marriage. She showed him two worn-out chairs beside the fireplace. "Every evening," she said, "we sat there together."
The priest asked, "Now that he's gone, why do you still keep both chairs?"

She answered gently, "Because love doesn't end when someone is no longer visible."

That is the mystery of today's feast. Jesus may no longer be visibly standing before us. Yet His love remains. Mary may not be physically beside us. Yet her maternal care continues.

Our own lives all contain crosses.

Some carry illness.

Some struggle with broken families.

Some worry about children who have drifted away from faith.

Others live with loneliness, disappointment or grief.

The temptation is always to run away spiritually.

Mary teaches another way.

Stand; Stand in prayer; Stand in hope; Stand with Christ.

Stand beside those who suffer; Stand when faith feels difficult.

One of the most beautiful witnesses to this was St Maximilian Kolbe. Before offering his life in Auschwitz, fellow prisoners noticed that he encouraged everyone around him. He prayed with them, comforted them and reminded them that God's love remained stronger than hatred. Like Mary beneath the Cross, he stood where love was most needed.

The Cross always appears to be defeat. Yet it becomes victory because love remains faithful. That is why today's feast is not a celebration of sadness. It is a celebration of courageous love.

Mary did not understand every detail of God's plan.

But she trusted. Sometimes we also ask, "Why?"

Why this sickness?

Why this tragedy?

Why this loss?

God does not always answer our questions immediately.

Instead, He gives us His presence.

That presence was hanging upon the Cross.

That presence remains in every Eucharist.

That presence accompanies us every day.

Let us ask ourselves today:

When suffering comes, do I run away from God—or stand beside Him?

Do I remain beside those who suffer—or avoid them?

Can others find hope because I remain faithful?

There is an old legend about a child walking with his mother after sunset. They passed through a dark forest. The boy looked frightened. "Mother," he whispered, "it's too dark." She quietly held his hand and said, "Look up." Above the trees the stars were shining brilliantly. The darkness had not disappeared. But the stars were visible because of it.

Calvary was the darkest moment in human history.

Yet beneath that Cross stood Mary, the brightest star of hope.

She reminds us today that even when suffering surrounds us, God's love is still shining. And because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, those who remain faithful beneath the Cross will one day rejoice forever beneath the light of the Resurrection. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ's Cross with Mary, His Mother, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Holy Church: that she may faithfully stand beside all who suffer and proclaim the hope of Christ's victory over sin and death, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may work tirelessly to overcome hatred, violence and injustice, bringing peace and dignity to every human person, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For all parents, especially mothers who suffer for their children: that Mary's faithful love may strengthen and comfort them in every trial, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For all who carry heavy crosses through illness, loneliness, grief or family difficulties: that they may discover Christ's unfailing love and the comforting presence of Mary, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For our sick, for those who are dying, and for all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the sick, peace to the dying, and everlasting joy to those who have gone before us, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, you gave Mary to us as the Mother of your Son's disciples. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

With Mary, who united her heart completely to the sacrifice of her Son, let us place our lives, our sufferings and our hopes and this bread and wine upon this altar, and pray that they may become an offering acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the foot of the Cross, Jesus entrusted us to Mary as one family. United as God's beloved children, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and strengthen us when we stand before the crosses of life.
Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
who remained faithful beneath the Cross of her Son,
keep us steadfast in hope
as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
from the Cross you reconciled heaven and earth
and entrusted your Mother to your Church.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of your people.
Grant us that peace which the world cannot give,
strengthen us to stand beside one another in love,
and graciously grant unity and peace in accordance with your will,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, whose sacrifice upon the Cross strengthens us to remain faithful with Mary beneath His Cross.

He has conquered sin and death.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, whose everlasting love nothing can overcome, strengthen you in every trial. Amen.

May the Son, who gave His Mother to us from the Cross, keep you faithful in hope and steadfast in love. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who filled Mary with courage and unwavering faith, lead you safely through every cross to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, standing with Christ and with Mary, to love and serve the Lord.

12.THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS II

Judith 13:17-20; John 19:25-27

Mary teaches us to remain faithful beneath every cross.

INTRODUCTION

A guide once took a group of visitors to see Michelangelo's *Pietà*. As they admired the marble sculpture of Mary holding the lifeless body of Jesus, one little girl quietly asked, "Did Mary know that this sadness would one day become joy?" The guide smiled and replied, "She believed God's promise even when she could not yet see its fulfilment." That simple faith is the heart of today's celebration.

In the first reading, Judith is praised because she trusted God with unwavering courage, becoming a blessing for all God's people. Like Judith, Mary stands before us as the woman whose faith brought hope in humanity's darkest hour.

In today's Gospel, we find Mary standing faithfully beneath the Cross, receiving from Jesus a new mission as the Mother of all His disciples. At the very place where suffering seemed to triumph, God was creating a new family united in Christ.

Today's Marian Mass honours The Blessed Virgin Mary at the Foot of the Cross. Mary teaches us that true love does not run away from suffering but remains faithful with hope until God brings new life.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for the times we have failed to remain faithful beneath the crosses of our own lives.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you gave us your Mother as our Mother from the Cross:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you strengthen us to remain faithful in times of
suffering: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you transform the Cross into the source of hope and
new life: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Standing with Mary beneath the Cross*

There is an old story about a terrible earthquake that struck a small town. Buildings collapsed, people fled in panic, and the streets were filled with fear. Amid all the confusion, rescue workers noticed an elderly woman sitting quietly beside the ruins of her home. She had lost almost everything, yet she refused to leave. When asked why she remained there, she answered, "My grandson is still inside. If he wakes up, I want the first face he sees to be someone who loves him." She could do nothing to remove the rubble. She could not stop the disaster. But she could remain present.

That is exactly what Mary does at Calvary. The Gospel tells us simply, "Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother..." It is one of the shortest descriptions in Scripture, yet one of the most powerful. Mary does not preach. She does not protest. She does not run away. She simply stands.

Standing is harder than it sounds.

Many people can celebrate success. Many can rejoice at weddings or victories. But only those who truly love can remain when life falls apart.

Today's first reading praises Judith as the "glory of Jerusalem" because she trusted God courageously. Judith became a heroine because she risked everything for God's people.

Mary becomes even greater—not by defeating an enemy with a sword, but by conquering despair through faithful love.

Both women show us that true greatness is found not in power but in trust.

A missionary once told the story of visiting a hospital after a devastating accident. One young man had suffered severe injuries and could barely speak. Every afternoon his mother travelled for three hours simply to sit beside his bed. Sometimes they exchanged only a few words. Sometimes they remained in silence. Years later the son said, "The doctors healed my body, but my mother's presence healed my heart." Presence can be more powerful than words.

Mary gives Jesus exactly that gift. Imagine her heart. Simeon's prophecy had come true: "A sword will pierce your own soul." Every nail driven into Jesus pierced Mary's heart as well. Yet she stayed.

Many of us know people who disappear when suffering arrives. Friends stop calling.

Neighbours avoid difficult conversations.

Even family members sometimes keep their distance because they do not know what to say.

Mary teaches us that we do not always need the right words. Sometimes the greatest act of love is simply to stay.

There is another beautiful lesson hidden in today's Gospel.
Jesus, while hanging on the Cross, looks at His Mother and at the beloved disciple.

"Woman, behold your son." "Behold your mother."
In His final moments Jesus is still giving.
He gives forgiveness to His enemies.
He gives paradise to the good thief.
He gives His Mother to the Church.
And He gives the Church a Mother.

Notice that Jesus does not ask John merely to care for Mary.
He creates a new family born beneath the Cross.
Every Christian becomes a son or daughter of Mary.
The Church is born not in comfort but at Calvary.

A priest once visited an elderly widow who had recently lost her husband after sixty years of marriage. She showed him an old photograph from their wedding day. Then she showed another picture taken only weeks before her husband's death. "Which picture do you think I treasure more?" she asked. The priest naturally pointed to the wedding photograph. She gently shook her head. "No," she said. "The second one. The first shows how much we loved each other. The second shows how faithful that love became." Love becomes beautiful when it remains faithful through suffering.

That is Mary's love. That is Christ's love.
That is the love every Christian is called to live.

Sometimes we wonder why God does not remove every cross from our lives. The Cross itself gives the answer.

God does not always remove suffering.
Instead, He enters it.
He stands within it.
He transforms it.
Mary teaches us never to waste suffering.
Every illness can become a prayer.
Every disappointment can become an offering.
Every tear can become a seed of hope.

Saint John Paul II once wrote that suffering united with Christ becomes participation in His work of salvation.

Mary understood this better than anyone.
She offered her broken heart together with the sacrifice of her Son.

Our world desperately needs people who stand beside others.
Parents who remain patient with struggling children.
Children who remain close to ageing parents.
Friends who visit the lonely.
Young people who defend classmates who are bullied.
Priests who accompany grieving families.
Doctors and nurses who treat every patient with dignity.
Volunteers who comfort refugees, prisoners and the forgotten.
Every one of these people is standing with Mary beneath the Cross.

Perhaps today each of us carries a cross.
Some carry illness.
Some loneliness.
Some family conflict.
Some disappointment.

Some hidden grief known only to God.

Mary does not promise that the Cross will disappear immediately.
She promises that no one stands beneath it alone.
She stands beside us because she first stood beside Jesus.
And because she stood there, she understands every sorrow carried
by her children.

There is a touching legend about stained-glass windows in an old
cathedral. During the Second World War the church was bombed.
Almost every coloured window shattered except one small panel
showing Mary standing beneath the Cross. When people asked why
that piece alone survived, an old parishioner smiled and said,
"Because she has always known how to stand when everything else
falls."

Whether or not the story is historical does not matter.
Its message is true.
The world around us may sometimes seem to crumble.
Families may struggle.
Faith may be tested.
Health may fail.
Dreams may collapse.
But Mary remains standing.

And she quietly invites every disciple to stand with Christ, trusting
that beyond every Good Friday lies the glory of Easter morning.
Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Standing with Mary beneath the Cross, we confidently bring our
prayers before our loving Father.

1. For the Church: that she may remain faithful to Christ in times of
trial and always be a sign of hope to a suffering world, let us pray to
the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may work for justice, reconciliation
and peace wherever violence and hatred continue to wound
humanity, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For parents, caregivers and all who accompany those who suffer:
that Mary may strengthen them with perseverance, compassion and
hope, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For all who carry heavy crosses through loneliness, grief, poverty
or disappointment: that they may experience Christ's loving presence
through the kindness of others, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, especially those who are seriously ill, and for all our
deceased brothers and sisters: that the Lord may grant healing to the
living and eternal joy to the faithful departed, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin
Mary, hear these prayers which we make through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary united her heart with the sacrifice of her Son beneath the Cross, let us now place our lives, our sufferings and our hopes upon this altar, and pray that, transformed, they may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the foot of the Cross Jesus formed us into one family by giving us His Mother. United as her children and trusting in our heavenly Father, we now pray with confidence in the words our Saviour taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil.
Strengthen us, like Mary, to remain faithful when life is difficult,
and fill our hearts with the hope
born from Christ's victory on the Cross.,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
from the Cross you reconciled heaven and earth
and gave us your peace.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church,
and through the loving intercession of Mary,
who stood faithfully beneath your Cross,
graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who offered Himself upon the Cross for the salvation of the world.

Happy are we who receive Him
together with the love and faith of Mary,
standing close to Him at the foot of the cross
and trusting completely in His saving mercy.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to stand faithfully beside His Son, strengthen you in every trial. Amen.

May God the Son, who from the Cross gave us His Mother as our Mother, fill your hearts with His hope and peace. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who sustained Mary in faith and love, make you steadfast witnesses of the Gospel until you share in the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives.

13. THE COMMENDING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Macc 7:1, 20-29; Jn 19:25-27

Mary, our Mother, leads us always to Christ.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy was once asked what his mother had given him that he treasured most. He did not mention toys or clothes. He simply replied, "She gave me herself." At the foot of the Cross, Jesus gave humanity His greatest earthly gift—not a possession, but His own Mother.

In the first reading from Maccabees, we meet a courageous mother who strengthens her children to remain faithful to God even in suffering, showing that true love leads others to eternal life.

In the Gospel, standing beneath the Cross, Mary receives a new mission as Jesus entrusts her to the beloved disciple and entrusts the disciple—and all of us—to her loving care.

Today's Marian Mass celebrates **The Commending of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. At Calvary, Mary becomes the Mother of the Church, faithfully embracing every disciple as her child.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for His mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, from the Cross You gave us Your Mother as our Mother:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You call us to welcome Mary into our homes and into our hearts: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, through Mary You continue to lead Your disciples faithfully to You: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"Behold Your Mother"*

A devastating earthquake once struck a town. Rescue workers searched tirelessly through the rubble. Under the remains of a collapsed house, they discovered the body of a young mother. She had died shielding her little child beneath her. When rescuers lifted her body, they found the baby alive, wrapped safely in her arms. Inside the baby's blanket was a note: "If you survive, remember that I loved you."

Those words have moved countless people because they reveal the heart of a mother. Every loving mother desires not only to give life but also to protect, guide and accompany her children.

Today's Gospel brings us to another mother beneath another scene of tragedy—the Cross of Jesus.
Standing there are very few people. Most have fled. Soldiers mock. Crowds insult. Darkness covers the earth. Yet Mary remains.
She does not run away.
She cannot remove the nails.
She cannot lessen the pain.
But she stays.

Sometimes the greatest expression of love is simply remaining present. There is a touching story about St. John Paul II. After he was shot in St. Peter's Square in 1981, he later visited the prison to forgive his attacker. When journalists asked why he forgave so easily, he simply replied that he had learned forgiveness by looking at Christ on the Cross and by learning from Mary, who stood beneath it without hatred or revenge. Mary teaches us how to stand with suffering instead of running from it.

The first reading gives us another remarkable mother. The mother of the seven Maccabean brothers watches each of her sons suffer martyrdom because they refuse to abandon God's law.

Imagine her pain. Every human instinct would tell her to save her children by asking them to compromise.

Instead, she strengthens them.

She reminds them that God is the Creator of heaven and earth.

She reminds them that life comes from God and returns to God.

She teaches them that faith is worth more than life itself.

This unnamed mother becomes one of Scripture's greatest examples of courageous motherhood.

Mary now stands beside her.

The mother in Maccabees prepares her sons for sacrifice.

Mary offers her only Son to save the whole world.

Both mothers teach us that genuine love never leads away from God.

Years ago, Blessed Carlo Acutis told his mother, "Everyone is born as an original, but many die as photocopies." Where did Carlo learn holiness? He learned much from his mother, who gradually

rediscovered her own faith by watching her son's love for Jesus. The influence of a believing mother can echo for generations.

At Calvary something extraordinary happens. Jesus looks first at His Mother. Then at the beloved disciple. Then He says, "Woman, behold your son." "Behold your mother."

These are among the final words of Jesus before His death.

People rarely waste words when they know they are dying.

Everything spoken becomes precious. Jesus is not simply making arrangements for Mary's future. He is establishing a new family.

The Church.

John represents every disciple. Mary becomes mother of everyone who follows Christ. That is why Catholics have always honoured Mary—not because she replaces Jesus, but because Jesus Himself entrusted her to us.

A priest once visited an elderly woman who had very little. Her furniture was old. Her eyesight was failing. But beside her bed stood a beautiful statue of Our Lady. The priest asked, "Why is that statue always next to you?" She smiled and replied, "Because when I wake during the night, I remember that my heavenly Mother is awake too." That simple faith sustained her through loneliness and illness.

Mary still comforts God's children. The Gospel also tells us something about John. "From that hour the disciple took her into his own home." Notice the words. He did not merely welcome Mary into his house. He welcomed her into his life. There is a difference. Many people have religious pictures in their homes. But has Mary entered our hearts?

Do we allow her to teach us prayer?

Do we imitate her humility?

Do we trust God as she did?

The Rosary has changed countless lives precisely because it places us in Mary's school.

A businessman once admitted that during a financial crisis he began praying one decade of the Rosary each morning while driving to work. Nothing changed immediately.

The debts remained. The problems remained. But gradually his fear disappeared. He said, "The situation stayed difficult, but I was no longer carrying it alone."

Mary always leads us back to Christ. She never keeps our attention on herself. Like at Cana, she simply says, "Do whatever He tells you." That remains her message today.

Our world desperately needs mothers like the mother in Maccabees. Our families need mothers like Mary. Our young people need examples of courage and fidelity. Our Church needs disciples who stand beside the Cross instead of running away.

Perhaps some of us today carry hidden crosses.

A broken marriage.

A sick child.

Loneliness.

Disappointment.

Grief.

Mary understands every one of those pains.

She has stood there before us.

She never promises that crosses will disappear.

She promises that we will never carry them alone.

An old missionary in Africa once described his final visit to a remote village before retirement. As he prepared to leave, an elderly woman pressed a small wooden crucifix into his hand. She said, "When you become tired, look at Jesus. When you become lonely, look at Mary standing beside Him. Then remember—you are never alone." The missionary later said that little crucifix became his greatest treasure. Every time he looked at it, he remembered that beneath the Cross a new family was born.

Today we stand spiritually beside Calvary. Jesus looks at each one of us just as He looked at John. He says, "Behold your Mother."

May we welcome Mary, not merely into our houses, but into our hearts. For the greatest gift Jesus left us before He died was not simply His final words. It was His Mother.

And like the little note found beneath the earthquake rubble, Mary's whole life repeats one beautiful message to every disciple: "Never forget—you are loved." Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the loving care of God, and with confidence in the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us bring before Him our prayers.

1. For the Holy Church, that under Mary's motherly protection she may faithfully proclaim Christ and become a welcoming home for all God's children, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For parents, especially mothers, that they may be strengthened by the example of the mother of the Maccabees and of the Blessed Virgin Mary in raising their children in faith, courage and hope, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For all who suffer, especially those burdened by grief, loneliness, persecution or family difficulties, that Mary, Mother of Sorrows, may console them and lead them to the hope found in Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community, that we may welcome Mary into our lives as the beloved disciple did and become faithful witnesses of Christ's love in our families and neighbourhoods, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying, and all our faithful departed, that through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary they may receive the Lord's healing, comfort and the joy of eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, You gave us Mary as our Mother beneath the Cross of Your Son. Hear the prayers we offer through her loving intercession, and grant them according to Your holy will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary offered her Son with perfect love at the foot of the Cross, let us now place our lives, our joys and our sufferings upon this altar, and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered as one family beneath the Cross, where Jesus entrusted us to the loving care of His Mother, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and through the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
graciously grant peace in our days.
Strengthen us to remain faithful beneath the crosses of life,
protect us from sin and every anxiety,
and keep us steadfast in hope
as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
from the Cross You gave us Your Mother
as the Mother of the Church.
Through her loving intercession, fill our hearts with Your peace,
strengthen our families in unity, comfort all who suffer,
and make us faithful witnesses of Your reconciling love.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who gave His life for our salvation
and entrusted us to the loving care of His Mother.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother of His Son, fill you with His fatherly love. Amen.

May God the Son, who from the Cross gave us Mary as our Mother, keep you faithful in every trial and lead you always to Himself. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary and formed Christ within her, strengthen you to live as true disciples of the Gospel. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL:

Go in peace, welcoming Mary into your hearts and following her Son.

14. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF RECONCILIATION

2 Cor 5:17–21; Jn 19:25–27

Reconciled by the Cross, united through Mary's motherly love.

INTRODUCTION

A village was once divided by a bitter family feud that had lasted for over thirty years. Two elderly brothers lived on opposite sides of the same road without speaking to one another. When their mother lay dying, she asked to see both of them. Holding one son with each hand, she whispered, "My greatest pain is not that I am dying, but that my children are strangers." Her final embrace accomplished what years of arguments could not. A mother's love became the bridge of reconciliation.

In today's first reading, St Paul tells us that God has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation, inviting us to become ambassadors of his peace. In the Gospel, standing faithfully beneath the Cross, Mary receives John as her son and becomes the Mother of all believers, gathering God's scattered children into one family through the sacrifice of Christ.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Reconciliation. At Calvary Mary witnessed the greatest act of reconciliation between God and humanity, and as our Mother she continues to lead wounded hearts back to her Son and to one another.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask forgiveness for every division, resentment and lack of charity in our lives.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you reconciled the world to the Father through your saving Cross. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us Mary as the Mother who gathers your children into one family. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to forgive one another as you have forgiven us. Lord, have mercy.

Homily: *Mary, Mother of Reconciliation: Love Stronger than Hurt*

A famous story tells of two sisters who had not spoken for years because of a misunderstanding over an inheritance. Their children grew up as strangers. One Christmas, an elderly nun visited them separately and gave each sister exactly the same gift—a small crucifix. She simply said, "Whenever you look at this cross, remember who suffered more to forgive." On Christmas morning, each sister independently walked to the other's house. They embraced before either could speak. The Cross had done what pride never could. Reconciliation always begins when someone allows love to become greater than hurt.

Today's liturgy centres on this beautiful title of Mary: Mother of Reconciliation. It is a title that speaks deeply to our divided world, our divided families, and sometimes even to our divided hearts.

St Paul reminds us in the first reading that "God reconciled us to himself through Christ." Reconciliation is God's initiative. Humanity wandered away, yet God came searching for us. Like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, God runs towards those returning home.

Paul goes even further. He says that God has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation. Every Christian is called to become an ambassador of peace. That sounds noble, but it is also difficult.

A little boy once asked his grandmother, "Why do grown-ups find it so hard to say 'I'm sorry'?" She smiled and answered, "Because little words often have to climb over a very big pride." How true that is. Broken marriages, divided families, parish disagreements, arguments among neighbours, resentments carried for years—many of these continue because no one wants to take the first step.

Yet Jesus always takes the first step.
On Calvary we witness the greatest reconciliation in history.
Humanity rejected God.
God responded with forgiveness.
People nailed Jesus to a Cross.
Jesus stretched out his arms—
not to strike back—but to embrace the whole world.

Standing beside that Cross was Mary.
She heard Jesus pray, "Father, forgive them."
She watched hatred conquered by mercy.
She saw reconciliation born from sacrifice.

Then Jesus looked at Mary and John.
"Woman, behold your son." "Behold your mother."
These words are far more than family arrangements.

At the very moment when Jesus reconciles humanity with the Father,
he also creates a new family.
The Church is born beneath the Cross.
Mary becomes the Mother of all who believe.
A mother always gathers.
She heals.
She reconciles.

Anyone who has watched a mother settle an argument among her
children knows this instinct.
She does not ask, "Who won?"
She asks, "Can we be a family again?"
Mary does the same for us.

There is an old tradition that after every quarrel among the monks in
one monastery, they were required to pray one Hail Mary together
before going to bed. Surprisingly, most disagreements ended before
the prayer was finished. It is difficult to call Mary "our Mother" while
refusing to accept another believer as our brother or sister.

Pope Francis often reminded us that mercy is not weakness but
strength. Forgiveness is never pretending that evil did not happen.
Rather, forgiveness refuses to allow evil to have the last word.
The Cross proves that love is stronger than hatred.
Mary teaches this lesson silently.

Notice something remarkable in today's Gospel.
Mary says nothing.
Not one recorded word.
Yet her silence speaks powerfully.

She remains.
She stays faithful.

Sometimes reconciliation begins not with many words but with
faithful presence.
A husband sitting beside his sick wife.
A daughter visiting an elderly parent.
A friend refusing to abandon someone who has failed.
Presence often heals where explanations cannot.

There is another beautiful story. After World War II, a church in
Germany had been almost completely destroyed. When the people
rebuilt it, they discovered that the statue of Christ had lost both
hands during the bombing. Some suggested making new hands.
Others proposed leaving it exactly as it was. Finally they placed
beneath the statue these words:
"Christ has no hands now but ours."

That inscription reflects today's first reading.
We become Christ's ambassadors.
Our hands forgive.
Our words heal.
Our actions reconcile.
Mary encourages precisely this mission.

Every Marian apparition carries essentially the same invitation:
conversion, prayer, repentance, peace.
At Fatima she asked people to pray for sinners.
At Lourdes she called for penance.
At Guadalupe she united divided peoples.

At Tre Fontane she invited conversion and fidelity to Christ and the Church.

Mary always leads towards reconciliation because she always leads towards Jesus.

Perhaps today someone comes to Mass carrying an old wound.

Maybe there is a brother you have not called.

A daughter from whom you are distant.

A neighbour you avoid.

Perhaps the division exists within yourself because you struggle to believe that God has truly forgiven your past.

Listen again to Paul's words:

"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation."

Notice that he says new creation, not repaired creation.

God does not merely patch up our lives.

He makes us new.

There is no sin too great for his mercy.

No relationship beyond his grace.

No future closed to his love.

Mary, Mother of Reconciliation, gently takes us by the hand and leads us to the Cross where every division can begin to heal.

A missionary once told of visiting a remote village where two tribal chiefs had been enemies for decades. During Mass he invited them both to come forward for Holy Communion. Each hesitated. Finally one chief stepped out, walked across the church, and embraced the other before receiving Communion. The entire congregation began to weep. Later someone asked him what changed his heart.

He answered simply, "I realised I could not receive the Body of Christ while refusing the brother for whom Christ gave that Body."

That is today's message.

The Cross reconciles.

Mary gathers.

The Church continues Christ's ministry of reconciliation.

May we leave this Eucharist ready to forgive,
ready to ask forgiveness,
ready to heal divisions,
and ready to become ambassadors of Christ's peace
under the loving guidance of Mary, our Mother of Reconciliation.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the mercy of God who reconciles the world to himself through Christ, let us bring before him our prayers.

1. For the Church: that she may always be a living sign of reconciliation, healing divisions through the Gospel of mercy and peace, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may seek dialogue over violence, justice over revenge, and peace over conflict, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For families and communities: that those burdened by misunderstanding, resentment or broken relationships may find the courage to forgive and to begin again, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For all of us gathered here: that, inspired by Mary, Mother of Reconciliation, we may become ambassadors of Christ's forgiveness in our homes, workplaces and parishes, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the sick, comfort to the suffering, and everlasting peace to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, hear the prayers we offer through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Reconciliation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we place bread and wine upon the altar, let us also offer every broken relationship, every wounded memory and every desire for reconciliation, and pay that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United as one family through Christ and under the loving care of Mary, our Mother of Reconciliation, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially the evil of division and unforgiveness.
Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, strengthened by your mercy
and guided by the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Reconciliation,
we may be freed from sin, secure from all distress,
and joyful in the hope of the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
through your Cross you reconciled the world to the Father
and made us one family in your love.
Through the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of Reconciliation,
fill our hearts with your peace, heal every division among us,
and make us faithful instruments of your forgiveness,
for you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who reconciles us with the Father and with one another.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb,
where Christ nourishes us with his Body
and teaches us to live as one family in love.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who has reconciled the world to himself through his Son, fill you with his mercy. Amen.
May Jesus Christ, who from the Cross gave us Mary as our Mother and reconciled heaven and earth, strengthen you to become ambassadors of forgiveness. Amen.
May the Holy Spirit, the bond of love and peace, unite your hearts in charity and lead you always in the way of reconciliation. Amen.
And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by living as ministers of reconciliation.

15. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Rev 21:1–5a; Mt 28:1–10

With Mary, we live the hope of the Resurrection.

INTRODUCTION

A little girl once planted a dry-looking bulb in her grandmother's garden. Every morning she watered the bare patch of earth. Weeks passed, and nothing appeared. One day she sadly asked, "Grandma, did the flower die?" Her grandmother smiled and replied, "No, my dear. Sometimes life is growing where we cannot yet see it." A few days later, a beautiful lily emerged from the soil.

In today's first reading from Revelation, God promises a new heaven and a new earth where every sorrow gives way to new life, reminding us that God is always making all things new.

In today's Gospel, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary discover the empty tomb and become the first witnesses of the Risen Christ, learning that death never has the final word.

Today we honour **the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Resurrection of the Lord**. Although the Gospels do not explicitly describe Mary's meeting with her risen Son, the Church contemplates her as the woman who never lost hope and who shared most perfectly in the joy of Christ's victory over death.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for those moments when we have allowed fear to overcome Easter hope.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you conquered death and opened for us the gates of eternal life. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you strengthened the faith of your Blessed Mother and filled her heart with Easter joy. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to announce your Resurrection by lives filled with hope and love. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Living the Resurrection with Mary*

Several years ago, after a devastating earthquake, rescuers searched through the ruins of a school. Hours passed with little hope. Suddenly one rescuer heard a faint tapping sound beneath the concrete. He stopped everyone from working and listened carefully. Following that tiny sound, they discovered several children alive beneath the rubble. Later one child explained, "We kept knocking because we believed someone would hear us." Hope saved them.

The Resurrection is God's answer to every human heart that keeps knocking in hope. Easter proclaims that God hears every cry, every prayer, every tear. And today the Church invites us to contemplate the Resurrection through the eyes of Mary.

Our first reading from Revelation is one of the most beautiful passages in Scripture. St John sees "a new heaven and a new earth." God himself declares, "Behold, I make all things new." Notice that God does not merely repair the old world. He creates something entirely new.

The Resurrection of Jesus is not simply the return of a dead man to life. It is the beginning of a completely new creation. Everything changes because Christ has conquered sin, death and evil forever.

Mary understood this better than anyone. Throughout her life she believed God's promises even when everything seemed impossible. At the Annunciation she believed before she understood. At Bethlehem she trusted amid poverty. In Egypt she trusted while living as a refugee. At Calvary she trusted while standing beneath the Cross. Faith remained alive even when hope seemed buried.

There is an old tradition in the Church, cherished by many saints, that the first-person Jesus visited after his Resurrection was his mother. The Scriptures remain silent, so we cannot claim it as historical fact. Yet the tradition beautifully expresses something profound: if anyone had kept the flame of faith burning through the darkness of Good Friday, it was Mary.

While the apostles hid behind locked doors, Mary's heart remained open. She knew that God's promises never fail.

There is a touching story about a widow whose husband had always planted roses in their garden. After his death she neglected the garden because every flower reminded her of her loss. One spring, despite her neglect, the roses bloomed more beautifully than ever. She said through tears, "Life has continued loving me even when I had forgotten how to love life." That is Easter.

God continues loving us even when we struggle to believe. Many people today live as though Good Friday were the final chapter.

They see wars, sickness, loneliness, broken families, addictions and disappointments. They conclude that darkness has won. But Christians are Easter people. We know that every Good Friday is followed by Easter Sunday.

The Gospel tells us that the women came to the tomb carrying spices. They expected to anoint a dead body. Instead, they encountered a living Lord. How often we approach situations expecting only disappointment. We think a marriage cannot heal. A child cannot return to faith. An illness cannot teach us anything. Our mistakes define us forever. But the Risen Christ constantly surprises us. The angel tells the women, "Do not be afraid." These are among the most repeated words in the Bible. Fear closes doors. Faith opens them.

After World War II, Coventry Cathedral in England lay in ruins after bombing. Instead of leaving the ruins as a symbol of hatred, the people built a new cathedral beside the destroyed one. They placed a cross made from burned beams at the centre with one simple word: "Father Forgive."

Out of destruction came reconciliation.
Out of ashes came hope.
Out of death came new life.
That is exactly what the Resurrection does.
It does not erase suffering. It transforms it.
Mary teaches us this transformation.

She did not escape sorrow.
She carried it with faith.

That is why she can teach every grieving parent, every lonely widow,
every discouraged student, every struggling family and every elderly
person.

She whispers the same message she heard from heaven:
"Do not be afraid."

The Resurrection also makes us missionaries.
The angel tells the women, "Go quickly and tell his disciples."
The first witnesses become the first messengers.
Real Easter faith cannot remain silent.

A Christian who has truly met the Risen Lord naturally shares joy,
forgiveness, kindness and hope.

Sometimes we imagine evangelisation means giving long speeches.
Usually it begins much more simply.
A smile.
A visit to someone who is lonely.
Forgiving an old wound.
Helping a neighbour.
Listening patiently.
Offering encouragement.
These are Easter actions.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta often said that the greatest poverty was not
hunger but feeling unwanted. Every time she picked up a dying
person from the streets, she was proclaiming the Resurrection.

She was saying with actions: "Your life still matters."
That is Easter hope in practice.

The world desperately needs such witnesses today.
People are surrounded by bad news. They hear about violence,
disasters, economic uncertainty and division.

Who will remind them that Christ is alive?
Perhaps God is asking each one of us.
One candle cannot remove all darkness.
But one candle can begin. Mary was that candle.
Quiet. Hidden. Faithful.
She never preached great sermons.
Yet her whole life proclaimed that God keeps his promises.

Let us return to the story of the children beneath the earthquake
rubble. Why did they continue knocking? Because they believed
someone was searching.

Our world is full of people knocking beneath the rubble of grief,
addiction, depression, failure and loneliness. The Risen Christ sends
us to them. Perhaps our words, our kindness, our patience or simply
our presence will become the answer to their knocking.
One day every tomb will be empty.
Every tear will be wiped away.
Every faithful disciple will hear the words proclaimed in today's first
reading: "Behold, I make all things new."
Until that day, may Mary, Mother of the Risen Lord, teach us never to
surrender to despair but always to live as joyful witnesses of Easter,
carrying hope wherever darkness still remains. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Filled with Easter hope and trusting in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us bring our prayers before our loving Father.

1. For the Church: that, strengthened by the joy of Christ's Resurrection, she may proclaim the Gospel with renewed courage and become a sign of hope to all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may seek reconciliation instead of conflict and work for justice, peace and the dignity of every human person, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For all who suffer discouragement, grief or despair: that the light of the Risen Christ may renew their hope through the love and support of Christian communities, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that, following the example of Mary, we may trust God's promises, live as people of the Resurrection and bring hope wherever we go, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, especially those suffering in mind, body or spirit, and for all our faithful departed: that Christ, who conquered death, may grant healing to the living and everlasting joy to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, through the Resurrection of your Son you have made all things new. Hear these prayers which we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we bring our gifts of bread and wine to the altar,
let us also offer our lives to God,
that they may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by his divine teaching,
let us pray with confidence to our loving Father,
for through Christ's Resurrection we have become His beloved children.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and strengthen us with the hope born of Christ's Resurrection.
Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
keep us steadfast in faith amid life's trials,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
by your glorious Resurrection you brought peace to fearful hearts
and transformed despair into joy.
Grant your peace to your Church and to our world,
that, strengthened by Mary's unwavering faith,
we may become instruments of your reconciliation and hope.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who died and is risen,
making all things new.

Happy are those called to the supper of the Lamb,
where the Risen Lord nourishes us with the bread of eternal life.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who raised his Son from the dead and filled the
Blessed Virgin Mary with Easter joy, strengthen your faith and renew
your hope. Amen.

May God the Son, the Risen Lord, walk beside you each day, turning
your fears into courage and your sorrows into lasting joy. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit fill your hearts with the light of the
Resurrection, so that you may be joyful witnesses of the Gospel
wherever you go. Amen.

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for
ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, living as people of the Resurrection,
and, with Mary, bring Christ's hope to all you meet.

16. HOLY MARY, FOUNTAIN OF LIGHT AND LIFE

Acts 2:14a, 36-40a, 41-42; Jn 12:44-50 (or Jn 3:1-6)

Through Mary, we receive Christ, our Light and Life.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a group of travellers lost their way while crossing a
desert. Their water was almost gone, and despair began to take
hold. Then an elderly guide smiled and said, "Follow me." Hidden
behind a cluster of rocks was a spring that had flowed there for
centuries. The spring had always been there; they simply had not
known where to look. That little fountain saved every one of them.

In today's first reading, Peter proclaims Jesus as Lord and invites the
people to repentance and Baptism, through which thousands receive
new life and devote themselves to the life of the Church.

In the Gospel, Jesus reveals Himself as the Light who has come into
the world so that all who believe in Him may leave the darkness and
receive eternal life.

Today we honour **Holy Mary, Fountain of Light and Life**. Mary is
not herself the source of light or life, but she leads every generation
to her Son, Jesus Christ, who is both the Light of the World and the
Giver of Life.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us
acknowledge those moments when we have preferred darkness to
light and sin to life, and ask the Lord for mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You came into the world as the Light that no darkness can overcome. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through Your death and resurrection You opened for us the fountain of eternal life. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, through the loving care of Mary, You continue to lead Your people into the fullness of truth and life. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Holy Mary, Fountain of Light and Life*

A little boy once visited a lighthouse with his grandfather. As evening approached, he watched the great lamp begin to rotate, sending beams of light far across the sea. Looking out, he asked, "Grandpa, does the lighthouse move to the ships?" His grandfather smiled. "No. It stays where it is. The ships must steer towards its light."

That simple answer contains a profound spiritual truth. God never abandons us. His light constantly shines. The question is whether we steer our lives towards Him. Today, we honour Mary under the beautiful title Fountain of Light and Life, because throughout her life she continually directs humanity to Jesus, the everlasting Light and the source of eternal Life.

Peter's sermon in today's first reading is one of the brightest moments in the early Church. Only weeks earlier, Peter had denied Jesus three times. He had hidden behind locked doors out of fear. Yet after Pentecost he stands before thousands without hesitation. What changed him? The Holy Spirit filled him with the light of Christ.

Peter boldly proclaims, "God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ." Those words pierce the hearts of the listeners. They ask, "What must we do?" Peter answers simply: "Repent and be baptised." The result is astonishing. Three thousand people are baptised in one day.

Notice what follows. They devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer. Light always creates community. Darkness isolates. Sin divides. Christ gathers.

A teacher once asked her students why people switch on a light when entering a dark room. One child answered, "Because darkness cannot leave by itself." The teacher smiled. "Exactly. Light does not fight darkness. It simply appears."

Jesus says something similar in today's Gospel.

"I have come into the world as light."

He does not merely bring light. He is the Light. Darkness is not removed by arguments but by encountering Christ Himself.

Mary understood this better than anyone.

At the Annunciation she welcomed the Light into the world.

At Bethlehem she presented the Light to the shepherds.

At Cana she pointed everyone to the Light by saying, "Do whatever He tells you."

At Calvary she remained faithful when darkness seemed to triumph. At Pentecost she prayed with the apostles until the Light of the Holy Spirit transformed them.

Her entire mission was to bring others to Jesus.

That is why the Church calls her Fountain of Light and Life.

Not because she replaces Christ, but because through her faith, obedience and motherhood, she constantly leads us to Him.

There is an old legend about a mountain village that depended entirely upon a spring. Every morning the villagers filled their buckets with its fresh water. One day someone asked, "Who owns this spring?" The oldest villager replied, "No one owns it. We only keep the path to it clear."

Mary's whole life is like that.
She keeps the path clear.
She never asks us to stop with her.
She quietly says, "Come to Jesus."

Every Marian shrine tells the same story.
Millions travel to Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, Loreto, Knock and countless other places. They may come because of Mary, but if the pilgrimage is authentic, they leave loving Jesus more deeply.

St Louis de Montfort beautifully wrote that Mary is the easiest, shortest and safest road to Christ.

Notice also how today's Gospel ends.
Jesus says His Father's command is eternal life.
Light and life belong together.

Without light, plants die.
Without sunlight, the earth becomes cold and barren.
Spiritually the same is true.
When people shut Christ out of their lives, darkness slowly enters.

We see it in broken families, dishonesty, addictions, loneliness and despair. Yet every confession, every Eucharist, every sincere prayer opens another window for Christ's light.

A hospital chaplain once visited an elderly woman who had almost completely lost her eyesight. He wondered what comfort he could offer someone who could barely see. She smiled and said, "Father, my eyes may no longer see the sunlight, but every morning I ask Jesus to keep my heart full of His light."

She understood something many healthy people forget.
The brightest light shines inside the soul.
That is why saints remain joyful even amid suffering.
Their circumstances may be dark, but Christ lives within them.

Mary teaches us exactly this interior light.
Think of her hidden years in Nazareth.
No miracles.
No applause.
No public recognition.
Only daily faithfulness.
Cooking. Cleaning. Working. Praying. Loving.

That hidden life became the fountain from which holiness quietly flowed into the world. Perhaps we sometimes imagine holiness requires extraordinary achievements. Usually it does not.
It means allowing Christ's light to shine through ordinary acts of love.
A smile. Forgiveness. Patience. Listening.
Helping someone without expecting gratitude.
These small acts become rays of Christ's light.

There is another beautiful lesson from today's first reading.
Those who accepted Peter's message devoted themselves to prayer,
fellowship and the breaking of bread.
Faith is never private. Light spreads.

Imagine lighting one candle in a dark cathedral. Soon another candle
is lit, then another, until hundreds shine together.
No candle loses its flame by sharing it. The same happens with faith.
Parents pass it to children.
Teachers pass it to students.
Friends encourage one another.
Priests nourish communities.
Grandparents quietly teach their grandchildren to pray.

Mary herself continues this mission in every generation.
She keeps pointing towards Jesus.

A famous artist was once asked why he painted so many windows
with sunlight streaming through them. He answered, "I am not
painting the window. I am painting the light."

Mary would say the same about her life.
She never wanted people to admire the window.
She wanted everyone to see the Light shining through it.

May we become such windows.
May people who meet us discover honesty instead of deceit,
hope instead of despair,
forgiveness instead of resentment,
kindness instead of selfishness.
Then Christ's light will continue to shine through the Church.

A missionary once described visiting a remote village where
electricity had never reached. At sunset the people gathered in the
small chapel. One elderly woman lit a single candle before the image
of Our Lady. Soon every person lit a candle from hers until the whole
chapel glowed with warm light. The missionary later wrote, "I realised
that evening what Mary has done throughout history. She has never
kept the Light for herself. She simply receives Christ and passes Him
on to every waiting heart."

May we leave this Eucharist carrying that same light into our homes,
workplaces and communities. And through the loving guidance of
Holy Mary, Fountain of Light and Life, may many others discover
Jesus Christ, the Light that never fades and the Life that never ends.
Amen

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ, the Light of the World, and trusting in the
maternal intercession of Mary, the Fountain of Light and Life, let us
present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully proclaim Christ as the Light
of the nations and lead all people to the waters of eternal life. Let us
pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may govern with wisdom, justice and
compassion, bringing hope where there is conflict and light where
there is despair. Let us pray to the Lord.
3. For catechumens, those preparing for Baptism, and all who seek
God: that they may discover in Christ the true light and receive the
gift of new life through the Holy Spirit. Let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that, inspired by Mary's faith, we may become living witnesses of Christ through works of charity, reconciliation and joyful discipleship. Let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that Christ, the Light of the World, may strengthen those who suffer, comfort those who mourn, and welcome the deceased into the eternal light of His heavenly kingdom. Let us pray to the Lord.

Father of Light and Life, hear the prayers we offer with confidence through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we place bread and wine upon the altar, let us also offer our hearts, asking Mary to lead us always to Christ, the true Fountain of Light and Life, so that our lives may become a pleasing sacrifice to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Christ, who has given us new birth through water and the Holy Spirit, and trusting in the maternal care of Mary, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil,
especially the darkness of sin and discouragement.
Strengthened by the light of Christ
and guided by the loving example of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
keep us faithful in hope
as we await the glorious coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You are the Light that shines in every darkness and the source of every true life.

Through the intercession of Mary, Fountain of Light and Life, fill our hearts with Your peace, unite our families in love, and make us instruments of reconciliation wherever we go. You live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who is the Light of the World and the Bread of Life.
Happy are those who are called to His supper,
where all who believe receive the light of grace
and the promise of eternal life.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light, bless and protect you. Amen.

May the Son, the Light of the World and the Giver of eternal life, fill your hearts with His peace and joy. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit renew you each day and make you faithful witnesses to the Gospel under the loving care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Fountain of Light and Life. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and, like Mary, bring Christ's light and life to all you meet.

17. OUR LADY OF THE CENACLE

Acts 1:6–14; Luke 8:19–21

Prayer, unity and obedience prepare hearts for the Holy Spirit

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once asked his grandmother, "Why do you always light a candle before we pray?" She smiled and replied, "Because a single flame reminds us that we never wait for God in darkness. We wait in hope." Every evening they prayed together, and the child later said that the candle taught him that God always comes to those who patiently wait. The Cenacle was such a place—a room filled with hope, prayer and expectation.

In the first reading, the disciples, together with Mary, remain united in prayer after Jesus' Ascension, waiting faithfully for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches that the true members of His family are those who hear the Word of God and put it into practice. Mary is the perfect disciple because she both listened to God's Word and lived it completely.

Today we honour Our Lady of the Cenacle, the Mother who gathered the disciples in prayer and strengthened their faith while they awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit. She teaches us that every Christian community becomes strong when it is united in prayer, hope and love.

Let us now acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to make us worthy of these sacred mysteries.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You gathered Your disciples in the Upper Room and filled them with hope as they awaited the Holy Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You gave us Mary as Mother and model of faithful prayer and perfect discipleship. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us to hear Your word, remain united in love, and become one family in Your Kingdom. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"Waiting Together with Mary"*

A young violinist once auditioned for a prestigious orchestra. After he finished playing, the judges thanked him but asked him to wait outside. Minutes became an hour. One by one, the other candidates left disappointed. Finally, the conductor came out with a smile and said, "The hardest part of becoming a musician is not learning to play. It is learning to wait without losing confidence."

Waiting is difficult. We want instant answers, instant success, instant healing and instant solutions. Yet throughout salvation history, God often works through waiting. Abraham waited for a son. Moses waited forty years. Israel waited centuries for the Messiah. The Apostles waited in the Upper Room. And in that waiting, Mary was with them.

Today's feast presents one of the most beautiful images of the Church. After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples did not scatter. They gathered in the Cenacle. They prayed together. They trusted together. And at the centre of that praying community stood Mary.

Notice that Mary does not preach a sermon. She performs no miracle. She gives no command. Her silent presence itself becomes a source of strength.

There is an old African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." The disciples were preparing to go to the ends of the earth. Before they could go, they first had to remain together. Unity preceded mission.

Many families today know how difficult it is simply to stay together. Everyone is busy. Phones have replaced conversations. Meals are hurried. Prayer is forgotten. Yet whenever a family kneels together before God, it becomes a little Cenacle.

A parish priest once noticed that an elderly couple never missed the daily Rosary before Mass. One day he asked their secret. The husband laughed and said, "Father, after sixty years of marriage we still disagree about many things. But when we pray together, we remember that God loves both of us more than either of us is right."

Prayer does not remove every problem. Prayer changes the people facing the problems.

The Gospel gives another important lesson. Someone tells Jesus that His mother and relatives are waiting outside. Jesus answers, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice."

Jesus is not rejecting Mary. He is praising her. She is His greatest disciple because she first listened and then obeyed.

Saint Augustine beautifully said, "Mary conceived Christ in her heart before she conceived Him in her womb."

That is why she belongs in the Cenacle. She had already lived a lifetime of saying "Yes" to God. Now she teaches the Apostles how to trust even when they do not understand everything.

There is a touching story about a little girl flying through a violent storm. The passengers were frightened as the aircraft shook. Some prayed aloud. Others cried. Yet the little girl calmly coloured in her book. After the plane landed, someone asked, "Weren't you afraid?" She smiled and answered, "No. My father is the pilot."

Mary teaches us that kind of confidence. She knew that God was leading history even when the future seemed uncertain.

Sometimes our own lives resemble the Cenacle.

We wait for medical results.

We wait for employment.

We wait for reconciliation.

We wait for peace in our families.

We wait for our children to return to the faith.

Waiting is never easy. But if we wait with Mary, our waiting becomes hopeful instead of anxious.

The Cenacle also teaches us that the Holy Spirit comes most powerfully where there is unity.

One Sunday, a father gave each of his three sons a single stick and asked them to break it. They did so easily. Then he tied ten sticks

together. None of them could break the bundle. "So it is," he said. "Separated, you are weak. United, you are strong."

That is exactly what happened in Jerusalem. Fearful individuals became courageous missionaries because they remained united in prayer.

Our world desperately needs new Cenacles.
Parishes that pray together.
Families that forgive each other.
Religious communities united in charity.
Young people open to God's call.
Married couples who place Christ at the centre.
Every Rosary group is meant to become a Cenacle.
Every Eucharistic celebration is meant to become a Cenacle.
Every Christian home is called to become a Cenacle.
When Mary is present, Christ is always at the centre.

The Psalm today celebrates Zion, the city founded by God. The early Church discovered that its true strength did not lie in buildings but in hearts united in faith. Wherever believers gather around Christ with Mary, there the Church is alive.

The Holy Spirit who descended at Pentecost has never stopped working. The same Spirit still renews hearts, heals divisions, strengthens the weak and inspires holiness.

Perhaps today each of us should ask three simple questions.
Do I make time for prayer?
Do I help create unity in my family and parish?
Am I willing to wait for God's timing instead of demanding my own?

If the answer to these questions grows stronger every day, then we too become people of the Cenacle.

Let us ask Our Lady of the Cenacle to gather us beneath her maternal care, to teach us perseverance in prayer, and to prepare our hearts for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

A missionary once visited an old chapel that had been abandoned for many years. The walls were cracked, the windows broken, and the altar covered with dust. Yet in one corner he found an old oil lamp still burning because an elderly woman had faithfully come every day to refill it. "Why do you keep the lamp burning?" he asked. She replied quietly, "So that if the Lord comes, He will find someone waiting."

That is the lesson of the Cenacle. Mary kept the flame of hope alive until the Holy Spirit came. May she teach us to keep the lamp of faith burning, to remain united in prayer, and to wait with joyful confidence until the Lord fills our lives with His Spirit. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered with Mary, Mother of the Church, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Holy Church: that, like the community gathered in the Cenacle, she may remain united in prayer and always be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that the Holy Spirit may inspire them with wisdom, justice and a sincere desire for peace and reconciliation among all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families and parish communities: that Mary, Our Lady of the Cenacle, may help them become places of prayer, unity, forgiveness and mutual encouragement, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For those waiting with hope: especially those seeking employment, healing, conversion of loved ones, or guidance in important decisions, that they may trust in God's perfect timing, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the lonely, and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to those who suffer, comfort to those who mourn, and eternal joy to all who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, hear the prayers we offer through the loving intercession of Mary, Our Lady of the Cenacle. Grant us the grace to remain faithful in prayer until we receive the fullness of Your Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, like the disciples gathered with Mary in the Cenacle, we may offer ourselves to God with open hearts, ready to receive the Holy Spirit, and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Christ and gathered as one family around His table, together with Mary who prayed with the Apostles in the Upper Room, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
As You strengthened the Apostles
who persevered in prayer with Mary
while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit,
keep us steadfast in faith,
united in charity, and joyful in hope,
as we await the blessed coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You brought peace to Your disciples gathered in the Upper Room
and poured out upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit.
Through the loving intercession of Our Lady of the Cenacle,
fill our hearts with Your peace,
strengthen the unity of Your Church,
and make us instruments of reconciliation wherever we live.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who nourishes His people
and makes us one family in Him.
Happy are those who, like Mary in the Cenacle,
wait upon the Lord with trusting hearts
and are invited to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who called Mary to gather the disciples in prayer, strengthen you in faith and hope. Amen.

May the Son, who made Mary the first and perfect disciple, help you to hear His word and put it into practice. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who descended upon the Church in the Cenacle, fill your hearts with His gifts and make you courageous witnesses of the Gospel. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives.

18. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, QUEEN OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4: John 19:25-27

Prayer with Mary leads to mission through the Holy Spirit

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a guide took a group of tourists into the upper room in Jerusalem. As they admired the ancient walls, one little boy asked, "What made this room so special?" The guide smiled and answered, "It was not the walls—it was the people who prayed there together, waiting with Mary." Great things begin wherever people gather in prayer with faith.

In the first reading, we find Mary in the Upper Room with the Apostles, praying with them until the Holy Spirit transforms fearful disciples into courageous missionaries.

In the Gospel, Jesus entrusts Mary to the beloved disciple and the disciple to Mary, making her the Mother of every disciple and the heart of the Church's apostolic family.

Today we honour Mary as Queen of the Apostles. She does not replace the Apostles but lovingly accompanies, encourages and intercedes for them as they carry Christ to the world.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for those times we have failed to be faithful witnesses of Christ.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You called the Apostles to proclaim the Good News and gave them Mary as their Mother and companion: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You sent the Holy Spirit upon the praying Church gathered around Mary in the Upper Room: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You continue to send us into the world as Your disciples and missionaries: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary, Queen of the Apostles: Waiting in Prayer*

In a small African village, a missionary noticed something unusual. Every evening before sunset, an elderly grandmother gathered the children beneath a large tree. She never preached long sermons. Instead, she simply lit a lantern and waited quietly. Curious visitors asked why she did this every day. She smiled and replied, "Children become restless in the dark. But when they see the light, they know someone is waiting for them." Years later many of those children became priests, religious sisters, teachers and devoted Christian parents. They often said, "We learned faith because someone waited for us with the light." That grandmother reminds us of Mary in today's feast.

The Church honours her as Queen of the Apostles. Notice that she is not called Queen because she commands an army or sits upon a throne. She is Queen because she serves with perfect love. Her greatness lies not in power but in humble discipleship.

Today's first reading takes us into the Upper Room. Imagine the atmosphere. Only weeks before, the Apostles had abandoned Jesus.

Peter had denied Him. Thomas doubted. All of them carried memories of fear and failure.

Now Jesus has ascended. What should they do?

They do exactly what Jesus asked.

They wait. And they wait with Mary.

Luke tells us that "they devoted themselves with one accord to prayer."

Mary does not give speeches.

She does not become the leader of the Apostles.

She simply prays.

Yet her silent presence holds the whole community together.

Sometimes the greatest leadership happens without saying many words.

There is an old story about St. John Vianney.

A priest noticed an old farmer sitting silently before the Blessed Sacrament every afternoon. "What are you doing?" he asked.

The farmer answered, "I look at Him. He looks at me. That is enough."

Mary teaches exactly that kind of prayer.

Before Pentecost there were no miracles.

No preaching.

No conversions.

Only prayer.

Every great mission begins in silence before God.

How different this is from today's world.

We like immediate results.

Fast internet.
Instant communication.
Quick solutions.
God often works differently.
He prepares hearts before sending them.
He teaches us to wait before asking us to act.
The Apostles received the Holy Spirit because they first learned to wait with Mary.

A young violinist once complained to his teacher that he practised every day but still was not improving quickly. The teacher replied, "Trees grow while nobody is watching." Faith grows the same way. Prayer changes us quietly before anyone notices.

Mary understood this better than anyone. For thirty years she lived the hidden life of Nazareth before the public ministry of Jesus began. She knew that God's greatest works mature in silence.

Today's Gospel takes us back to Calvary.
Standing beneath the Cross, Mary hears Jesus say,
"Woman, behold your son."
Then to John, "Behold your mother."
At that moment Mary becomes Mother not only of John but of every disciple. That includes us.
Notice something beautiful. At Calvary Jesus creates a new family.
Not one united by blood but by faith.
The Church is born around the Cross just as it will later be strengthened in the Upper Room.

Mary is present at both moments.
At the Cross she receives the Church.
At Pentecost she prays with the Church.
She is always where Christ forms His disciples.

There is an old legend from the early Church. After Pentecost, people sometimes asked the Apostles what Jesus looked like. When they struggled to describe Him, they would often turn to Mary. Only she had watched Him grow from infancy. Only she remembered His first smile, His first steps, His childhood prayers.

She helped the Apostles remember Jesus more deeply.
Whether or not the story is historical, it expresses an important truth.
Mary always leads us to know Jesus better.
She never points to herself.
She always points to her Son.

Pope St. Paul VI beautifully described Mary as the "Star of Evangelisation." A star never draws attention to itself. It helps travellers find their destination. Mary leads every disciple safely to Christ.

That is why missionaries throughout history have carried great devotion to Mary.
When St. Francis Xavier travelled across Asia, he carried an image of Our Lady.
When St. Damien served the lepers of Molokai, he entrusted himself to Mary.

When St. Teresa of Calcutta entered the poorest streets of Calcutta each morning, she first prayed the Rosary.
They understood that missionary work begins not with clever plans but with hearts united to Mary.

There is another lesson today.
The Apostles were very different men.
Peter was impulsive.
John was gentle.
Thomas questioned everything.
Matthew had been a tax collector.
Simon had once belonged to a revolutionary movement.
Humanly speaking, such people should never have formed a successful team.
Yet they became one Church because they prayed together.
Mary united them.

How much our families, parishes and communities need that lesson today.
Unity is not created by everyone thinking alike.
Unity is created when everyone places Christ at the centre.
Mary always gathers people around Jesus.
She never gathers them around herself.
That is why she remains Queen of the Apostles.
Not because she dominates. Because she unites.

Every parish needs an Upper Room.
Every family needs an Upper Room.
Every Christian heart needs an Upper Room.
A place where prayer comes before activity.

Where listening comes before speaking.
Where waiting comes before rushing.
Where the Holy Spirit is welcomed.

Perhaps today's feast invites us to ask ourselves some simple questions.

Do I pray before making important decisions?
Do I invite Mary to accompany my family?
Am I helping others grow closer to Jesus?
Am I building unity or creating division?

The world does not need more noisy Christians.
It needs Spirit-filled disciples. Pentecost begins on our knees.
It begins with prayer.
It begins with Mary.

A beautiful story is told about a cathedral damaged during World War II. After the bombing, workers found a large statue of Christ shattered into many pieces. They painstakingly restored it, but the hands were too badly damaged to repair. Some suggested sculpting new hands. Instead, the parish placed beneath the statue a simple inscription:
"Christ has no hands now but yours."
That is the mission of every Apostle.

But before our hands can become Christ's hands, our hearts must first become like Mary's heart—humble, prayerful, faithful and open to the Holy Spirit.

May Mary, Queen of the Apostles, gather us once more into her Upper Room, teach us to pray, fill us with hope, and send us into the world as joyful witnesses of her Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered with Mary, Queen of the Apostles, and trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, let us present our prayers to our loving Father.

1. For Pope N., our bishops, priests, deacons, religious and all missionaries, that, like the Apostles gathered around Mary, they may proclaim Christ with courage, wisdom and joy.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For world leaders, that the Holy Spirit may guide them to seek justice, reconciliation and lasting peace among all nations.

Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For our parish community, that our homes may become modern Upper Rooms where families pray together, grow in faith and welcome the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For those who feel discouraged, lonely or uncertain about their vocation, that through Mary's maternal care they may discover God's loving plan and find renewed hope. Lord, hear our prayer.

5. For the sick, the elderly, the dying, and for all our faithful departed, that Christ may grant healing to the suffering and welcome the dead into the joy of His heavenly kingdom. Lord, hear our prayer.

Father of mercy, through the intercession of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, hear the prayers we make with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, united with Mary in prayer, we may offer ourselves to God and be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Mary, the Mother of the Church, and filled with the same Spirit who descended at Pentecost, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil
and strengthen Your Church with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
Through the loving intercession of Mary, Queen of the Apostles,
keep us united in faith, steadfast in hope,
and courageous in proclaiming the Gospel,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You gathered Your Apostles around Mary
and filled them with the peace and power of the Holy Spirit.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity according to Your will.
May Your Spirit make us instruments of reconciliation
wherever we live and work.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who nourishes His Church and sends us forth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Happy are we who are called to the supper of the Lamb, together with Mary, Queen of the Apostles, who always leads us to her Son.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother of His Son and the Queen of the Apostles, strengthen you in faith. Amen.

May God the Son, who from the Cross gave us Mary as our Mother and called us to be His witnesses, fill your hearts with His love. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who descended upon the Apostles gathered with Mary in the Upper Room, empower you to proclaim the Gospel with courage and joy. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, filled with the Spirit, and bear witness to Christ.

19. HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Chronicles 15:3-4, 15-16; 16:1-2; Luke 1:39-47

Mary, the Living Ark, brings Christ's joy.

INTRODUCTION

There is an old story about a lonely widow whose little cottage seemed lifeless after the death of her husband. One Christmas Eve, her granddaughter came carrying a small statue of the Infant Jesus. "Grandma," she said, "where Jesus is welcomed, a house becomes a home again." The widow placed the statue on the table, lit a candle, and prayed. She later said, "Nothing in the house changed—but everything in my heart did." The presence of Christ transformed her home.

Today's first reading recalls how David joyfully brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, for wherever God's presence dwelt, blessings followed. The Ark was the sign that God walked with His people.

In today's Gospel, Mary becomes the new and living Ark. Carrying Jesus within her, she hastens to Elizabeth, and immediately joy, blessing, and the Holy Spirit fill that home. Wherever Mary brings Jesus, hearts come alive.

Today we celebrate Holy Mary, Mother of God. By calling Mary the Mother of God, we proclaim not only Mary's dignity but, above all, the truth that Jesus is truly God made man.

Let us ask Mary to bring Christ once more into our lives as we acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You came into the world through Mary, Your holy Mother, to bring God's saving presence among us. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You fill every heart that welcomes You with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us, like Mary, to carry Your love into our families and our world. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary, the Living Ark: Bringing Christ's Joy*

A village once suffered a long drought. The fields were brown, the wells almost dry, and people were losing hope. One morning, a little girl was seen walking joyfully with a small bucket. Someone laughed, "Why are you carrying that? There's no water anywhere." She smiled and replied, "Father said the rain is coming today. I don't want to be the only one without a bucket." Before sunset, dark clouds gathered, rain poured down, and her little bucket was the first to be filled. Her trust had prepared her for the blessing.

Mary lived like that little girl. She believed God's promise before anyone else could see its fulfilment. She welcomed Christ into her heart before the world recognised Him. Because she carried Jesus within her, she became the greatest blessing ever to enter a human home.

The first reading tells us about King David bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem with singing, dancing, music, and great rejoicing. The Ark was no ordinary chest. It contained the stone tablets of the Law, the sign of God's covenant with His people.

Wherever the Ark rested, people believed that God Himself was present among them.

Centuries later, something remarkable happened. The Ark disappeared from history, but God prepared a new Ark—not made of gold and wood, but of flesh and grace. That Ark was Mary.

Saint Luke intentionally describes Mary's visit to Elizabeth using details that remind us of David bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. David travelled to the hill country with the Ark. Mary travelled into the hill country to Elizabeth. David exclaimed, "How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?" Elizabeth cried out, "Why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" David danced before the Ark. John the Baptist leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb. Even the length of Mary's stay—about three months—echoes the time the Ark remained in the house of Obed-Edom. Luke wants us to understand that Mary is the new Ark because she carries not the word of God written on stone, but the eternal Word made flesh.

There is a beautiful story about St. Teresa of Calcutta. One day a volunteer complained that visiting the poor was exhausting because many homes were dirty, crowded, and hopeless. Mother Teresa gently replied, "We are not bringing food first; we are bringing Jesus. Once Jesus enters a house, hope enters with Him." She knew that the greatest gift Christians carry is not money or possessions but Christ Himself.

Mary teaches exactly that. After the Annunciation she does not remain at home admiring her own privilege. She immediately sets

out "in haste." Love never stands still. Faith always becomes service. Genuine encounters with God always lead us towards others.

Many families today are divided by misunderstandings, silence, resentment, or endless busyness. Houses may be full of modern comforts yet empty of prayer, forgiveness, and peace. We sometimes spend more time looking at screens than looking into one another's eyes. Mary's visit reminds us that Christ wishes to enter our homes again. A family Rosary, a shared meal, a word of forgiveness, or reading the Gospel together may seem small, yet these simple acts allow Jesus to dwell among us.

An elderly man once confessed that after forty years of marriage he and his wife had developed the habit of criticising each other every evening. Their grandson visited one weekend and innocently asked, "Grandpa, do you ever tell Grandma that you love her?" The question embarrassed him. That night he simply held his wife's hand and said, "Thank you for staying with me all these years." She burst into tears. One sentence healed years of silence. Christ often enters through the smallest door.

Mary also teaches us humility. In her Magnificat she does not praise herself. She praises God. Modern society often tells us to make ourselves the centre of attention. Mary points in the opposite direction. She magnifies not herself but the Lord. The more God becomes greater in our lives, the more joyful we become. True greatness is measured not by how many people notice us, but by how much Christ is visible through us.

Pope St. John Paul II once said that Mary is the first tabernacle in

history. Before churches were built and before the Eucharist rested upon our altars, Jesus rested beneath Mary's heart.

Every time we receive Holy Communion, we are invited to imitate Mary. We become living tabernacles carrying Christ into our workplaces, schools, hospitals, and homes. People should leave our presence feeling what Elizabeth experienced: peace, joy, encouragement, and hope. Our world desperately needs Christians who carry Christ rather than anger, peace rather than division, compassion rather than judgement. Every conversation becomes different when Jesus is present. Every home changes when prayer returns. Every parish becomes vibrant when its members imitate Mary's readiness to serve.

The little girl with the bucket believed the rain would come before the clouds appeared. Mary believed God's promise before Bethlehem, before Calvary, before Easter morning. Because she trusted, she became the Mother of God and the Mother of the Church.

There is another touching story. After a devastating earthquake, rescue workers searched the ruins of a collapsed house. They found a mother who had died while shielding her baby with her own body. Underneath her was a healthy infant wrapped in a blanket. Attached to the blanket was a note that simply read: "If you survive, remember that I loved you." That child lived because a mother had given everything.

Mary's motherhood is different yet even more wonderful. At the foot of the Cross she received every disciple as her child. Today she continues to whisper to each of us, "If you wish to know how much

God loves you, look at my Son." She never keeps our attention on herself. Like the living Ark, she always brings us to Jesus. May every one of us leave this Eucharist carrying Christ into the world, so that wherever we go, others may encounter His joy, His peace, and His saving love.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ with Mary, the Mother of God, let us confidently present our prayers to our loving Father.

1. For Pope N., our bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and all the faithful, that like Mary they may faithfully carry Christ to the world with joy and humility, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders, that they may work tirelessly for peace, justice, and reconciliation, protecting the dignity of every human person from conception to natural death, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For our families, especially those experiencing division, grief, or anxiety, that the presence of Christ, brought through Mary's intercession, may restore unity, hope, and love, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For all gathered here, that nourished by God's Word and the Eucharist, we may become living tabernacles who bring Christ's compassion and joy wherever we go, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, especially those suffering in mind, body, or spirit, and for all our departed brothers and sisters, that the Lord may grant healing to the living and eternal joy to the faithful departed, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, You chose Mary to be the Mother of Your Son and our Mother. Hear the prayers we offer through her loving intercession. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, following Mary's example of faithful self-offering, we may offer our lives to God, and that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Christ, whom Mary first carried beneath her heart and whom we receive in this Eucharist, let us pray with the confidence of God's beloved children.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Through the loving intercession of Mary,
the Mother of God and the living Ark of the New Covenant,
keep us faithful in carrying Christ wherever You send us.
Strengthen us to be signs of His joy, mercy,
and peace in our homes and in our world,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ,

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You brought heavenly peace into the house of Elizabeth through the presence of Your Blessed Mother.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity

in accordance with Your will.
May every family become a dwelling place of Your love,
and may Your peace reign in every heart,
for You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who once dwelt in the womb of Mary
and now comes to dwell within us in the Holy Eucharist.
Happy are those who welcome Him with the faith, humility,
and joy of His Blessed Mother.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother
of His eternal Son, fill you with His abundant blessings. Amen.

May the Son, born of the Virgin Mary for our salvation, dwell always
in your hearts and make you living bearers of His love. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary and filled Elizabeth
with joy, strengthen you to proclaim Christ by your words and your
lives. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for
ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, carrying Christ's presence into your homes and the
world.

20. HOLY MARY, THE NEW EVE

Rev 21:1-5a; Lk 1:26-38

Through Mary's Yes, God Makes All Things New.

INTRODUCTION

A sculptor was once asked how he created such a beautiful statue
from a rough block of marble. He smiled and replied, "The
masterpiece was already inside; I simply removed everything that did
not belong." God works in the same way. He takes what seems
ordinary and, through willing hearts, creates something entirely new.

In the first reading from the Book of Revelation, God promises a new
heaven and a new earth, declaring: "Behold, I make all things new."
His plan is not merely to repair humanity but to renew it completely.

In today's Gospel, Mary's humble "Yes" opens the door for that new
creation to begin. Where Eve once doubted God's word, Mary trusts
it completely, becoming the New Eve through whom the Saviour
enters the world.

Today we honour Holy Mary, the New Eve. Through her obedience,
God reversed the tragedy of Eden and began a new history of grace.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask
pardon for every time we have resisted God's invitations instead of
saying our own generous "Yes."

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, through Mary's faithful obedience You began the new creation: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You call us to trust God's word as Mary trusted it completely: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You make all things new through Your grace and mercy: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Through Mary's Yes, God Makes All Things New*

A village schoolteacher once gave every child a blank sheet of paper with a tiny black dot in the middle. "Tell me what you see," she said. Nearly every child answered, "A black dot." Then she smiled and asked, "Did none of you notice the large white space around it?" How often we focus on what is broken instead of seeing what God can still create. Humanity after the fall of Adam and Eve seemed like that black dot—marked by sin, fear and death. Yet God saw something much greater. He saw the possibility of a new beginning. Today's readings proclaim that wonderful truth: God makes all things new, and He begins that new creation through the humble "Yes" of Mary.

The Book of Revelation offers one of the most hopeful visions in the entire Bible. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth... Behold, I make all things new." God does not abandon a wounded world. He renews it. He does not simply patch up broken lives. He transforms them from within. Throughout salvation history, God repeatedly begins again—with Noah after the flood, with Abraham, with Moses, with David. But the greatest new beginning comes when the angel

Gabriel enters the little house of Nazareth and speaks to a young woman whose answer will change history forever.

The early Church Fathers loved calling Mary the New Eve. St Irenaeus wrote, "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience." Eve stood before an angel who had become Satan and doubted God's goodness. Mary stood before the angel Gabriel and trusted God's promise. Eve reached out her hand to grasp what was forbidden. Mary opened her hands to receive what God freely offered. Eve's "No" brought death into the world; Mary's "Yes" allowed Life Himself to enter the world. God did not erase human freedom after Eden; He redeemed it through Mary's free cooperation.

There is a touching story about St Maximilian Kolbe. A young seminarian once asked him, "Father, how can I become holy?" Kolbe pointed to a statue of Mary and simply answered, "Give her your yes every morning." Holiness is not usually built on spectacular achievements. It grows through daily surrender. Mary's greatness did not begin at Calvary or at Pentecost. It began in Nazareth when she quietly said, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

Many people imagine that saying "Yes" to God makes life easier. Mary's experience shows otherwise. Her "Yes" led her to misunderstanding, poverty, exile into Egypt, the loss of Jesus in the Temple, and finally to the Cross. Yet her peace never came from easy circumstances; it came from trusting God's plan. A sailor once explained that the safest place during a storm is not where there are no waves but where the anchor holds firmly. Mary's anchor was always God's word. Storms came, but she remained secure.

Our own lives often resemble unfinished construction sites. There are broken relationships, regrets, disappointments, illnesses, fears about the future, and wounds we wish had never happened. Sometimes we think that because something has been damaged, it can never become beautiful again. But Japanese craftsmen practise an ancient art called **kintsugi**, repairing broken pottery with lacquer mixed with gold. Instead of hiding the cracks, they make them part of the beauty. God's grace works similarly. When we allow Him into our wounds, He does not merely cover them. He transforms them into places where His mercy shines most brightly. Mary's whole life proclaims that God delights in bringing new life out of what appears impossible.

This is why the Gospel begins not in a palace but in a hidden village called Nazareth. God begins His greatest work in unnoticed places. Mother Teresa often reminded her sisters, "Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love." Mary's "Yes" consisted of only a few simple words, yet heaven and earth changed because they were spoken with complete trust.

The message of the Virgin of Revelation echoes exactly this mystery. At Tre Fontane, Mary called people back to conversion, prayer, the Rosary, fidelity to the Church, and obedience to God's will. She did not offer complicated programmes. Like the Gospel of today, she invited hearts to say "Yes" to Christ. Every Rosary is, in a sense, another "Fiat." Every Hail Mary echoes Mary's own surrender. Every mystery invites us to let Christ be born again in our hearts and in our families. Whenever we pray the Rosary with faith, we allow God to continue His work of making all things new.

There is another simple story. A grandmother kept an old Bible whose pages had become worn after decades of daily reading. One day her granddaughter asked, "Grandma, why don't you buy a new Bible?" The old woman smiled and replied, "God has been making me new with this one for sixty years." That is exactly how grace works. God renews us little by little, prayer by prayer, confession by confession, Eucharist by Eucharist, one faithful "Yes" after another.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, God asks each of us the same question that was placed before Mary: "Will you trust Me?" Perhaps He is asking someone to forgive. Perhaps He is inviting another to return to prayer after many years. Perhaps He is calling a young person to a vocation or a family to deeper faith. Like Mary, we may not understand everything, but we can still answer, "Let it be done."

A stained-glass artist was once asked why he preferred using pieces of broken coloured glass instead of perfect panes. He answered, "Because when the sunlight passes through broken pieces joined together, the colours become even more beautiful." God is the divine Artist. He took a broken humanity after Eve and, through Mary's faithful "Yes," created the masterpiece of the new creation in Christ. Today He continues the same work in each of us. If we entrust ourselves to Mary, the New Eve, and echo her daily "Let it be done," then one day we shall hear the joyful words of God fulfilled completely: "Behold, I make all things new."

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Through Mary, the New Eve, God has begun the new creation in Christ. With confidence let us present our prayers.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully proclaim Christ, the source of the new creation, and lead all people to trust God's word as Mary did, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that they may work for reconciliation, justice and peace, helping to build a world that reflects God's promise of a new heaven and a new earth, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that parents and children may imitate Mary's faith, saying "Yes" to God's will in daily life and becoming living signs of hope, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For those who feel trapped by sin, failure or despair: that they may discover God's power to make all things new through repentance, prayer and the sacraments, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, especially those suffering in mind, body or spirit, and for all our faithful departed: that Christ, through the loving intercession of Mary, may grant healing to the living and eternal joy to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of all mercy, You made all things new through the obedience of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saving work of Your Son. Hear these prayers which we make through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, following Mary's faithful "Yes," we may offer ourselves to God, and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Jesus, the new Adam,
and inspired by Mary, the New Eve,
who trusted completely in the Father's will,
let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, following the faithful "Yes" of the Blessed Virgin Mary
and by the help of Your mercy,
we may be freed from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
through the obedience of Mary
You entered our world as the Prince of Peace.
Renew our hearts, our families and our nations
with the peace that only You can give.
May the Blessed Virgin, the New Eve,
lead all humanity away from division
and toward the unity and joy of Your Kingdom,
where You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who makes all things new.
Happy are we who are invited to the banquet of the new creation,
where Christ nourishes us with His own Body and Blood,
and Mary continues to lead us to her Son.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to begin the new creation, fill you with His love. Amen.

May the Son, born of the Virgin Mary for our salvation, renew your hearts with His grace. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary and formed Christ within her, strengthen you to live each day with a faithful and generous "Yes." Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives, and, like Mary, become joyful witnesses that God continues to make all things new.

21 THE HOLY NAME OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Sirach 24:17-21; Luke 1,26-38

Mary's holy name leads us to Christ.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy was once lost in a crowded shopping centre. Frightened and crying, he remembered what his mother had always told him: "If you are ever afraid, just call my name." He shouted, "Mum!" Within moments, she heard him, ran to him, embraced him, and all his fear disappeared. A loving name has the power to bring comfort, hope, and security.

Today's first reading presents divine Wisdom as a fruitful tree whose branches offer nourishment and life to all who seek her. The Church has long seen Mary as the one in whom God's Wisdom found its perfect dwelling, making her name a source of consolation for God's people. In the Gospel, the angel Gabriel greets Mary, and through her humble "Yes," the eternal Word becomes flesh. Her holy name reminds us of the woman whose complete trust opened the door of salvation to the world.

Today we honour **the Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary**. Whenever we lovingly pronounce the name of Mary, we remember her faith, her humility, and her constant mission of leading every heart to Jesus.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for those moments when we have failed to imitate her trusting obedience.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you came into the world through the humble obedience of the Virgin Mary. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us your Mother as our loving guide on the journey of faith. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to answer God's invitation with generous hearts like Mary's. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"There is Power in a Name"*

Many years ago, a missionary priest working in Africa noticed something remarkable. Whenever a violent storm frightened the children in his village, they instinctively ran into the little chapel. Some held their rosaries tightly and repeatedly whispered only one word: "Mary...Mary...Mary." After one terrible storm had passed, the priest asked one little girl why she kept saying Mary's name. She simply answered, "Because every time I say her name, I remember that she always takes me to Jesus, and then I am no longer afraid."

That simple child understood something that Christians have treasured for centuries. We do not honour Mary's name because of magic. We honour it because her name reminds us of a life completely surrendered to God. Her name recalls faith, humility, courage and love.

Today's first reading from Sirach describes Wisdom as a flourishing vine producing sweet fruit and abundant blossoms. "Come to me, all who desire me," Wisdom says, "and eat your fill of my fruits." The Church has often applied these beautiful words to Mary, not because she replaces Wisdom, but because she became the living dwelling

place of God's eternal Wisdom, Jesus Christ. Just as a healthy tree is known by its fruit, Mary is known because she gave the world its greatest gift—her Son.

In today's Gospel, the angel Gabriel enters the quiet home of Nazareth and speaks Mary's name. Imagine that moment. Mary was unknown to the world. She possessed neither wealth nor influence. Yet heaven knew her name. God calls each person by name because each person has a unique mission. Mary's greatness did not lie in extraordinary talents but in her extraordinary willingness to say, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

A famous violin maker once displayed several violins. One looked old and worn. Visitors thought it had little value until a master musician picked it up and began to play. Suddenly the room filled with beautiful music. Afterwards the violin was worth thousands of dollars. Nothing had changed about the instrument except whose hands held it. Mary's life became beautiful because she placed herself entirely into God's hands. The same can happen to us.

The Holy Name of Mary has always been precious to Christians, especially in moments of danger. Sailors crossing stormy seas, soldiers facing battle, mothers praying for their children, the sick lying in hospitals, and elderly people preparing for death have all found comfort simply by whispering, "Mary." The power lies not in the sound of the word but in the faith that the name awakens. Mary's name immediately directs our hearts toward Jesus.

Saint Bernard beautifully said, "If the winds of temptation arise, if you run upon the rocks of tribulation, look to the star, call upon Mary." He

knew that Mary never keeps anyone for herself. Every true Marian devotion always ends where Cana ended: "Do whatever he tells you."

There is a touching story about Pope St. John Paul II. After the assassination attempt in 1981, he firmly believed that Our Lady had protected him. He often repeated, "One hand fired the bullet; another hand guided it." His deep love for Mary was expressed in his motto, *Totus Tuus*—"Totally Yours." Loving Mary did not distract him from Christ; it made him love Christ even more faithfully and serve the Church with extraordinary courage.

The Virgin of Revelation gave a similar message to Bruno Cornacchiola. She did not ask people to stop at her. She called them to prayer, conversion, the Rosary, fidelity to the Gospel, and love for the Eucharist. Every apparition approved by the Church has the same direction: Mary leads us to Jesus, never to herself. Her holy name therefore becomes an invitation to deeper discipleship.

A young university student once admitted that he had drifted away from the faith. One evening he visited his elderly grandmother. Before sleeping she simply handed him her old rosary and said, "When life becomes confusing, don't forget Mary's hand." Years later he confessed that he had begun by saying just one Hail Mary each night. That single prayer slowly led him back to confession, to Sunday Mass, and finally to a joyful Christian life. Sometimes God changes a life not through spectacular miracles but through one small daily act of trust.

Mary teaches us that holiness grows in ordinary places. Nazareth was not famous. Her daily work consisted of cooking, cleaning, drawing water, praying and caring for her family. Yet it was there that God prepared the greatest event in history. We too may imagine that our daily routine is insignificant, but every act done with love becomes part of God's plan.

The Holy Name of Mary also reminds us to guard our own names. When people hear our names, what do they remember? Kindness? Honesty? Compassion? Faithfulness? Mary earned a beautiful name because she lived a beautiful life. Our reputation is built not by grand achievements but by countless hidden acts of goodness.

There is an old tradition that parents teach their children the names "Jesus" and "Mary" before they can even read. These first holy names become anchors throughout life. In moments of joy they become songs of thanksgiving; in moments of sorrow they become prayers of hope; at the hour of death they become words of peaceful surrender.

A traveller once became trapped in a dense forest as darkness fell. Every path looked the same until he noticed a small light in the distance. Walking toward that light, he found a cottage where an elderly woman welcomed him, gave him food, warmth, and directions home the next morning. Years later he said, "I never forgot that little light because it led me safely home."

Mary's holy name is like that light. Whenever we speak it with faith, we remember the woman who first welcomed Christ into the world and who still points every traveller toward Him. Her name is not the

destination; Jesus is. But her name shines like a lamp along the road, encouraging us never to lose hope.

May we leave this Eucharist with Mary's words echoing in our hearts: "Let it be done to me according to your word." If we learn to pronounce not only her holy name but also imitate her trusting heart, then one day our own names, too, will be lovingly called by God into the eternal joy of heaven. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose holy name fills the Church with hope, let us present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Holy Church: that Pope, bishops, priests, religious, and all the faithful may imitate Mary's humble obedience and lead many people to Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For the nations of the world: that leaders may seek wisdom, justice, and peace, and that Mary's example of humility may overcome hatred and violence, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that parents may teach their children to love Jesus and Mary through daily prayer, especially the Rosary, making every home a school of faith, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that by frequently calling upon the Holy Name of Mary we may grow in trust, holiness, and generous service of one another, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying, and for all our faithful departed: that through Mary's maternal intercession they may experience Christ's healing, comfort, and the joy of eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, you chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to become the Mother of your Son. Hear the prayers we offer through her loving intercession, and grant them according to your holy will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that our gifts, offered with hearts inspired by the humble faith of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Christ and encouraged by the loving example of Mary, who trusted completely in the Father's will, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, and graciously grant peace in our days.

As we honour the Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, strengthen our faith to echo her trusting "Yes" in every circumstance of life.

Through her maternal intercession, keep us steadfast in hope, joyful in charity, and faithful in following Christ, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you came into our world through the willing obedience of the Virgin Mary and became our Prince of Peace.

Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church. Through the loving intercession of your holy Mother, whose blessed name inspires confidence and hope, graciously grant her unity and peace in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who came into the world through the humble faith of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb and who, like Mary, receive Christ with trusting hearts.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary from all generations, fill you with his abundant love. Amen.

May the Son, who was conceived in her womb and born for our salvation, strengthen you to follow him with faithful hearts. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin of Nazareth and formed Christ within her, make you living witnesses of the Gospel in the world. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and may the Holy Name of Mary always lead you to Jesus.

22. HOLY MARY, HANDMAID OF THE LORD

1 Samuel 1:24–28; 2:1–2, 4–8; Luke 1:26–38

With Mary, true greatness is found in God's will.

INTRODUCTION

A famous sculptor was once asked how he could create such beautiful statues from rough blocks of marble. He smiled and replied, "I simply remove everything that does not belong to the masterpiece already hidden inside." God works in much the same way. He shapes great saints from ordinary people who allow Him to work freely in their lives.

In the first reading, Hannah joyfully offers back to God the son she had received from Him, teaching us that everything becomes a blessing when placed in God's hands.

In today's Gospel, Mary freely answers the angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," showing us that God's greatest miracles begin with humble obedience.

Today we honour **Holy Mary, Handmaid of the Lord**. Mary's title reminds us that serving God is not slavery but the highest dignity, because His plans are always greater than our own.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for the times we have resisted God's will instead of trusting His loving plan.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You called Mary to become the humble servant of Your saving plan: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You strengthen all who courageously say "yes" to the Father's will: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You invite us to become faithful servants in Your Kingdom: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: "*The Joy of Saying Yes*"

Many years ago, a little girl was helping her mother bake bread. The mother asked her to hold a heavy bowl while she poured in the flour. After several minutes the little girl's arms began to ache. She wanted to put the bowl down, but she trusted her mother and continued holding it. Finally the dough was ready. Looking at the delicious bread later that evening, the child proudly said, "It was hard, but I helped make something beautiful."

Life with God is often like that. We do not always understand why He asks something difficult of us, but when we trust Him, He creates something beautiful that we could never have imagined.

Today's readings place before us two extraordinary women: Hannah and Mary. They lived centuries apart, yet their hearts beat with the same rhythm—the rhythm of surrender.

Hannah had waited years for a child. She suffered ridicule and heartbreak. Every year she went to the Temple carrying tears instead of children. Yet she never stopped praying. When God finally answered her prayer and Samuel was born, she did something

astonishing. She brought the little boy back to the Temple and offered him completely to God. Most parents would have clung tightly to such a precious gift. Hannah opened her hands instead of closing them. Her joyful song tells us why: "My heart exults in the Lord." She discovered that whatever we give back to God is never lost.

There is an old story about a missionary in Africa who noticed a little boy carrying his younger brother on his back while climbing a steep hill. "That's a heavy burden," the missionary said kindly. The boy immediately replied, "He's not a burden. He's my brother." Love changes the weight we carry. Hannah's offering was not a burden but an act of love.

Mary lived the same mystery in an even greater way. The angel Gabriel entered the ordinary routine of a young woman in Nazareth. Mary had her own hopes and dreams. She may have imagined an ordinary family life. Instead, God invited her into a plan that would change the history of the world.

Notice that God did not force her. He waited for her answer.

Her response has echoed through every century: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word."

The word "handmaid" sounds strange to modern ears. Yet Mary was not surrendering her freedom; she was using it perfectly. Real freedom is not doing whatever we want. Real freedom is becoming the person God created us to be.

Someone once compared life to a violin. Left alone, it is only polished wood with silent strings. Only when placed into the hands of

a skilled musician does it produce beautiful music. Mary's life became the most beautiful melody because she placed herself entirely into God's hands.

The Magnificat, our Responsorial Psalm today, reveals Mary's secret. She never speaks about herself as being great. Instead she sings, "My soul magnifies the Lord." She becomes great precisely because she points away from herself toward God.

There is a touching story about St Teresa of Calcutta. A journalist asked her, "How can you continue serving so many poor people every day?" She smiled and answered, "I am only a little pencil in God's hand." A pencil does not write its own story. It allows someone else to write through it. Mary was God's perfect pencil. Mother Teresa tried to imitate her.

This is also the invitation given to each one of us.
Perhaps God asks us to forgive someone who deeply wounded us.
Perhaps He asks us to remain faithful in a difficult marriage.
Perhaps He asks us to care patiently for an ageing parent.
Perhaps He asks us to accept illness with courage.
Perhaps He simply asks us to pray faithfully every day even when we feel nothing.

Our own "yes" may never be as dramatic as Mary's, but in God's eyes it is just as precious.

There is another beautiful legend. A monk spent years searching for the greatest prayer ever spoken. He travelled across countries asking wise men and holy women. Finally an elderly nun quietly told him, "The greatest prayer has only four words: 'Thy will be done.'"

The monk realised that every saint had learned those words—not only with their lips but with their lives.

The Virgin of Revelation continually reminds us of this same path. She calls us to prayer, conversion, the Rosary, and fidelity to Christ. Every bead of the Rosary is another quiet "yes" spoken with Mary. As we meditate on the mysteries of Christ, she gradually teaches us to trust God's plan even when we cannot understand it.

The world often admires people who control others. God admires those who surrender themselves to Him. The world praises power. God praises humility. The world says, "Follow your own will." Mary says, "Let God's will become your joy."

The saints prove that God's plans are always better than our own. Peter wanted to fish; God made him the rock of the Church. Francis wanted to be a knight; God made him a saint. Teresa wanted a quiet convent life; God sent her to the poorest of the poor. Mary simply said "yes," and through her the Saviour entered the world.

A businessman once carried a crumpled piece of paper in his wallet for over forty years. Whenever life became difficult, he unfolded it and read just one sentence written by his mother before she died: "Trust the One who already knows tomorrow." Those words guided every important decision he made.

Mary lived by that wisdom every day. She did not know tomorrow. She knew God.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us place our own lives into the hands of the Lord. Like Hannah, let us offer Him our gifts. Like Mary,

let us say our daily "yes." Like Jesus Himself in Gethsemane, let us pray, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

Then, one day, looking back over our lives, we shall discover that every generous "yes" allowed God to create a masterpiece far more beautiful than anything we could ever have planned ourselves.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Like Mary, the humble Handmaid of the Lord, let us confidently bring our prayers before our heavenly Father.

1. For the Holy Church: that she may faithfully proclaim God's saving plan and inspire all Christians to respond generously to His call, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may exercise authority with humility, justice and compassion, always seeking the good of every person, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For all parents and young people: that, like Hannah and Mary, they may trust God's plan and generously offer their lives in loving service, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish and all who honour the Blessed Virgin Mary: that through prayer, especially the Holy Rosary, we may become joyful servants of Christ and courageous witnesses to the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the lonely, those suffering in mind or body, and for all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing, hope and eternal joy in His heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, You looked with favour upon Your humble servant Mary. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, following the example of Mary, the humble Handmaid of the Lord, we may offer our gifts and our lives to the Father, and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with the confidence of children who, like Mary, desire above all that the Father's will be accomplished.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
the humble Handmaid of the Lord,
we may trust Your loving providence in every circumstance.
Free us from fear, strengthen us to say "yes" to Your will each day,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You came into the world through the faithful "yes" of the Virgin Mary
and brought peace between heaven and earth.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,

and graciously grant her peace and unity according to Your will.
May we become humble servants of Your Gospel
and instruments of Your peace,
for You live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who became one of us through the willing
obedience of Mary, the Handmaid of the Lord.
Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the
humble Handmaid of His saving plan, fill you with joyful trust in His
holy will. Amen.

May God the Son, who took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary,
strengthen you to follow Him with generous and faithful hearts.
Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary with His power,
guide you each day to live as willing servants of the Gospel. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, ✠
and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and, like Mary, joyfully say "yes" to God's will each day.

23. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, TEMPLE OF THE LORD

1 Kings 8:1, 3-7, 9-11; or Rev. 21:1-5a; Luke 1,26-38

With Mary, we become living temples of God

INTRODUCTION

A tourist once visited the ruins of an ancient cathedral in Europe. The walls had crumbled, the roof had disappeared, and only a few stone pillars remained. Looking around sadly, he asked the old caretaker, "Where is your church now?" Smiling, the caretaker pointed to the people leaving Sunday Mass and replied, "There goes the Church. Stones can fall, but God's true temple walks on two feet."

In the first reading, the Ark of the Covenant is brought into the Temple, and God's glory fills the sanctuary, reminding us that wherever God dwells, heaven touches earth.

In today's Gospel, the Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will become the dwelling place of the Son of God. By her joyful "Yes," Mary becomes the true Temple where God chooses to live among humanity.

Today's Marian title, "**The Blessed Virgin Mary, Temple of the Lord,**" reminds us that before God lived in buildings made by human hands, He chose to dwell in the heart of a humble woman. Through Baptism, we too have become temples of the Holy Spirit, called to welcome Christ as Mary did.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask forgiveness for the times we have failed to keep our hearts worthy of God's presence.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You chose the humble Virgin Mary to become Your living Temple: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You continue to make Your home in all who welcome You with faith: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us to become holy temples filled with Your Spirit: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"Making Room for God"*

Several years ago, a family bought an old abandoned farmhouse. It had been empty for decades. The windows were broken, weeds had grown everywhere, and dust covered every room. Before moving in, they spent months cleaning, repairing, painting and restoring it. When the neighbours asked why they worked so hard instead of buying another house, the father simply answered, "Because someone must prepare a place where love can live."

That is exactly what today's feast celebrates.

God was looking for a place where His Son could dwell—not merely a building of stone but a human heart completely open to Him. He found that place in Mary. She became the living Temple of the Lord.

In the first reading, Solomon dedicates the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem. It was one of the wonders of the ancient world. The Ark of the Covenant was carried inside with solemn ceremony. Then something extraordinary happened: the cloud of God's glory filled the Temple so completely that even the priests could not continue their ministry. God's presence had entered His holy dwelling.

For centuries Israel believed that the Temple was the special place where heaven met earth.

Yet God had an even greater plan.

When the angel Gabriel visited Mary in Nazareth, there were no trumpets, no choirs, no crowds, no magnificent architecture. There was only a young woman in a simple village home. But in that quiet moment, something far greater than Solomon's Temple happened. The eternal Son of God took flesh within her womb.

The Temple of stone gave way to the Temple of flesh.

Saint Augustine beautifully observed that Mary conceived Christ first in her heart by faith before she conceived Him in her womb. Her greatest miracle was not simply becoming the Mother of Jesus but opening her whole life to God's will.

There is a touching story about Saint Teresa of Calcutta. A journalist once visited one of her homes for the dying. After seeing the difficult conditions, he asked, "Mother, how can you keep serving in such poverty?" She smiled and replied, "Every morning I begin by welcoming Jesus. If my heart belongs to Him, everything else becomes possible."

That is precisely Mary's secret. She welcomed Jesus first.

Many people spend enormous effort decorating their houses. We repaint walls, replace furniture, polish floors and care for gardens. Yet we sometimes neglect the house that matters most—our own heart.

Saint Paul reminds us elsewhere that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Every confession is like cleaning that temple. Every act of charity adds beauty to it. Every prayer opens another window to God's light. Every Eucharist allows Christ once again to dwell within us.

An elderly parish priest once noticed a little girl kneeling silently after Communion every Sunday. One day he asked, "What do you say to Jesus for so long?" She answered, "Nothing, Father. I just let Him enjoy being with me."

Children often understand what adults complicate.

Communion is not simply receiving something holy; it is welcoming Someone who wishes to make our hearts His home.

Mary teaches us this openness.

Her response to Gabriel was remarkably simple: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word."

Notice that she did not understand everything. She had questions. She faced uncertainty. She knew that saying "Yes" would change her life forever. Yet she trusted the One who called her.

A missionary once told the story of carrying a small wooden tabernacle through mountain villages where there were no churches. Wherever he celebrated Mass, people decorated the simplest hut with flowers and candles. Afterwards they carefully removed everything again. Someone asked one villager why they made such

effort for a temporary chapel. He answered, "Because wherever Jesus stays becomes the most beautiful place in the village."

What a beautiful lesson.

Where Christ dwells, beauty begins—not necessarily outward beauty but the beauty of forgiveness, peace, kindness and hope.

The Book of Revelation offers another wonderful image. Saint John sees the new Jerusalem where God Himself dwells among His people. He hears the promise: "See, the dwelling of God is with humanity."

That promise began with Mary. She became the first living sanctuary of the New Covenant, the first human tabernacle carrying Christ into the world. Think of her visit to Elizabeth. She did not keep Jesus for herself. Like every true temple, she became a place from which God's blessing flowed to others. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist leapt with joy, and an entire household experienced God's presence simply because Mary brought Jesus there.

That remains the mission of every Christian. We are not called merely to visit church once a week. We are called to become the Church wherever we go—to carry Christ into our homes, workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods.

People should sense something different when they meet someone who truly carries Christ within.

There is an old Jewish proverb: "Every person should carry two pockets. In one pocket, a note saying, 'I am only dust.' In the other, a note saying, 'The world was created for me.'" Christians might carry a third note: "God wishes to dwell in me." That changes everything.

Every decision becomes an opportunity to honour God's presence. Every relationship becomes sacred. Every act of mercy becomes an extension of God's dwelling among His people.

The feast of Mary, Temple of the Lord, invites us to ask one simple question: If Jesus were looking today for a heart in which to dwell, would mine be ready?

A little boy once helped his grandmother prepare for an important guest. He dusted the furniture, swept the floor, arranged flowers and waited excitedly at the window. When the guest finally arrived, the house was spotless—but what impressed the visitor most was not the clean house. It was the joyful welcome waiting at the door.

God is not looking for perfect people. He is looking for welcoming hearts.

Mary opened her heart completely, and the Word became flesh.

May we do the same, so that Christ may continue to dwell in our world through us. Then every home we enter, every person we meet and every act of love we offer will become another place where heaven touches earth. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ, who chose to dwell in the Virgin Mary, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that, following the example of Mary, she may always be a holy dwelling place of God's presence and faithfully bring Christ to the world, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may build societies founded on justice, respect for human dignity and peace, where God's presence is honoured in every person, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For families and young people: that their homes may become living temples of prayer, love and mutual forgiveness, welcoming Christ into their daily lives, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that every Eucharist may deepen our awareness that we are temples of the Holy Spirit and inspire us to carry Christ joyfully to others, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that Christ, who made His dwelling among us, may strengthen the sick with His healing presence and welcome the deceased into the eternal temple of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, You chose the Blessed Virgin Mary as the living Temple of Your Son. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, following Mary's example of generous self-offering, we may offer our lives to God, and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Christ who made His home among us through Mary's generous "Yes," and confident that our heavenly Father desires to dwell within all His children, let us pray together in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, and free our hearts from all that keeps us from becoming living temples of Your presence. Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Temple of the Lord, grant us the grace to welcome Christ each day with generous faith, so that, living in Your peace and protected from all anxiety and sin, we may joyfully await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You made Your dwelling among us through the humble faith of the Virgin Mary. Fill our hearts with that same openness to Your presence, so that Your peace may reign within us, within our families, within Your Church and throughout the world. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who chose to make His dwelling among us and who now comes to make His home within our hearts. Happy are those who welcome Him with the faith and humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to become the living Temple of His Son, fill your hearts with His abiding presence. Amen.

May the Son, who took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary and now comes to dwell within you in the Eucharist, strengthen you to carry His love into the world. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary and made her the holy sanctuary of the New Covenant, transform you into living temples of God's glory. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and, like Mary, let Christ dwell in your hearts and shine through your lives

24. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, SEAT OF WISDOM (A)

Prov 8:22–31 (or Sirach 24:1–4, 18–21); Mt 2:1-12

With Mary, we seek Christ, true Wisdom

INTRODUCTION

A university professor once placed before his students an old treasure map. Everyone immediately began arguing about the map's age, the paper, the handwriting and the symbols. Only one quiet student asked, "But where does the map lead?" The professor smiled and said, "Many become experts about the map, but few seek the treasure." Wisdom is not simply knowing facts; wisdom is finding what truly matters.

In today's first reading, Divine Wisdom speaks of being with God from the beginning of creation, reminding us that true wisdom comes from God and leads us to life.

In today's Gospel, the Magi wisely follow the star until they find Jesus, while Mary silently offers the world the Child who is God's eternal Wisdom. That is why the Church honours her today as Mary, Seat of Wisdom. She does not keep wisdom for herself but lovingly points every generation towards her Son.

As we begin this Eucharist, let us ask Mary to teach us humble hearts that are willing to seek Christ above every earthly treasure.

Acknowledging the times we have preferred worldly wisdom to God's wisdom, let us ask for his mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you are the eternal Wisdom of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through Mary you invite every searching heart to find the light of truth. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you lead those who seek you with sincere hearts into the joy of your Kingdom. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"Following the Star of Wisdom"*

Several years ago, a wealthy businessman visited an elderly monk who lived in a tiny mountain monastery. Looking around the simple room, he asked, "Where is all your furniture?"

The monk smiled and replied, "Where is yours?"

The businessman laughed. "I'm only passing through."
"So am I," answered the monk.

Those four simple words contain great wisdom. Many people accumulate possessions, titles and achievements but forget that life itself is a journey. Wisdom is not measured by how much we know or own. Wisdom is knowing where we are going. That is precisely what today's readings invite us to discover.

The Book of Proverbs presents Wisdom as being with God before creation itself. Before there were mountains, seas or stars, Wisdom was already delighting in God's presence. This beautiful poetic image teaches us that wisdom is not merely information. Wisdom is a relationship with God. It is seeing life through God's eyes.

Today we honour Mary as Seat of Wisdom. The title may sound unusual. A seat is simply a place where someone sits. Mary is called the Seat of Wisdom because she carried within her womb Jesus Christ, the eternal Wisdom of the Father. She became the living throne upon which Divine Wisdom came into the world. She never claimed the wisdom as her own. She simply carried Christ.

That is still Mary's mission today. She never points to herself. Like the moon reflecting the sun, she reflects only Jesus.

Today's Gospel beautifully illustrates this truth. The Magi were wise men. They possessed education, science and astronomy. Yet all their knowledge could only bring them as far as Jerusalem. Their calculations could not lead them into Bethlehem.

Something more was needed. They needed God's light. The star represents divine guidance. The Scriptures point the way. Mary presents the Child. Only then do the wise men reach their destination.

How different from King Herod. Herod knew the Scriptures. The chief priests knew the prophecies. Yet none of them travelled the short distance to Bethlehem. Knowledge without faith remained useless.

There is an old story about two brothers who inherited a library from their father. One spent years reading every book. The other spent years serving the poor in their village. When both became old, someone asked, "Which one became wiser?" An old priest replied, "The one who discovered that every page should become an act of love." That is Christian wisdom.

Our modern world has never possessed so much information. With one click we can know what happens on the other side of the globe. Artificial intelligence answers questions in seconds. Universities produce experts in every field. Yet loneliness, anxiety, violence and division continue to grow. Knowledge has increased. Wisdom has not always kept pace.

Pope Benedict XVI once observed that the greatest danger today is not ignorance but forgetting God.

Mary reminds us that wisdom always begins by listening. When the Angel spoke, she listened. When Elizabeth greeted her, she listened. When Simeon prophesied, she treasured his words. When Jesus spoke in the Temple, she pondered everything in her heart. Luke repeatedly tells us that Mary "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart." That may be the greatest definition of wisdom.

Wisdom reflects before it reacts.
Wisdom listens before it speaks.
Wisdom prays before it decides.

There is a lovely story from Africa. A village elder was asked why he always paused before answering difficult questions. He picked up a bucket of muddy water and placed it on the ground. "Watch." They waited. After a few minutes the mud settled and the water became perfectly clear. He said, "If I answer while my mind is disturbed, everything is cloudy. When I wait before God, I see clearly."

Mary lived exactly like that. She allowed God's presence to settle every fear.

She teaches us to make space for silence in a noisy world.
The Magi also teach us something important.
Notice how many obstacles they encountered.
A long journey.
Uncertainty.
Herod's deception.
The disappearance of the star.
Yet they kept searching.
Real wisdom never gives up seeking Christ.

Saint Augustine famously wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You."
Every human heart is searching.
Some seek success.
Some seek pleasure.
Some seek security.
Some seek recognition.
Yet beneath every search lies the deeper longing for God.

The Magi found not a palace but a humble house. Not a king seated on a golden throne but a little child in his mother's arms. God's wisdom often appears hidden in humility.

A journalist once interviewed Mother Teresa and asked, "What do you say to God when you pray?"
She answered, "Mostly I listen."
"And what does God say?"
"He listens too."
The interviewer looked puzzled.
Mother Teresa smiled and said, "If you don't understand that,

I cannot explain it."
That is wisdom beyond words. It is friendship with God.

Mary invites each of us to become, in our own way, another "seat of wisdom."
When Christ lives in our hearts our words become wiser.
Our decisions become kinder.
Our families become more peaceful.
Our workplaces become more honest.
Others begin to encounter Jesus through us.

At every Mass we imitate the Magi.
We have followed the star of God's Word.
Soon we shall approach Bethlehem once again.
The word Bethlehem means "House of Bread."

Here upon this altar, we meet the same Jesus whom the Magi adored.
Like them we kneel. Like Mary, we receive him.
Like Mary we are then sent to bring Christ to the world.

Let me conclude with another story.
A grandfather gave each of his grandchildren a small compass before they left for university.
One grandson asked, "With GPS on my phone, why do I need this old compass?"
The grandfather replied, "Your phone will tell you where you are. The compass reminds you which direction is north. Life will always tell you where you are, but only wisdom will tell you where you ought to go."

Mary, Seat of Wisdom, is that compass for the Church. She never becomes the destination. She always points to Jesus, the true North of every human heart.

If we follow her example with humble, listening and trusting hearts, we too shall find the eternal Wisdom who gives meaning to every journey and leads us safely into the Father's everlasting home. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered around Christ, the eternal Wisdom of the Father, and trusting in the intercession of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, let us present our prayers.

1. For the Church: that Pope, bishops, priests, religious and all the faithful may always proclaim Christ as the true Wisdom who enlightens every nation, we pray to the Lord.
2. For leaders of nations, educators, scientists and all who seek knowledge: that they may unite learning with humility and always place the dignity of every human person before every achievement, we pray to the Lord.
3. For students, teachers, parents and young people: that through the example of Mary they may grow not only in knowledge but also in faith, compassion and holiness, we pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that, like the Magi, we may persevere in seeking Christ, recognise him in the Eucharist, and joyfully bear witness to him in our daily lives, we pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the elderly, those suffering from loneliness or confusion, and for all our departed brothers and sisters: that Christ, the eternal Wisdom of God, may strengthen the sick, comfort the dying, and welcome the faithful departed into everlasting joy, we pray to the Lord.

Father of everlasting Wisdom, hear the prayers we bring before you through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, enlightened by the wisdom of Christ and the intercession of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Guided by the wisdom of Christ and encouraged by the loving example of Mary, who treasured God's word in her heart, let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Saviour has given us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and from the false wisdom that leads us away from you.
Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Seat of Wisdom, grant us hearts that seek your truth
and minds enlightened by your Spirit,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the eternal Wisdom of the Father and the Prince of Peace. As you guided the Magi to Bethlehem and gave your Mother to the Church as Seat of Wisdom, guide us along the paths of truth and reconciliation. Grant peace to our hearts, our families and our world, and make us instruments of your peace wherever we go. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, the eternal Wisdom made flesh, who comes to nourish us with the Bread of Life. Happy are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, whose eternal Wisdom created all things, fill your minds and hearts with his truth. Amen.
May the Son, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom, guide you always in the way of life. Amen.
May the Holy Spirit enlighten you with his gifts, so that you may always seek what is true, love what is good, and faithfully follow Christ. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you forever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, seeking Christ, the eternal Wisdom, and, like Mary, lead others to him by the witness of your faith and love.

24. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, SEAT OF WISDOM (B)

Prov 8,22-31; or Sirach 24:1-4, 18-21; Lk 2:15b-19

With Mary, we treasure God's word.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a university professor was asked which student had impressed him the most. Everyone expected him to mention the brightest scholar. Instead, he replied, "The wisest student was the one who listened more than she spoke. She never hurried to judge but always reflected before acting." Intelligence fills the mind; wisdom transforms the heart.

The first reading presents divine Wisdom as God's companion from the beginning of creation, reminding us that true wisdom comes from God and leads us into harmony with His plan.

In today's Gospel, Mary listens to the shepherds, treasures everything she hears, and ponders God's mysteries in her heart. She becomes the perfect disciple who allows God's word to mature into wisdom.

Today we honour Mary as the **Seat of Wisdom**. She carried within her womb Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, and continues to teach us how to listen, reflect and faithfully follow Him.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask forgiveness for those moments when we preferred our own opinions to God's wisdom.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you are the eternal Wisdom through whom all things were created. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us Mary as the Seat of Wisdom, teaching us to treasure your word. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to build our lives upon the wisdom that comes from your Gospel. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary, Seat of Wisdom: Treasuring God's Word*

A traveller once visited an elderly monk who lived alone on a mountain. Entering the small hut, he was surprised to find almost no furniture—a wooden table, a chair, a bed and a shelf with a Bible. "Where is all your furniture?" the traveller asked. The monk smiled and replied, "Where is yours?" The visitor answered, "I'm only passing through." The monk gently said, "So am I."

That brief conversation contained a lifetime of wisdom. Wisdom is not simply knowing facts; it is knowing what truly matters. The world admires intelligence, success and influence. God admires wisdom—the ability to see life through His eyes. That is why today the Church honours Mary under the beautiful title Seat of Wisdom.

The Book of Proverbs presents Wisdom as being with God from the beginning of creation. Before mountains, oceans and stars existed, divine Wisdom was already present, delighting in God's work. Christians have always seen the fullness of that Wisdom in Jesus Christ. St Paul tells us that Christ is "the wisdom of God." Mary became the Seat of Wisdom because she welcomed into her womb the Eternal Word made flesh.

A throne does not make a king; it serves the king. Mary does not replace Christ; she points entirely to Him. She is the Seat of Wisdom because she carried, nurtured and presented to the world Jesus, who alone is true Wisdom.

The Gospel gives us a simple sentence that reveals Mary's greatness: "Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart."

Notice what Mary did not do.

She did not pretend to understand everything immediately.

She did not demand explanations from God.

She did not become anxious because God's plans seemed mysterious.

She listened.

She remembered.

She reflected.

She trusted.

That is wisdom.

Someone once compared life to reading a novel one page at a time. We often become impatient because we want to know the ending. God, however, is the author. Mary teaches us to trust Him even when we have read only one chapter.

There is a beautiful story about the famous inventor Thomas Edison. One of his assistants accidentally dropped an expensive light bulb after many hours of work. Everyone expected Edison to scold him. The next day Edison gave the same assistant another finished bulb and asked him to install it. Someone asked why he trusted the man

again. Edison answered, "Making the bulb took a day. Restoring the man's confidence could take much longer."

That is wisdom—seeing people not merely through their mistakes but through their potential.

Our world has more information than ever before, yet often less wisdom. We carry powerful computers in our pockets, but many people have forgotten how to sit quietly, pray and listen. Social media teaches us to react instantly. Mary teaches us to ponder patiently. Silence is becoming rare. Yet wisdom grows in silence.

St Mother Teresa once said that God is the friend of silence. Trees grow silently. Flowers bloom silently. The stars move silently. God's greatest works often happen quietly.

Mary's greatest moments happened in silence.

She silently welcomed Gabriel.

She silently cared for Jesus in Nazareth.

She silently stood beneath the Cross.

She silently prayed with the Apostles awaiting Pentecost.

Her silence was never empty. It was filled with God.

A teacher once placed a jar before her students. She filled it with large stones and asked if it was full. They agreed. Then she poured in pebbles, which filled the spaces. Next came sand. Finally she poured in water. "What is the lesson?" she asked.

One student replied, "There is always room for more."

The teacher smiled. "No. The lesson is this: if you don't put the big stones in first, you'll never fit them in later."

Wisdom knows what the "big stones" are.

Faith.

Family.

Prayer.

Love.

Forgiveness.

Everything else must find its proper place around them.

Mary never lost sight of what mattered most. God always came first.

Pope Benedict XVI often reminded us that wisdom is not merely accumulated knowledge but friendship with Christ. A person may hold several university degrees and still make foolish decisions. Another may have little formal education but possess deep wisdom because he or she walks closely with God.

Many of us have known grandparents like that. They may never have studied theology, yet their words carried extraordinary insight because they were born of prayer, sacrifice and experience.

There is an old African proverb: "When an old person dies, a library burns down." Wisdom is preserved not only in books but in holy lives.

Mary invites every Christian family to become a little school of wisdom. Children learn wisdom less from lectures than from watching parents pray, forgive, work honestly and love generously.

One evening a little girl saw her grandmother reading the Bible every day. She asked, "Grandma, haven't you already read that book many times?" Her grandmother smiled. "Yes, dear. But every day the Book reads me." That is exactly what Mary allowed God to do. She let His Word shape her thoughts, her decisions and her whole life.

Perhaps today's feast invites each of us to ask some honest questions:

Do I make time each day to listen to God's Word?

Do I react immediately, or do I first pray and reflect?

Do I seek God's wisdom before making important decisions?

Do I allow Mary to lead me closer to Jesus?

The world desperately needs wise Christians—not merely clever ones. Families need wise parents. Parishes need wise leaders. Young people need wise mentors. Society needs people whose decisions are guided by truth, charity and prayer.

Mary, Seat of Wisdom, remains our teacher. She teaches us that wisdom begins with humility, grows through listening, matures in prayer and blossoms into faithful action.

Let us return to the old monk and the traveller. Both admitted they were only passing through this world. The difference was that the monk lived every day with eternity in mind.

One day, when our own earthly journey ends, our degrees, achievements and possessions will no longer matter. What will matter is whether we have become wise in God's eyes—whether we have loved Him, trusted Him and followed His Son.

May Mary, Seat of Wisdom, help us treasure God's Word as she did, ponder it in our hearts, and live it with joyful faith until we reach the eternal home where Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, reigns forever. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, and encouraged by the prayers of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, let us present our petitions.

1. For the Church: that Pope, bishops, priests, religious and all the faithful may always proclaim the wisdom of the Gospel with courage and humility, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For those who govern nations: that they may seek God's wisdom in promoting justice, peace and the dignity of every human person, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For teachers, students, researchers and all engaged in education: that they may unite knowledge with wisdom and always seek the truth that leads to God, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that, like Mary, we may treasure God's Word in our hearts and allow it to guide our families, decisions and daily lives, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, especially those burdened by loneliness, anxiety or chronic illness, and for all who have died, that the Lord may grant healing to the living and eternal joy to the faithful departed, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of all wisdom, hear the prayers we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts, offered with humble hearts through the intercession of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Christ, the Eternal Wisdom made flesh, and following the example of Mary who trusted completely in the Father's will, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil
and grant us the wisdom that comes from above.
Through the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom, help us to treasure your word, persevere in faith,
and await with joyful hope
the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the Wisdom that reconciles heaven and earth.
Fill our hearts with your peace,
calm our fears,
heal our divisions,
and, through the loving intercession of Mary, Seat of Wisdom,
make us instruments of your peace wherever we live and serve.
You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father,
who comes to nourish us with his own Body and Blood.
Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, the source of all wisdom, bless and guide you.
Amen.

May Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom made flesh, remain always in
your hearts. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit enlighten your minds and strengthen you to live
the Gospel each day. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and
the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, treasuring God's word in your hearts as Mary did,
and let the wisdom of Christ shine through your lives.

24. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, SEAT OF WISDOM (C)

Prov 8:22–31 (or Sirach 24:1–4, 18–21); Lk 10:38–42

With Mary, true wisdom is found at Christ's feet.

INTRODUCTION

A university professor once asked his students, "What is the most important lesson you have learned?" Many answered with formulas, theories, and facts. One elderly cleaner, who happened to be passing by, quietly said, "The greatest wisdom is knowing whom to listen to." The classroom fell silent. Knowledge fills the mind, but wisdom opens the heart.

The first reading presents Wisdom as God's eternal companion, inviting us to discover that true wisdom comes from God and leads us into His life.

The Gospel shows Mary of Bethany choosing "the better part" by sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening attentively to His word.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary under the beautiful title Seat of Wisdom. She carried Eternal Wisdom, Jesus Christ, in her womb and treasured His words in her heart. She teaches us that holiness begins not with many activities but with a heart that listens.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask forgiveness for the many times we have preferred our own opinions to God's wisdom.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, Eternal Wisdom of the Father, You came to reveal the truth that leads to life. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through the humble faith of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, You teach us to treasure Your word in our hearts. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You invite us to sit at Your feet and learn the wisdom that never fades. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: ***"Learning to Sit Before We Stand"***

A traveller once visited an ancient monastery renowned for its wise monks. He expected to find shelves full of books and scholars engaged in endless debates. Instead, he found an old monk sitting quietly beneath a tree, smiling as he watched the sunrise.

The traveller asked, "What are you doing?"

The monk replied, "Learning."

"But no one is teaching you."

The monk smiled. "The Lord teaches those who know how to listen."

The traveller never forgot those words.

That simple story brings us to today's Marian celebration. We honour Mary as Seat of Wisdom, not because she wrote books or delivered great speeches, but because she listened more deeply than anyone else ever has.

Our world admires information. Never before have people known so much. Within seconds we can search almost anything on our phones. Artificial intelligence answers questions instantly. Libraries fit into our pockets. Yet something is missing.

People know more, but often understand less.
They communicate constantly, yet many feel lonely.
They have opinions about everything but peace about very little.
Knowledge has increased.
Wisdom has become rare.

The Book of Proverbs presents Wisdom as existing before creation itself. Before the mountains were formed, before the oceans appeared, Wisdom delighted in God's presence. The message is clear: wisdom is not simply intelligence; it is sharing God's own way of seeing the world.

Mary possessed precisely this wisdom. When the angel announced God's surprising plan, she did not understand everything. Yet she trusted.
When shepherds arrived with extraordinary stories, she listened.
When Simeon foretold suffering, she accepted.
When Jesus remained in the Temple, she pondered.
Luke repeatedly tells us that Mary "kept all these things in her heart."
That is wisdom.

There is an old story about a young apprentice who wanted to become a master violinist. During his first lesson he expected difficult music. Instead, his teacher asked him to spend weeks simply listening to the finest musicians.
The student complained, "When will I begin playing?"
The master answered, "Until your ears learn music, your fingers never will." The same is true in the spiritual life.
Before we speak for God, we must listen to God.

The Gospel beautifully illustrates this through Martha and Mary. Martha is busy serving. Her work is generous and necessary. Jesus never criticises service itself. After all, He came "not to be served but to serve." The problem is not Martha's activity but her anxiety. Mary chooses first to sit at Jesus' feet. Only someone who has first listened to Christ can truly serve Christ.
This is why Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is called Seat of Wisdom. She becomes the living throne upon which Eternal Wisdom rests.

Every mother teaches her child many things. Mary allowed her Son to teach her continually.

Saint John Paul II once remarked that Mary's entire life became a school of faith. That school remains open today.

There is another little story: A successful businessman proudly showed his expensive office to an elderly priest.
"I've built all this through hard work," he said.
The priest congratulated him and then asked gently, "When was the last time you spent fifteen quiet minutes with God?"
The businessman looked embarrassed. "I honestly don't remember."
The priest smiled kindly. "Perhaps that explains why you have built a successful business but struggle to build a peaceful heart."

That question reaches all of us.
We are busy.
Parents care for children.
Teachers prepare lessons.
Doctors see patients.
Priests prepare liturgies.

Students study.
Retirees fill their calendars.

There is nothing wrong with activity.
But without prayer, activity slowly becomes agitation.
Without silence, work loses direction.
Without Christ, even good works become exhausting.

Mary teaches balance.
She was never lazy.
She travelled to help Elizabeth.
She cared for Jesus.
She accompanied the early Church.
But everything she did flowed from listening.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta often said that her sisters began each day with long periods of prayer before serving the poorest of the poor. Someone once asked her, "Wouldn't it be better to spend that time helping people?" She answered, "Without Jesus we could not help anyone for even one day."

Prayer was not a distraction from service.
Prayer made service possible.
That is Marian wisdom.
Wisdom also means seeing life from God's perspective.
When suffering comes, the wise person asks not merely, "Why did this happen?" Instead, they ask, "Lord, what are You teaching me?"
When success comes, they ask, "How can I use this for Your glory?"
When making decisions, they ask, "What pleases Christ?"

This is wisdom.

Today's feast also reminds us that wisdom grows through humility.
The proud think they already know everything.
The humble continue learning.

Mary called herself the servant of the Lord.
Because she remained humble, God could continually fill her with His wisdom.

An old professor was once asked the secret of his brilliance.
He laughed. "I never stopped being a student." The saints would say the same. The holier they became, the more they realised how much they still needed God. Every Eucharist becomes a classroom of divine wisdom.

Jesus teaches us through His Word.
He teaches us through His Body and Blood.
He teaches us through silence.
He teaches us through His people.
The only requirement is that we come with hearts willing to learn.

Perhaps this week we could imitate Mary in one practical way.
Spend ten minutes every day sitting quietly with the Gospel before rushing into work.
Listen before speaking.
Pray before deciding.
Reflect before reacting.
Little by little, Christ's wisdom will shape our hearts.

Let me conclude with another story: A little girl was watching her grandmother pray every morning before a small statue of Our Lady.

One day she asked, "Grandma, why do you always look at Mary before you begin your day?"

The grandmother smiled. "I don't look at Mary first."

"What do you mean?"

"I ask Mary to help me look at Jesus."

Years later, after her grandmother had died, the young woman kept the same simple practice.

Whenever life became confusing, she first turned to Mary.

She discovered that Mary never kept anyone focused on herself.

She always led them to Christ, the Eternal Wisdom.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom, teach us to listen before we speak, to trust before we understand, and to place Christ at the centre of every decision. Then our lives will not merely be filled with knowledge but transformed by the wisdom that leads to everlasting life. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, and inspired by Mary, Seat of Wisdom, let us present our prayers.

1. For the Holy Church: that Pope, bishops, priests, religious and all the faithful may always proclaim Christ, the Wisdom of God, by both their words and the witness of their lives, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For leaders of nations, educators and all who shape society: that they may seek wisdom rather than power, truth rather than popularity, and justice rather than personal gain, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For schools, universities, families and all places of learning: that knowledge may always be united with faith, humility and love, and that young people may discover Christ as the source of true wisdom, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that, following the example of Mary, Seat of Wisdom, we may become attentive listeners to God's Word and joyful servants of one another, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the elderly, those burdened by anxiety or confusion, and for all our faithful departed: that Christ, the Eternal Wisdom, may strengthen the living with hope and welcome the dead into the joy of His heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of all wisdom, hear these prayers which we make through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as we place these gifts upon the altar, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom, may teach us to offer not only bread and wine but also attentive hearts, so that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to the Father, asking for the wisdom to live as His beloved children.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Seat of Wisdom, keep us faithful to Your truth,
courageous in our witness, and steadfast in hope,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You are the Eternal Wisdom of the Father and the Prince of Peace.
As Mary listened to Your word with an undivided heart,
grant that we too may become instruments of Your peace,
bringing understanding where there is confusion,
hope where there is discouragement,
and love where there is division.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, the Eternal Wisdom made flesh,
who nourishes all who come to Him with faith.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, the source of all wisdom, fill your hearts with
His truth. Amen.

May God the Son, Eternal Wisdom made flesh, guide your words,
your choices and your lives. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit enlighten your minds and strengthen you to
live the Gospel each day. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and
the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, enlightened by Christ's wisdom and inspired by Mary,
Seat of Wisdom, to live God's Word with joy.

**25. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
IMAGE AND MOTHER OF THE CHURCH (I)**

Gens 3:9–15, 20; Jn 19:25–27

With Mary, we stand with Christ and His Church.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once became frightened during a violent storm. He ran into his mother's room and asked, "Mum, will you stay with me?" She smiled and replied, "God is with you." The boy answered, "I know God is with me, but right now I need someone with skin on." A loving mother makes God's care visible and tangible.

In the first reading, after humanity's fall into sin, God does not abandon his people but promises victory through the woman whose offspring will crush evil, opening the door to hope and new life.

In the Gospel, as Jesus hangs upon the Cross, he gives Mary to the beloved disciple and the disciple to Mary, making her the Mother of the Church and the model of every disciple.

Today we celebrate Mary as the **Image and Mother of the Church**. As the first and perfect disciple, she reflects what the Church is called to become: faithful, holy, compassionate and always pointing to Christ.

Let us now acknowledge our sins and ask God's mercy, that we may become a Church after Mary's own heart.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you gave us Mary to be our Mother beneath the Cross.
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you call us to become one family united in faith and love. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you invite us to imitate Mary's faithful discipleship every day of our lives. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: "*Standing with Mary at the Foot of the Cross*"

Many years ago, after a devastating earthquake, rescue workers searched through the ruins of collapsed homes. In one house they found a young mother lying lifeless beneath the broken concrete. As they moved closer, they discovered that her body formed a small shelter. Beneath her was her tiny baby, still alive. Before the building collapsed, the mother had wrapped herself around her child, sacrificing her own life to save him. Next to the baby was a mobile phone with one final message: "If you survive, always remember that your mother loved you."

That story touches every heart because it reveals the love of a mother—a love willing to suffer so that her children may live.

Today's Gospel brings us to another Mother standing beneath another tragedy—not an earthquake but the Cross of Calvary. Mary cannot stop the nails. She cannot remove the crown of thorns. She cannot take away Jesus' pain. Yet she remains standing. Her presence speaks louder than words.

In the first reading, after Adam and Eve fall into sin, everything appears lost. Humanity has broken its friendship with God. Fear replaces trust. Blame replaces love. Yet God immediately promises hope.

The mysterious woman whose offspring will defeat the serpent points forward to Mary, the New Eve. As Eve's disobedience contributed to humanity's fall, Mary's obedience opened the way for our salvation through Christ.

Saint Irenaeus beautifully wrote, "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience." Mary becomes the beginning of a new humanity.

There is an old legend about a cracked church bell. People wanted to melt it down because it no longer rang perfectly. But an old priest refused. "Its cracks remind us," he said, "that God can still call people through broken things."

The Church itself is full of broken people.

We have saints and sinners.

We have moments of generosity and moments of failure.

Yet God continues calling the world through this imperfect Church.

Why? Because the Church has a perfect Mother.

Today's Gospel is one of the shortest passages in Scripture, yet one of the richest.

Jesus looks at his mother. Then he looks at John.

"Woman, behold your son."

"Behold your mother."

These are not simply arrangements for Mary's future care.

If that were Jesus' only concern, he had many relatives.

Instead, at the very hour of redemption, Jesus establishes a new family.

The Church is not merely an organisation. It is a family.

And every family needs a mother.

A little girl once asked her grandmother, "Why do we call Mary our Mother?" The grandmother answered by taking her into the kitchen. She baked a cake. When it came out of the oven, she cut a slice.

"Who made this slice?"

"The baker."

"But who made the whole cake?"

"The baker."

"And who gave us Jesus?"

"Mary."

"And if Jesus is the Head and we are his Body, then the Mother of the Head also becomes Mother of the Body." The little girl smiled and simply said, "Then she's my Mother too." That is profound theology explained with simple love.

Mary is not only the Mother of Jesus.

She is Mother of all who belong to Jesus.

Notice something remarkable.

Mary receives no title of honour from Jesus at Calvary.

Instead, she receives a mission.

Motherhood.

Real motherhood never retires.

Even today she continues leading people toward Christ.

Saint John Paul II often spoke about his deep devotion to Mary. As a young factory worker under Nazi occupation, he lost his mother at the age of nine. Later he would say, "I lost my earthly mother very early, but all the more I experienced the maternal presence of Mary." His famous motto, *Totus Tuus*—"Totally Yours"—expressed his complete trust in Mary because she always led him to Jesus.

Mary never keeps attention for herself.
She always says, as at Cana, "Do whatever he tells you."
She is like a stained-glass window.
Nobody admires stained glass because of the glass itself.
They admire the light shining through it.
Mary allows the light of Christ to shine without obstruction.
She is the Image of the Church because the Church too exists only to reflect Christ.

Pope Francis once remarked that the Church is called to be like a mother, not like an office.
An office has opening hours.
A mother never stops caring.
A mother forgives.
A mother waits.
A mother welcomes.
A mother hopes.
The Church is most authentic when it behaves like Mary.

Many years ago, Mother Teresa was asked how she could continue serving the poorest people every single day. She answered quietly, "Each morning I look at the crucifix, and each evening I look into the faces of the poor. Between the two, I simply try to stay beside Jesus

like Mary." That is the whole Christian life.
Stay close to Jesus.
Stay close to those who suffer.
Stand beneath the crosses of others.
Our families need Mary's example.
Our parishes need Mary's tenderness.
Our world, divided by hatred and loneliness, desperately needs the heart of a mother.
The Church will never become attractive merely through better buildings or better programmes.
She becomes beautiful when her members reflect Mary's humility, compassion and faith.

Let us ask ourselves today:
Do people experience the Church through me as a loving mother?
Do I bring people closer to Christ?
Do I stand beside those who suffer, or do I walk away?
Mary shows us the answer.
She simply remained.
Faith is often less about doing extraordinary things than about remaining faithfully beside Jesus.

A missionary priest once visited an elderly woman who had been bedridden for years. He apologised because she could no longer do much for the parish. The old woman smiled and pointed to a picture of Our Lady beside her bed.
"I can't preach," she said.
"I can't sing."
"I can't visit people."
"But I can stand with Jesus as Mary did—and I can pray for

everyone."

The priest later admitted that this hidden woman became one of the greatest missionaries in his parish.

As we leave this Eucharist today, let us remember that final message of the mother beneath the earthquake: "Always remember that your mother loved you." Mary says the same to every disciple.

More importantly, through Mary, God himself says to each of us:

"You are never alone.

You have a Mother.

And that Mother will always lead you safely to my Son."

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in God, who has given Mary to us as Mother of the Church, let us confidently present our prayers.

1. For Pope Leo XIV, our bishops, priests and all who serve the Church, that they may reflect Mary's faith, compassion and steadfast love as they shepherd God's people, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For nations torn apart by war, division and injustice, that through Mary's maternal intercession hearts may be reconciled and lasting peace may flourish, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families, especially mothers, fathers and children, that homes may become schools of faith, forgiveness and mutual love after the example of the Holy Family, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community, that we may become an image of the Church as Mary lived it: welcoming, prayerful, joyful and always leading others to Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying and all our faithful departed, that Mary's loving presence may comfort them, Christ may grant healing according to his will, and the deceased may rejoice forever in the kingdom of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, you have given us Mary as our Mother. Hear these prayers which we make through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Following the example of Mary, Mother of the Church, let us offer ourselves with Christ as we pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Standing with Mary as one family beneath the Cross, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father in the words our Saviour himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, strengthen us in faith, preserve us in hope, and keep us united in charity as we await the joyful coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
from the Cross you entrusted your Mother to your disciples
and your disciples to your Mother.

Through her maternal care, grant peace to your Church,
harmony to our families, healing to wounded hearts
and reconciliation among all peoples.

You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who gave himself for the life of the world
and has given us Mary as our Mother.

Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the
Mother of his Son and the Image of the Church, fill you with his love.
Amen.

May God the Son, who from the Cross entrusted us to Mary's
maternal care, strengthen you in faithful discipleship. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who formed Christ in the womb of Mary and
forms Christ within his Church, make you witnesses of the Gospel.
Amen.

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, and the Son, ✠
and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you
forever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and like Mary, Mother of the Church,
lead others to Christ by your faith and love.

26. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, IMAGE AND MOTHER OF THE CHURCH (II)

Acts 1:12-14; Jn 2,1-11

With Mary, the Church trusts Christ.

INTRODUCTION

A guide once brought a group of tourists to an ancient cathedral.
While everyone admired the stained-glass windows and towering
columns, a little girl quietly asked, "Where is the mother?" The guide
smiled, pointed to a beautiful statue of Mary, and said, "She is
always near her Son, and wherever she is, she gathers God's family
together." Sometimes children understand the Gospel better than
adults.

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we find Mary
praying with the apostles in the Upper Room. Before the Church
begins its mission, the Mother gathers the disciples into one family
united in prayer and hope.

In today's Gospel, at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary notices the
needs of others and gently leads the servants—and all of us—to
Jesus with her timeless advice: "Do whatever he tells you." Christ
transforms ordinary water into abundant wine, revealing the joy that
comes from trusting him.

Today we honour Mary as the **Image and Mother of the Church**.
She reflects perfectly what every Christian and the whole Church are
called to become: faithful disciples centred on Christ. As our Mother,
she continues to gather us around her Son, teaching us to pray, to
trust, and to serve.

Let us now acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for his mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you gathered your disciples into one family of faith through the prayer of your holy Mother. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you ask us to trust your word as Mary trusted you at Cana. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you continue to make your Church holy through the loving care of Mary, our Mother. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary: The Mother Who Always Leads Us to Jesus*

There is a beautiful story from the rebuilding of a village after a devastating earthquake. Workers carefully reconstructed the church that had stood at the centre of village life. When everything was finished except one thing, the villagers searched through the ruins for the old statue of Our Lady. They finally found it, scratched and broken but still recognizable. One elderly woman gently cleaned it and said, "Now our church is complete. A home is not complete until the mother comes home."

Whether historically exact or not, the story expresses a profound truth. A family instinctively looks for its mother. Wherever Mary is, she gathers God's children around Jesus. That is precisely why today's liturgy calls her Image and Mother of the Church.

The first reading takes us into the Upper Room after Jesus has ascended into heaven. The disciples are frightened, uncertain and waiting. Yet one detail stands out: "All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with Mary, the mother of Jesus."

Luke could have omitted Mary's name. Instead, he deliberately places her at the heart of the praying Church.

Notice what Mary is not doing. She is not preaching. She is not giving orders. She is not seeking attention. She is praying. That is Mary's way.

She gathers.

She encourages.

She prays.

She waits for the Holy Spirit.

She becomes the quiet centre of unity.

Someone once asked St. Teresa of Calcutta why people were so attracted to her. She replied, "When people come to me, I try to let them see Jesus." That could also describe Mary perfectly. She never points to herself. She always points to Christ.

The Gospel at Cana illustrates this beautifully.

Imagine the embarrassment of the bride and groom. The celebration is about to become a public disaster because the wine has run out.

Nobody notices except Mary.

Mothers usually notice what others miss.

She quietly approaches Jesus. "They have no wine."

She never tells Jesus what he must do. She simply presents the need.

Then she turns to the servants with perhaps the most important advice ever spoken by any human being: "Do whatever he tells you." These are Mary's last recorded words in Scripture. Remarkably, they remain her message to the Church today. Do whatever he tells you.

When families forgive one another, they are doing what he tells them.

When people care for the lonely, they are doing what he tells them.

When Christians pray faithfully even during difficult times, they are doing what he tells them.

Mary always leads us toward obedience born of love.

A missionary once told the story of teaching children to pray in a remote village. Every evening one little boy faithfully came to the church. When asked why he came so regularly, he answered, "Because if Mother Mary is here with Jesus, I never feel alone." That simple faith captures today's feast.

Mary does not replace Jesus. She brings us to him.

Some Christians worry that Catholics pay too much attention to Mary. Yet if we truly understand Marian devotion, the opposite is true. Every authentic devotion to Mary deepens our love for Christ.

Think of a stained-glass window. Nobody admires stained glass because of the glass itself. It is beautiful because it allows the sunlight to shine through. Mary is like that. She lets Christ shine through her life. That is why today's title calls her the **Image of the Church**. The Church should never draw attention to herself but should always allow Christ's light to shine.

Pope St. Paul VI beautifully called Mary "the model of the Church." Everything she did, the Church must also do.

She listened. The Church must listen.

She believed. The Church must believe.

She served. The Church must serve.

She remained faithful beneath the Cross. The Church must remain faithful even during suffering.

She prayed for Pentecost. The Church must always pray for the Holy Spirit.

An elderly parish priest once shared that after more than fifty years of ministry, the happiest parishes were never the richest or the biggest. They were the ones where people prayed together, forgave one another, and cared for each other like a family. "Whenever I saw that," he said, "I knew Mary was quietly at work."

That observation echoes today's first reading.

Mary builds communion.

She teaches us that the Church is not simply an organisation.

It is a family. And every healthy family needs prayer.

Perhaps many of us have relatives who have stopped practising their faith. Some parents worry endlessly about their children or grandchildren.

Remember St. Monica.

She prayed for years before Augustine returned to God.

Mary also waited patiently with the apostles.

God often works slowly.

Prayer is never wasted.

The Upper Room reminds us that great things begin with faithful prayer.

The miracle at Cana reminds us that Jesus can transform ordinary water into extraordinary wine.

Our lives often seem ordinary.
Our families have struggles.
Our parishes have limitations.
Our hearts carry disappointments.
But when we place everything into Christ's hands, following Mary's advice, he transforms what we offer.

He changes fear into courage.
Division into unity.
Weakness into holiness.
Ordinary disciples into saints.
There is another touching story.

A little child once drew a picture of heaven. The teacher asked, "Who is the lady standing beside Jesus?"
The child answered, "That's his mother. She's welcoming everyone and showing them where Jesus is."
Whether the child's theology was perfect hardly matters.
The picture was. Mary's whole mission is to welcome people and lead them to Christ.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, we are gathered just like the apostles in the Upper Room. Mary is spiritually present with the Church, praying with us and for us. She once said, "Do whatever he tells you." If we make those words the programme of our lives, Christ will continue to work miracles—not only in our hearts but also in our families, our parish, and our world.

May we become, like Mary, faithful images of the Church: people who pray together, stay united, notice the needs of others, and always bring everyone to Jesus. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered with Mary, the Mother of the Church, let us confidently bring our prayers before our heavenly Father.

1. For the Holy Church: that, following the example of Mary, she may always remain united in prayer, faithful to Christ, and courageous in proclaiming the Gospel to all peoples.
Lord, hear our prayer.
2. For the Pope, bishops, priests, deacons and all who serve the Church: that the Holy Spirit may strengthen them to shepherd God's people with humility, wisdom and joyful hope. Lord, hear our prayer.
3. For families throughout the world: that Mary, Mother of the Church, may help parents and children grow in faith, reconciliation, mutual love and trust in Christ. Lord, hear our prayer.
4. For our parish community: that we may imitate Mary's concern for others, notice those in need, welcome the lonely, and always do whatever Christ asks of us. Lord, hear our prayer.
5. For the sick, the elderly, the lonely, and all who have died: that Christ may grant healing to the suffering, comfort to those who mourn, and eternal joy to our departed brothers and sisters.
Lord, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of your Church, hear the prayers we make with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Following Mary's example of self-offering, let us pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered as one family around Christ, and united with Mary, Mother of the Church, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour has given us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil
and strengthen your Church in faith and unity.
Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
keep us faithful to your Son,
so that, doing whatever he tells us,
we may joyfully await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
through Mary you gathered your disciples into one family
before the coming of the Holy Spirit.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her unity and peace
in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who transforms our lives with his grace.
Happy are those who, like Mary, trust his word and come to the banquet prepared by the Lord.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother of his Son and the Mother of the Church, bless you and keep you in his love. Amen.

May God the Son, who at Cana revealed his glory through the faith of his Mother, strengthen you to do whatever he asks of you. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who gathered the apostles in prayer with Mary, fill you with unity, courage and peace for the mission of the Church. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, strengthened by the Eucharist,
and like Mary, Mother of the Church,
lead others to Christ by your life.

**27. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
IMAGE AND MOTHER OF THE CHURCH (III)**

Rev 21:1-5a; Lk 1:26-38

With Mary, our "Yes" renews the world in Christ.

INTRODUCTION

There is a beautiful story about the rebuilding of a city after a devastating earthquake. As people cleared away the ruins, a little girl was seen carrying a single brick every day to the construction site. Someone smiled and asked, "Do you really think your little brick can rebuild the city?" She answered, "No—but my brick belongs in God's new city." Every act of love helps God build something new.

The first reading from the Book of Revelation presents God's promise of a new heaven and a new earth, where He makes all things new and dwells forever with His people.

In today's Gospel, Mary becomes the beginning of that new creation by her humble "Yes" to the angel, allowing Christ to enter the world and renew humanity.

Today we honour Mary as the Image and Mother of the Church. In Mary we see what the Church is called to become: holy, faithful and welcoming to Christ. As our Mother, she continues to teach us to trust God's plan even when we do not fully understand it.

Let us now acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to make us a living image of His holy Church.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You came to make all things new through Your saving love. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through Mary's humble obedience You became one with our human family. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call Your Church to reflect the holiness and love of Your Blessed Mother. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: "God Builds His New World Through Our 'Yes'"

A traveller once visited the famous cathedral of Chartres in France while it was still under construction. He asked three stonecutters what they were doing. The first replied, "I'm cutting stones." The second answered, "I'm earning my wages." But the third looked up with shining eyes and said, "I am building a house for God."

All three were doing the same work, but only one understood the larger vision.

Today's readings invite us to discover God's larger vision. God is not simply improving the old world. He is creating something entirely new. And remarkably, He chooses ordinary people to help build it.

The Book of Revelation gives us one of the most hopeful visions in Scripture. St. John sees "a new heaven and a new earth." He hears God declare, "Behold, I make all things new."

Notice that God does not say, "I make new things." He says, "I make all things new."

God renews broken hearts.
He renews wounded families.
He renews divided communities.
He renews His Church.
He renews each one of us.

That great work of renewal began in a humble village called Nazareth.

The Gospel presents perhaps the quietest yet most important conversation in history. There is no palace, no crowd, no army, no miracle visible to the world. Only a young woman and an angel. Everything depends upon one word.
Mary says, "Let it be done to me according to your word."
At that moment the eternal Son of God entered human history.
God never forced Mary. He invited her.
Love always invites; it never compels.

A little boy once wanted to surprise his mother for her birthday. He carefully made a greeting card with crooked letters and colourful scribbles. To others it looked untidy, but the mother framed it and placed it in her living room because it came from a loving heart.

God delights not in perfect performances but in generous hearts.
Mary's greatness was not extraordinary talent.
Her greatness was extraordinary availability.
She allowed God to work.
That is why today's Mass calls her the **Image and Mother of the Church**.

She is the Image of the Church because everything the Church is meant to become already shines in her.
She listens before she speaks.
She believes before she understands everything.
She serves before seeking recognition.
She carries Christ to others.
She remains faithful beneath the Cross.
The Church is never stronger than when it resembles Mary.

Pope St. Paul VI beautifully said that Mary is the Mother of the Church because she lovingly cooperates in giving spiritual birth to all who become members of Christ.

Think of a mother teaching her child to walk. She does not walk instead of the child. She encourages, supports, lifts the child after every fall and patiently waits for another attempt.

That is how Mary accompanies the Church.
She does not replace Christ.
She always leads us to Him.
At Cana she simply says, "Do whatever He tells you."
Those words remain her message today.

There is an old legend about a stained-glass window in a medieval church. During the daytime people admired the beautiful colours from inside the church. But at night, when lights were placed within, the colours became even more brilliant and could be seen from far outside. Christ is the light within the Church.
Mary is the perfect stained-glass window.

She never keeps attention for herself.
She lets Christ shine through her.

The Church is called to do the same.
Sometimes we become discouraged by
the weaknesses we see within the Church.
We hear scandals.
We experience disappointments.
We encounter human failures.

Yet today's feast reminds us that the deepest identity of the Church
is not found in human weakness but in God's grace. Mary reveals
what the Church truly is in God's eyes—a beloved Bride, holy
because Christ makes her holy.

A missionary once told the story of visiting a village where Christians
had lost everything through persecution. Their church had been
burned down. Yet every Sunday they gathered beneath a large tree.
Someone asked one elderly woman, "Do you miss your church?"
She smiled. "Our church was never the building. Our church is
wherever Christ lives among His people."
That woman understood Revelation's vision.
God dwells among His people.
The Church is not primarily bricks and mortar.
It is people transformed by grace.
Every family can become a little Nazareth.
Every parish can become a little Bethlehem.
Every Christian can become another Mary by bringing Christ into the
world through kindness, forgiveness and faithful obedience.

Our world desperately needs such witnesses.
People today are tired of arguments.
They long to see lives that radiate hope.

Mary teaches us that holiness grows quietly.
One hidden act of forgiveness.
One generous sacrifice.
One faithful prayer.
One courageous "Yes."
These small acts slowly build God's new creation.

St. Teresa of Calcutta often reminded her sisters, "Not all of us can
do great things. But we can do small things with great love."
Mary lived exactly that way.
History changed not because she performed spectacular miracles
but because she trusted completely.

Let us ask ourselves today:
Am I allowing God to make something new in my own life?
Where is He asking for my "Yes"?:
Perhaps in forgiving someone.
Perhaps in serving my family with greater patience. Perhaps in
becoming more faithful in prayer.
Perhaps in accepting His plan when it differs from mine.
God still rebuilds His world one faithful heart at a time.

There is a lovely story about an old woman who planted oak trees
although she knew she would never live to sit beneath their shade.
Someone asked why she bothered. She smiled and replied, "Others
planted trees whose shade I enjoy today. Now it is my turn."

Mary's "Yes" has sheltered every generation of Christians. Today God asks us to plant seeds of faith for those who will come after us. May we, like Mary, become living stones in God's new Jerusalem, allowing Christ to dwell within us, so that one day He may truly say of us what He promises in today's first reading: "Behold, I make all things new."

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

United with Mary, Mother of the Church, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Holy Church: that, following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she may faithfully proclaim Christ and become a radiant sign of God's new creation for the whole world, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For the leaders of nations: that they may work for peace, justice and the dignity of every human person, helping to build a world where hope overcomes fear, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that parents may imitate Mary's faith and generosity, making their homes places where Christ is welcomed, loved and served, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that each of us may respond generously to God's call, saying "Yes" to His will in our daily lives and helping to build up His Church with love, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying, and for all our departed brothers and sisters: that the Lord may comfort them with His presence, restore the sick to health according to His will, grant eternal joy to the

faithful departed, and strengthen those who mourn, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, You chose Mary to become the Mother of Your Son and the Mother of the Church. Hear these prayers we make with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

United with Mary's faithful "yes," let us pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

As beloved children gathered into God's new family through Christ, and encouraged by the loving example of Mary, Mother of the Church, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
and through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary
renew our hearts by your grace
and strengthen your Church in faith and charity,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You entered our world through the faithful "Yes" of the Virgin Mary
and gathered us into one holy Church.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church.
Graciously grant her peace, unity and steadfast hope,

that together we may become a living sign of Your new creation,
where You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who makes all things new
and whom Mary first welcomed in faith.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the
Mother of His Son and the Mother of the Church, fill you with His
fatherly love. Amen.

May God the Son, born of the Virgin Mary, renew your hearts and
make you faithful witnesses of His Gospel. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary and formed Christ
within her, strengthen you to live each day with generous faith and
joyful hope. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and
the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, and like Mary, carry Christ to the world and help make
all things new.

28. THE IMMACULATE HEART OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (A)

Judith 13:17-20, 15:9; Lk 11:27-28

Blessed is the heart that listens to God.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a sculptor was asked how he could create such a
beautiful statue from a rough block of marble. He smiled and replied,
"The masterpiece was already inside. I only removed everything that
did not belong." God worked in a similar way in Mary. By a unique
grace, he preserved her from sin so that she might become the
perfect dwelling place of his Son.

In the first reading, Judith is praised as the most blessed of women
because she trusted God and became an instrument of his saving
plan. Her courage foreshadows the greater blessedness of Mary, the
spotless woman through whom salvation entered the world.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches that Mary's greatest glory is not
merely that she gave birth to him but that she heard the word of God
and kept it perfectly. Her holiness began with her attentive heart.

Today's Mass honours **Mary Immaculate**, the woman completely
open to God's grace from the first moment of her existence.

As we celebrate her purity of heart, let us ask the Lord to remove
from us whatever keeps us from listening to his word. We now
acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate these
sacred mysteries.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you chose Mary to be the spotless dwelling place of your presence: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you blessed those who hear the word of God and keep it: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to become holy as your heavenly Father is holy: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"An Empty Cup Can Be Filled"*

A professor once entered his classroom carrying two cups. One was full of muddy water; the other was completely clean and empty.

Holding up the muddy cup, he asked, "Can I pour fresh water into this?" The students answered, "No, because it is already full." Then he lifted the empty cup and said, "Only an empty cup can receive fresh water." The professor concluded, "God fills only the heart that is open to him."

That simple lesson beautifully describes today's celebration of Mary Immaculate. Many people mistakenly think the Immaculate Virgin means simply that Mary never committed personal sin. While that is true, the mystery is much deeper. God, by a unique grace, preserved Mary from original sin from the very beginning of her life because she was chosen to become the Mother of his Son. She was not saved apart from Christ but by the saving merits of Christ applied beforehand. She is the first and most perfect fruit of Christ's redemption.

Today's first reading presents Judith, one of the great heroines of the Old Testament. After saving Israel, the people praise her: *"You are the glory of Jerusalem... the highest honour of our race."*

Those words reach their fullest meaning in Mary. Judith defeated an earthly enemy; Mary cooperated in God's victory over sin itself. Judith saved one nation; Mary became Mother of all who believe.

The Responsorial Psalm gives us Mary's own song, the Magnificat. "My soul magnifies the Lord." Notice that Mary's first thought is never about herself. Everything points toward God. That is why she is truly great.

There is a lovely story about a stained-glass window in an old cathedral. Tourists admired its brilliant colours shining in the sunlight. One child asked, "What makes the window so beautiful?" The guide replied, "The glass shines only because the light passes through it." Mary never tried to become the light. She simply allowed God's light to pass through her. That is holiness.

Sometimes we imagine holiness means extraordinary miracles or dramatic sacrifices. Jesus tells us something much simpler in today's Gospel.

When a woman cries out, "Blessed is the womb that bore you," Jesus gently redirects the praise: "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it." Jesus is not diminishing his mother. He is explaining why she is blessed. Mary is blessed because she listened. She listened at the Annunciation. She listened at Bethlehem.

She listened in the hidden years at Nazareth.
She listened beneath the Cross.
She listened with the Apostles at Pentecost.
Her entire life was one long "Yes" to God.

A young violinist once asked the famous musician Jascha Heifetz,
"How do I become a great performer?"
Heifetz answered, "Make your instrument obey every movement of
your hand."

Mary allowed herself to become God's perfect instrument. There was
no resistance, no selfishness, no pride. Grace shaped every part of
her life. This is why the Church presents Mary not as someone
distant but as the model for every Christian.

God does not ask us to become another Mary. He asks us to imitate
Mary's openness. The saints remind us that holiness grows in
ordinary moments.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux did not perform spectacular miracles during
her life. She simply offered every small action to God with love.
Great holiness often grows from small acts of faithful obedience.

There is another touching story: A gardener planted two rose bushes.
One struggled because weeds constantly surrounded it. The other
flourished because the gardener carefully removed everything that
hindered its growth. One day someone asked why one bush
produced so many beautiful flowers. The gardener answered,
"Flowers grow where weeds are removed." The same is true
spiritually.

God wants beautiful virtues to blossom in us.
But first, resentment must be removed.
Pride must be removed.
Jealousy must be removed.
Selfishness must be removed.

Mary's Immaculate Heart reminds us what a human life looks like
when nothing blocks God's grace. Of course, unlike Mary, we all
struggle with weakness and sin. Yet every confession is another
opportunity for God to clear away the weeds.

Every Eucharist fills us again with divine life. Every sincere prayer
opens another window through which God's light can shine. The
Immaculate Virgin therefore gives us hope, not discouragement.
She shows us what God's grace can accomplish in a human life.
She also reminds us that holiness is God's work before it is ours.

A sculptor once said that every hammer stroke reveals the hidden
beauty inside the stone. Likewise, every act of forgiveness, every
sacrifice, every prayer, every faithful decision allows Christ to shape
us more into his image. Mary never stopped saying yes.
Even when she did not understand.
Even when she suffered.
Even when she stood beneath the Cross.
That is why she remains the perfect disciple.

Let us ask ourselves today:
Do I listen to God's word?
Do I allow his grace to transform me?
Do I remove whatever prevents his light from shining through me?

The answer to those questions determines our holiness.

Let me conclude with another story: A little girl brought her mother a mirror covered with dust. She asked, "Why can't I see my face?"

Her mother quietly cleaned the glass with a soft cloth.

Immediately the girl's face appeared clearly. The mother smiled and said, "The face was always there. Only the dust prevented you from seeing it." Our souls are like that mirror. Sin clouds God's image within us. Grace cleans it.

Mary's Immaculate Heart was never clouded by sin, and therefore reflected God perfectly. As we celebrate her today, may we allow Christ to cleanse our hearts so that, like Mary, our lives may reflect his goodness, his mercy and his love to everyone we meet. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

United with Mary, the Immaculate Virgin who listened perfectly to God's word, let us bring our prayers before our loving Father.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully proclaim God's word and become a radiant sign of holiness for the whole world, we pray to the Lord.

2. For nations and their leaders: that they may reject violence, protect the dignity of every human person, and seek justice and peace, we pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that parents and children may imitate Mary's attentive listening, growing together in faith, love and mutual forgiveness, we pray to the Lord.

4. For all of us gathered here: that, inspired by the Immaculate Virgin, we may remove whatever hinders God's grace and faithfully live his word each day, we pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the sick, comfort to those who mourn, and eternal joy to all who have died, we pray to the Lord.

Father of all holiness, you chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the spotless Mother of your Son. Hear the prayers we offer through her loving intercession. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we place these gifts of bread and wine upon the altar, let us also offer our hearts to God. Through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, let us pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Mary trusted completely in God and called him her Saviour. With the same confidence as God's beloved children, let us pray in the words our Lord himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil,
and free our hearts from whatever separates us from your grace.
Through the loving intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mary,
keep us faithful to your word
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you brought peace to the world through the humble obedience of your Mother. Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her unity and peace in accordance with your will, who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who makes holy those who come to him in faith. Happy are those who, like Mary, welcome him with open hearts and are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary from the beginning of time, fill you with his grace. Amen.

May God the Son, born of the Immaculate Virgin, make your hearts faithful to his word. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary and formed Christ within her, make you holy and joyful in his service. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, keeping God's word as Mary did, and shine with the light of Christ.

28. THE IMMACULATE HEART OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (B)

Judith 13:17-20; 15:9; Lk 2:46-51

A pure heart seeks and treasures Christ.

INTRODUCTION

A little girl once asked her grandmother, "How can I keep Jesus close to me every day?" The grandmother smiled, placed her hand over the child's heart and said, "Whenever you love, forgive, pray, and trust God, your heart becomes a home where Jesus loves to stay." That simple lesson remained with the child for the rest of her life.

In today's first reading, Judith is praised because her courageous and faithful heart became a source of blessing for God's people.

The Gospel presents Mary whose Immaculate Heart continually sought Jesus, treasured His words, and pondered everything in her heart.

Today we honour the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary's heart was preserved by God's grace from every stain of sin and remained completely open to His will. It teaches us that holiness begins not with extraordinary deeds but with an ordinary heart that belongs entirely to God.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask the Lord to purify our hearts so that, like Mary, we may seek Christ above all else. Let us acknowledge our sins.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You gave us Mary whose Immaculate Heart was always open to Your Father's will. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You invite us to seek You with trusting hearts whenever we feel lost or confused. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us to treasure Your word and keep it faithfully in our hearts. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"The Heart that Never Stopped Looking for Jesus"*

Many years ago, a father took his little son to a crowded market. For a moment the child became fascinated by colourful toys and let go of his father's hand. Within seconds he realised he was alone. Panic filled his eyes. Meanwhile, the father searched every street calling his son's name. When they finally found each other, neither blamed the other. They simply embraced. The child had discovered something unforgettable: there is no love greater than the love that never stops searching.

Today's Gospel tells us of another search. Mary and Joseph searched anxiously for Jesus for three long days. We can easily imagine their fear. Every parent knows what it means to lose sight of a child. Yet this event is much more than the story of worried parents. It reveals the mystery of Mary's Immaculate Heart—a heart that never stopped seeking Jesus.

The Gospel says that after finding Him in the Temple, Mary "kept all these things in her heart." That sentence appears several times in Luke's Gospel. Mary does not simply remember events; she allows God's word to sink deep into her heart until it transforms her life.

The first reading presents another remarkable woman—Judith. After saving Israel through her courage and trust in God, the people proclaim, "You are the glory of Jerusalem." These very words later became associated with Mary. Judith was blessed because she trusted God in a moment of crisis. Mary is even more blessed because from the first moment of her existence, her heart belonged entirely to God.

Someone once asked Mother Teresa how she managed to recognise Jesus among the dying and abandoned. She replied simply, "I look at them until I see Jesus."

That was Mary's secret too. She looked for Jesus not only in the Temple but in every ordinary day of life.

Sometimes we think holiness consists in doing spectacular things. Yet Mary spent almost thirty years living an ordinary family life in Nazareth. Cooking meals, cleaning the house, drawing water, helping neighbours—these ordinary tasks became holy because they were done with an extraordinary heart.

A tourist once visited a famous cathedral where a guide pointed to magnificent stained-glass windows. During the day the windows seemed rather dull from outside. But when sunlight shone through them, they became dazzling with colour.

The guide explained, "The beauty comes when the light passes through."

That describes Mary's heart perfectly. Her greatness did not come from herself but because God's light shone through her completely.

There was nothing selfish, nothing proud, nothing dark to block God's grace.

The Immaculate Heart is not simply a privilege given to Mary; it is a promise offered to every Christian. At Baptism our hearts also became temples of the Holy Spirit. Although we struggle with weakness and sin, Christ continually purifies us through His mercy.

Pope Francis once remarked that Mary is not a mother who merely admires her Son from a distance. She walks with us, accompanies us, and teaches us to become disciples.

How does she teach us? First, she teaches us to seek Jesus. There are many things that distract us today—social media, endless entertainment, anxiety about money, success, and recognition. Like the young Jesus in Jerusalem, Christ can easily disappear from the centre of our lives while we assume He is somewhere nearby.

When Mary realised Jesus was missing, she did not wait another day. She immediately turned back. That is the beginning of every conversion.

Whenever we discover that prayer has disappeared, that forgiveness has become difficult, that Mass has become routine, that charity has grown cold, we must turn back immediately and seek Christ again.

A priest once visited an elderly woman living alone. Her eyesight had almost failed, and she could no longer read her Bible. Yet every morning she opened it and rested her hands upon its pages. The priest asked, "Can you still read?" She smiled. "No, Father. But Jesus knows I am here."

That is an Immaculate Heart—remaining close to Jesus even when we understand very little.

Secondly, Mary teaches us to treasure God's word. The Gospel says she pondered everything in her heart.

Modern life encourages instant reactions. Mary teaches silent reflection. She did not immediately understand why Jesus stayed behind in the Temple. Yet she trusted that God would reveal His plan in time. Faith does not answer every question immediately. Sometimes faith simply waits.

Thirdly, Mary teaches us to let love become action. The Immaculate Heart is not sentimental devotion. It is a heart that visited Elizabeth. A heart that stood beneath the Cross. A heart that encouraged the Apostles. A heart that became Mother of the Church. Real devotion to Mary's heart always leads us to imitate her.

Saint John Vianney once compared the human heart to a garden. If weeds are left alone, they soon take over. But if the gardener removes them every day and plants flowers, the garden becomes beautiful. Our hearts are exactly like that. Every confession removes weeds. Every act of forgiveness plants a flower. Every Eucharist strengthens the roots. Every Rosary waters the garden. Slowly Christ Himself begins to bloom there.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, Mary gently asks each of us one simple question: "Where is Jesus in your heart today?"

Perhaps He has been forgotten amid worries.

Perhaps He has been hidden beneath disappointment.

Perhaps He is waiting patiently to be welcomed again.

Whatever our situation, Mary never stops leading us back to her Son.

There is a beautiful legend about a sculptor who carved an image of Our Lady. Someone admired its beauty and asked, "How did you create such a beautiful face?" The sculptor answered, "I did not create it. I simply removed everything that did not belong."

That is exactly what God accomplished in Mary's Immaculate Heart. He removed every obstacle to love so that Christ could shine perfectly through her. And that is what God desires to do in us.

May this Eucharist allow Him to remove whatever prevents us from loving as Mary loved, trusting as Mary trusted, and seeking Jesus with all our heart, until one day we find Him forever in the Father's house. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

United with Mary, whose Immaculate Heart was always open to God's will, let us confidently present our prayers to the Father.

1. For the Church: that, following the example of Mary's Immaculate Heart, she may faithfully proclaim Christ and bring hope to every nation, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that they may seek wisdom, justice and peace, protecting the dignity of every human life, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that parents and children may learn from the Holy Family to seek Christ together, treasure God's word, and grow in mutual love, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For all who have wandered away from faith: that, through Mary's loving intercession, they may rediscover Christ and experience the joy of returning to Him, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying, and for all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the sick, comfort to those who suffer, eternal rest to the deceased, and consolation to those who mourn, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, You gave us the Immaculate Heart of Mary as a model of perfect discipleship. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that our gifts, offered with hearts purified by God's grace and inspired by the Immaculate Heart of Mary, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Following the example of Mary, whose whole life was surrendered to the Father's will, let us pray with confidence in the words that Jesus Himself taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.

Through the loving intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
keep our hearts faithful to Your Son,
free us from sin and discouragement,
and help us to seek Christ always with joyful hope
as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You gave us Your Mother
whose Immaculate Heart remained steadfast in every trial.
Fill our hearts with Your peace, unite us in love,
and make us instruments of reconciliation,
that we may live as faithful witnesses of Your Gospel.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who is the true treasure sought by the Immaculate Heart of Mary.
Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary from all
eternity, fill your hearts with His grace. Amen.

May God the Son, whom Mary sought, treasured, and faithfully
followed, remain always the joy of your hearts. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who formed the Immaculate Heart of Mary
into His living sanctuary, make your hearts ever more like hers.
Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you forever.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, with hearts renewed after the example of the
Immaculate Heart of Mary, glorifying the Lord by your lives.

29. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, QUEEN OF ALL CREATION

Isaiah 9:1-3, 5-6; Lk 1,26-38

Mary's "Yes" renews creation in Christ.

INTRODUCTION

A traveller once stood on a mountain at sunrise and watched the first rays of light spread across forests, rivers, villages and distant fields. Turning to the guide beside him, he said, "It is as if someone is gently awakening the whole world." The guide smiled and replied, "Creation always responds to the One who made it." Today we celebrate the woman who responded most perfectly to the Creator's plan.

Isaiah announces the coming of the Child who will bring light into darkness and establish an everlasting kingdom of justice and peace. His reign is not built on power but on love that transforms the whole of creation.

In the Gospel, Mary freely accepts God's invitation with her humble "Yes," allowing the King of the universe to enter human history through her. Her obedience opens the way for the renewal of all creation.

Today we honour Mary as Queen of All Creation. She is Queen not because she dominates creation but because she is the humble Mother of the King of kings, leading every creature to praise and obey its Creator. As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask for God's mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You are the Light who scatters every darkness through Your coming into the world. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through Mary's faithful "Yes," You became one of us to restore all creation. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You reign forever with Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth, guiding us towards Your eternal kingdom. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *The Queen Who Shows Us the King*

There is an old legend about a king who wished to know whether his people truly loved him or merely feared his authority. So one day he removed his royal robes, dressed as a poor traveller, and quietly walked through his kingdom. Most people ignored him. A few offered him food and shelter. Months later, when he returned to the palace, he invited those generous people to a royal banquet. They were astonished to discover that the poor traveller they had welcomed was their king.

God has done something even more wonderful. The King of the universe entered our world, not in splendour but as a tiny child in Mary's womb. Today we honour Mary as Queen of All Creation because she welcomed the King before anyone else did. Her greatness comes entirely from her closeness to Christ.

Many people misunderstand queenship. They imagine crowns, thrones, power and privilege. But Mary's crown is woven from humility, obedience and love.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of the child who would be called "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." This child is the true King of creation. The world belongs to Him because through Him all things were made. Mary becomes Queen because she belongs completely to Him.

St. Louis IX of France, one of the greatest Christian kings, used to kneel before a statue of Our Lady before making important decisions. His advisers once asked why a king should kneel before another queen. Louis replied, "Because before she is Queen, she is Mother; and every good son listens to his mother when she points to Christ." That is exactly Mary's mission.

In today's Gospel, the angel greets Mary with extraordinary words: "Hail, full of grace." Mary could have refused.

God never forces anyone. History waited upon the free answer of a young woman from Nazareth. Her answer changed everything: *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word."* Notice that Mary does not ask, "What will I gain?" She asks, in effect, "What does God want?" That is the secret of holiness.

Mother Teresa once said that God does not ask us to do extraordinary things. He asks us to do ordinary things with extraordinary love. Mary lived that truth perfectly.

A little girl was once asked during catechism, "Why did God choose Mary?" She answered, "Because God knew He could trust her." That simple answer contains profound theology.

God could trust Mary's faith.
God could trust her obedience.
God could trust her love.
Can He trust ours?

Today's title—Queen of All Creation—also reminds us of our responsibility towards creation itself.

When Pope Francis speaks about caring for creation, he reminds us that the earth is not simply a possession but a gift entrusted to us.

Mary teaches us how to receive every gift with gratitude.
Think of Cana.

When the wine ran out, Mary noticed the need before anyone else.

A queen notices.

A mother notices.

She quietly tells Jesus, "They have no wine."

She notices human need because her heart is attentive.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves:

Do we notice lonely neighbours?

Do we notice struggling families?

Do we notice the poor?

Do we notice the wounded earth that God has entrusted to us?

Or are we too busy with ourselves?

There is a beautiful story about St. Francis of Assisi. One cold winter's day he saw a man chopping down an entire fruit tree for firewood. Francis gently stopped him and said, "Leave part of the tree alive, so that it may blossom again." Francis understood that creation belongs first to God.

Mary, Queen of Creation, teaches exactly that same lesson.
She teaches reverence.
She teaches gratitude.
She teaches stewardship.
The Psalm today speaks of the queen standing beside the king in splendid garments.

The Church has always seen this as an image fulfilled in Mary.
But notice something beautiful.
The queen stands beside the king.
She never replaces Him.
Every authentic Marian devotion always leads us closer to Jesus.

Whenever people stop at Mary instead of walking with Mary towards Christ, they misunderstand her completely.
She herself says, "Do whatever He tells you."
Those five words summarise her whole queenship.
Lead people to Jesus.
Nothing more. Nothing less.

There is another touching story from World War II. During heavy bombing in Europe, many churches were destroyed. In one ruined church, the statue of Mary survived almost untouched except that both hands had been broken off. Later, the parish restored the statue but deliberately left the hands missing. Underneath they placed a plaque that read: **"Mary has no hands now but ours."**
What a powerful reminder.

Mary continues her work through us.
She comforts through our kindness.

She feeds through our generosity.
She forgives through our mercy.
She protects creation through our responsible care.
She brings Christ through our witness.
Every time we imitate her "Yes," the kingdom of Christ grows.
Every act of kindness, every prayer, every sacrifice, every effort to protect God's creation becomes another echo of Mary's Fiat.

In the Eucharist we meet the same Jesus whom Mary carried beneath her heart.
She was the first tabernacle.
She teaches us how to receive Him with reverence, humility and love.
May every Communion today renew within us the words that shaped Mary's entire life: "Let it be done to me according to your word."

A missionary once visited a remote village where the people had almost nothing. Yet every evening they gathered before a simple statue of Our Lady. One little boy was asked why he came every day. He answered, "Because when I look at Mary, I remember that God keeps His promises."

That is why the Church crowns Mary Queen. Not because she points to herself. But because she reminds the whole of creation that God's greatest promise has already been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

May Mary, Queen of All Creation, teach us to welcome Christ as she did, to care lovingly for God's creation, and one day lead us into the everlasting kingdom where the King reigns forever and His faithful Mother rejoices with all the saints. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ our King and through the loving intercession of Mary, Queen of All Creation, let us present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For Pope N., our bishops, priests and all who lead the Church, that they may faithfully proclaim Christ, the King of creation, with humility and courage, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders, that they may work for justice, peace and the responsible care of God's creation entrusted to humanity, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For families, especially those burdened by suffering, anxiety or poverty, that Mary may help them place their trust in God and remain faithful to His will, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community, that like Mary we may respond generously to God's call and become joyful witnesses of Christ in our homes, workplaces and society, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the elderly, those who are dying, and for all our faithful departed, that the Queen of Heaven may comfort them, obtain healing according to God's will, and lead the departed into the everlasting joy of Christ's kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of all creation, hear the prayers we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as we offer these gifts with Mary, Queen of All Creation, our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father, united with Mary, Queen of All Creation.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil.
Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by Your mercy
and inspired by the faith of Mary, Queen of All Creation,
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You are the Prince of Peace foretold by the prophet Isaiah.
Through the loving intercession of Mary, Queen of All Creation,
grant peace to our hearts, our families, our nations
and to all creation,
that we may live together in justice, harmony and hope.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who came into the world through the loving "Yes" of Mary.
Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb and who
welcome Christ with the faith and humility of His holy Mother.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who created heaven and earth, fill you with His love.
Amen.

May the Son, the King of all creation, strengthen you to live faithfully
as His disciples. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit guide you each day, through the loving
intercession of Mary, Queen of All Creation, to share Christ's light
with the world. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and
the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by caring for His creation and
following the example of Mary, Queen of All Creation.

30. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

Esther 8:3-8, 16-17a; John 2,1-11

With Mary, we receive Christ's abundant grace.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once watched his mother quietly sewing late into the night. Looking at the underside of the embroidery, he complained, "It's just a tangled mess of threads." His mother smiled and asked him to come upstairs. From above he saw a beautiful pattern of flowers and colours. "You were looking only from underneath," she said. "I could see the whole design." Mary is like that loving mother. When life seems full of tangled threads, she sees our needs and gently leads us to the One who completes God's beautiful design.

Like Queen Esther, who courageously interceded for her people before the king, Mary lovingly intercedes for us before her Son, becoming a channel through whom God's saving grace reaches His children.

At Cana, Mary notices a simple human need before anyone else does. Her words, "Do whatever he tells you," continue to lead every disciple to Christ, the source of every grace and blessing.

Today we honour Mary as **Mother and Mediatrix of Grace**. She does not replace Christ, the one Mediator, but lovingly brings us to Him, through whom every grace flows.
As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask for God's mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You came into the world as the Father's greatest gift, and through Your Mother You continue to pour out Your grace upon Your people. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You listened to the loving intercession of Your Mother at Cana and revealed Your glory to those who believed. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You invite us, through Mary's example, to trust Your word and do whatever You command. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary Notices What Others Miss*

Several years ago, after a devastating earthquake, rescuers searched through the ruins of a collapsed apartment building. Beneath broken concrete they found a young mother who had died protecting her baby. For more than two days she had shielded the child with her own body. When they finally reached the little boy, he was alive. Beside him was a mobile phone carrying one final message from his mother: "If you survive, remember that I love you."

A mother's love notices what others overlook. She senses hunger before a child asks for food, sadness before tears begin to fall, and danger before anyone else recognises it.

Today's Gospel begins with one of the most beautiful examples of a mother's attentive love. At a joyful wedding feast in Cana, everyone is celebrating. Music is playing. Guests are laughing. No one notices that disaster is quietly approaching. The wine has run out. For us, it might seem like a small inconvenience. But in Jewish culture this would have been a lifelong humiliation for the newly married couple.

Everyone is celebrating.

Everyone—except Mary.

She notices.

She does not wait until someone asks for help.

She simply tells Jesus, "They have no wine."

That simple sentence reveals Mary's heart.

She sees.

She cares.

She intercedes.

She trusts.

This is precisely why the Church honours her today as Mother and Mediatrix of Grace.

The title "Mediatrix of Grace" sometimes causes misunderstanding. It does not mean that Mary replaces Jesus. St Paul clearly teaches that Christ alone is the one Mediator between God and humanity. Everything Mary gives comes entirely from Him.

Think of sunlight entering a room through a clean window. The glass creates no light. Yet the room is brighter because the window allows the light to pass through. Christ is the Sun of Justice. Mary is the clear window through whom His light reaches us.

Today's first reading gives us another remarkable woman who became an instrument of salvation. Queen Esther risks everything by approaching the king. She pleads for her people. She asks for mercy. Because of her courage, death is changed into life and mourning into rejoicing.

The Church has always seen Esther as a beautiful image preparing us for Mary.

Esther approached an earthly king.

Mary approaches the King of Kings.

Esther saved a nation.

Mary brings us to the Saviour of every nation.

There is a lovely story about St Bernard of Clairvaux. A poor peasant once asked him, "How can I be sure that God hears someone as ordinary as me?"

St Bernard answered, "When a little child falls, whom does he call first? Usually his mother. And does a good mother ignore him? Never. She lifts him up and brings him safely to his father."

That is Mary's mission.

She always brings us safely to Jesus.

Notice something else in today's Gospel.

Mary never draws attention to herself.

She does not say, "Listen to me."

She says, "Do whatever He tells you."

Those are the last recorded words of Mary in the Gospels.

Her entire life points away from herself and towards Christ.

There is an old story from medieval Europe about a magnificent cathedral. Visitors admired its colourful stained-glass windows. One day a traveller asked an old caretaker, "Which window is the most beautiful?" The caretaker smiled. "The one that lets in the most light."

The same is true of Mary.

Her greatness lies not in drawing attention to herself but in allowing the light of Christ to shine through her.

At Cana another remarkable detail appears.

Jesus asks the servants to fill six enormous stone jars with water.

Imagine what those servants must have thought.

"This makes no sense."

Yet they obey.

Only after their obedience does the miracle happen.

Grace almost always meets obedience.

Mary teaches us exactly this. "Do whatever He tells you."

Sometimes we ask God to solve our problems while refusing to follow His instructions.

We pray for peace but refuse forgiveness.

We pray for stronger families but neglect prayer together.

We pray for holiness while making no effort to change our habits.

Mary reminds us that grace does not eliminate our cooperation.

Grace invites our response.

There is a touching story of a missionary doctor serving in Africa.

An elderly woman walked nearly twenty kilometres every month carrying a small bottle.

The doctor assumed she needed medicine.

Instead she asked him to refill it with holy water.

He gently asked why she walked so far.

She smiled. "When I sprinkle this water in my home, I remember that God has not forgotten us."

The doctor later admitted that her faith healed him more than his medicine healed her.

Grace often enters ordinary lives through simple acts of trust.

Cana itself was an ordinary village.
The wedding was an ordinary family celebration.
The servants were ordinary workers.
Yet because Mary brought everything to Jesus, ordinary water
became extraordinary wine.
That is still how grace works.

Mary continues to notice our hidden worries.
She notices the broken marriage no one speaks about.
The young person searching for purpose.
The elderly person feeling forgotten.
The parent worried about a child's future.
The priest carrying silent burdens.
The family struggling financially.
She quietly brings them all before her Son.
And Jesus still transforms ordinary lives.

The abundance of wine is also significant.
Jesus did not provide just enough.
He provided overflowing abundance.
God's grace is never stingy.
He always gives more than we deserve.
More forgiveness.
More mercy.
More hope.
More love.

Every Eucharist is another Cana.
We bring ordinary bread and wine.
Christ transforms them into His Body and Blood.

We bring ordinary lives.
He fills them with extraordinary grace.
Mary is present spiritually at every altar, still whispering to us,
"Do whatever He tells you."

Let me conclude with one final story. A small child was learning to swim. Standing at the edge of the pool, he was terrified to jump into his father's waiting arms. His mother knelt beside him and quietly said, "Trust your father."
The little boy jumped. His father caught him immediately.
Years later he said, "It wasn't my courage that made me jump. It was my mother's voice."

Life often places us at the edge of frightening moments.
Illness.
Failure.
Loneliness.
Loss.
Uncertainty.

Beside us stands Mary, not asking us to trust in her, but gently repeating the words she first spoke at Cana: "Do whatever He tells you."

When we listen to that loving voice and place ourselves into the hands of Christ, we discover that His grace is always greater than our need, His mercy greater than our sin, and His love more abundant than we ever imagined.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ, from whom every grace comes, and encouraged by the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully lead all people to Christ, as Mary did at Cana, encouraging every believer to do whatever the Lord commands. Lord, hear us.

2. For world leaders: that they may seek justice with wisdom and compassion, protecting the vulnerable as Queen Esther courageously defended her people. Lord, hear us.

3. For families and married couples: that Mary, who cared for the newlyweds at Cana, may strengthen love, fidelity, generosity and joy in every home. Lord, hear us.

4. For all who feel burdened by anxiety, disappointment or hopelessness: that through Mary's maternal intercession they may experience the abundant grace and peace of Christ.
Lord, hear us.

5. For the sick, the dying and our faithful departed: that the healing grace of Christ may strengthen the sick, comfort the dying, and welcome the deceased into the eternal wedding feast of heaven.
Lord, hear us.

Heavenly Father, You have given us Mary as the Mother of Your Son and our loving Mother. Through her prayers, hear these petitions and grant them according to Your holy will. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as Mary brought the needs of the wedding guests before her Son, we too may place our lives upon this altar, and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to the Father, trusting that through Christ every grace is given and that Mary continually leads us to Him.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil.
Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by Your mercy
and strengthened by the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Mediatrix of Grace,
we may be free from sin, safe from all distress, and joyful in hope as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, You revealed Your glory at Cana through the faith-filled intercession of Your Mother.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will.

May Your grace renew our hearts
so that we may become instruments of reconciliation and hope
in our homes and throughout the world.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who fills the emptiness of our hearts with the abundance of His
grace.

Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb
and who, following the example of Mary,
place their complete trust in His saving word.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother
of His Son, fill you with His abundant grace. Amen.

May the Son, who revealed His glory at Cana through Mary's loving
intercession, strengthen your faith and keep you always close to
Himself. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary and
continues to sanctify the Church, fill your hearts with peace, hope
and enduring joy. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, rejoicing in the grace of Christ.
Like Mary, lead others to Jesus and do whatever He tells you.

31. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, FOUNTAIN OF SALVATION (I)

Ez 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; Jn 19:25-37

With Mary, we draw from Christ, the Fountain of Salvation.

INTRODUCTION

A traveller crossing a scorching desert had almost given up hope.
Just as his strength was fading, he heard the gentle sound of flowing
water. Following the sound, he discovered a hidden spring. Kneeling
beside it, he drank deeply and found new life. Later he said, "That
spring did not simply quench my thirst—it gave me back my life."

Today's first reading presents the beautiful vision of water flowing
from the Temple, bringing life wherever it reaches. God's grace is like
a river that heals, restores and makes everything fruitful.

In the Gospel, from the pierced side of Jesus flow blood and water,
the fountain of our salvation, while Mary stands faithfully beneath the
Cross.

The title of today's Marian Mass, "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Fountain
of Salvation," reminds us that Mary is not herself the source of
salvation, but the Mother who leads us unfailingly to Christ, the living
fountain from whom every grace flows.

As we gather around this fountain of mercy, let us acknowledge the
times we have searched for satisfaction in other places instead of
coming to Christ, and ask the Lord for pardon and peace.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, from your pierced side flowed the living water that gives eternal life: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us your Mother to accompany us on our journey to the fountain of salvation: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you continually refresh your Church with the grace of your Sacraments: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *The Fountain That Never Runs Dry*

Many years ago, a village depended entirely on a single spring hidden among the hills. Every morning people walked there carrying empty jars. One summer a wealthy merchant arrived and laughed at them. "Why make this journey every day?" he asked. "I have built a large reservoir near my house." At first everyone admired it. But after weeks without rain, the reservoir dried up because it only stored yesterday's water. The spring, however, continued to flow because it came from deep within the mountain. The villagers returned to it, realizing that only a living source can give living water.

That simple story opens today's Scriptures. The prophet Ezekiel sees an extraordinary vision. Water flows from the Temple. At first it is only a trickle, but soon it becomes a mighty river. Wherever it flows, deserts bloom, dead waters become fresh, fish abound, trees bear fruit every month, and their leaves become medicine for healing. Water means life. Without water, everything dies.

God is saying that His grace is not meant to remain inside the Temple. It flows outward to transform the world.

The Gospel reveals where this prophecy is fulfilled. Standing beneath the Cross are Mary, John and a few faithful women. The soldier pierces the side of Jesus, and immediately blood and water flow out.

Saint John does not mention this merely as a medical detail. He knows that this is the fulfilment of Ezekiel's vision. The true Temple is now Christ Himself. From His Heart flows the river of salvation.

The blood reminds us of the Eucharist.

The water reminds us of Baptism.

From the Cross the Church is born.

Every sacrament flows from the Heart of Christ.

And where is Mary?

She is standing beside the fountain.

Not standing in front of it.

Not replacing it.

She simply remains where every disciple should remain—close to Jesus.

That is why the Church honours her today as Fountain of Salvation. She is not the source but the Mother who constantly leads us to the Source.

Saint Bernard beautifully said, "If you seek the fountain, go to Christ. If you seek the safest guide to the fountain, go to Mary."

There is a lovely story about a little girl visiting Lourdes with her grandmother. The child watched thousands of pilgrims filling bottles with spring water.

She asked, "Grandma, is this water magical?"
Her grandmother smiled. "No, dear. The water reminds us that God is the one who heals. Mary always tells us to trust her Son."
That is exactly Mary's mission.

She never points to herself.
She always points to Jesus.
At Cana she said, "Do whatever he tells you."
At Calvary she says nothing.
Her silence is even more powerful.
Her whole life says, "Look at Him."

Many people today are spiritually thirsty.
They thirst for peace.
For forgiveness.
For meaning.
For love.
Yet they often drink from wells that cannot satisfy.
Money.
Entertainment.
Success.
Popularity.
Technology.

These things are not evil, but they cannot fill the deepest thirst of the human heart.

Saint Augustine confessed after years of searching, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You." Only Christ satisfies.

A priest once visited a man who had become extremely successful in business. The house was luxurious, every room filled with expensive possessions.

The man quietly admitted, "Father, I own everything I dreamed about, but I sleep badly every night."

The priest asked only one question. "When was the last time you prayed?"

The man lowered his head. "Years ago."

He had many reservoirs.
But he had lost the spring.
That happens to many of us.
We become busy.
We stop praying.
We neglect Sunday Mass.
Confession becomes rare.
The Bible gathers dust.
Gradually the soul becomes dry.
Yet Christ's fountain never stops flowing.

Every Confession is a return to the fountain.
Every Eucharist is a drink from living water.
Every sincere prayer opens our hearts again to His grace.
Mary gently leads us back each time.

Notice something remarkable in today's Gospel.
Mary does not run away from suffering.
She stands beneath the Cross.
Standing requires courage.
Standing requires hope.

Standing requires love.

Many parents imitate Mary without even realizing it.
A mother sitting beside her child's hospital bed.
A husband caring for his wife suffering from dementia.
A daughter visiting her elderly father every day.
A parishioner quietly bringing Communion to the sick.
These people stand beneath countless crosses.

Like Mary, they cannot remove the suffering, but they refuse to abandon the person.
Their presence becomes a living sign of God's love.

There is a touching story of Saint Teresa of Calcutta.
One volunteer complained, "I don't think I'm accomplishing much."
Mother Teresa replied, "God has not called you to be successful. He has called you to be faithful."

That describes Mary perfectly.
She remained faithful.
She trusted when everything seemed lost.
Because she remained at the Cross, she witnessed the birth of hope.

Today's Psalm invites us, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."
Notice the word "joy."
The Christian life is not carrying empty buckets forever.
It is drinking from an inexhaustible fountain.
That fountain is still flowing today.

Every Mass makes Calvary present.
Every Eucharist places us beside the pierced Heart of Christ.
Every time we receive Holy Communion, we come to the living source.
Mary accompanies us there.
Not drawing attention to herself.
Always leading us to Jesus.

Let us conclude with one final story:
A grandfather often took his grandson to a mountain spring.
One day the boy asked, "Grandpa, why do we always come here instead of buying bottled water?"
The old man cupped the cold water in his hands and replied,
"Because bottled water was once alive. This spring is still alive."

Our faith is never meant to become bottled religion—old memories, empty habits and lifeless routines.
Christ remains the living fountain.
Mary still stands beside Him.

Today she gently invites each one of us: "Come to my Son. Drink deeply. Trust completely. His mercy never runs dry."

May we leave this Eucharist refreshed by the living water flowing from the Heart of Christ, and, like Mary, help others discover the only Fountain of Salvation. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

United with Mary, who stood beside the fountain of our salvation, let us confidently present our prayers to our loving Father.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully proclaim Christ as the living water who alone satisfies the thirst of every human heart, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that they may work for justice, reconciliation and peace, enabling all peoples to experience the life and dignity God desires for them, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For all who are spiritually searching: that through the witness of Christians and the loving intercession of Mary they may discover Christ, the true source of hope and salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that nourished by the Eucharist and strengthened by the Sacraments, we may become channels of God's healing love to our families and neighbours, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying and all our faithful departed: that Christ, the Fountain of Salvation, may strengthen the sick, comfort the dying, and welcome the deceased into the eternal joy of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, from the pierced Heart of your Son flows every grace. Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, hear the prayers we place before you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as we place these gifts upon the altar, we may also offer ourselves with Christ, the Fountain of Salvation. Through the intercession of Mary, who stood beneath the Cross, may our sacrifice be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the foot of the Cross, Jesus entrusted Mary to the beloved disciple and the beloved disciple to Mary, making us one family in faith. As God's beloved children, let us now pray with confidence in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, and graciously grant peace in our days.

As the living water flowed from the pierced side of your Son, may your mercy continue to refresh and strengthen your Church. Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, keep us steadfast in hope as we await the blessed coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
from your pierced Heart flowed the blood and water
that brought reconciliation and life to the world.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.

May your peace flow into every troubled heart, every family
and every nation, for you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, from whose pierced side flows the living water of eternal life.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb, where Christ refreshes every thirsty soul with the grace of His saving love.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, whose love is the source of every blessing, fill your hearts with the living water of His grace. Amen.

May the Son, whose pierced Heart is the Fountain of Salvation, strengthen you in faith, hope and love. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who renews the face of the earth, refresh you each day with His gifts and lead you to everlasting life. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, drawing from Christ, the Fountain of Salvation.
Like Mary, lead others to him by your faith, hope, and love.

31. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, FOUNTAIN OF SALVATION (II)

Song of Songs 4:6-7, 9, 12-15; Jn 7,37-39a

Mary leads us to Christ, the Fountain of living Water.

INTRODUCTION

A traveller crossing a dry desert came upon a tiny spring hidden beneath some rocks. He knelt, drank deeply, and filled his bottle. Years later he returned to that place, only to discover that the little spring had become a flourishing oasis where weary travellers found life. One hidden source had transformed an entire landscape. God's grace often works like that—quietly, generously, bringing life wherever it flows.

In the first reading, the Bride is praised as a sealed garden and a living fountain whose beauty and purity become a source of refreshment and delight. It reminds us that Mary, full of grace, became God's chosen garden from whom the Saviour entered the world.

In today's Gospel, Jesus invites all who thirst to come to him and drink, promising the living water of the Holy Spirit. Mary always leads us to this inexhaustible source because she herself received and welcomed the fullness of God's grace.

Today's Marian Mass honours the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Fountain of Salvation, not because she is the source of salvation herself, but because through her faithful "Yes," the Saviour came into the world, and she continually leads all people to Christ, the living water. As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to renew us with the waters of his mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you are the living water who satisfies every human thirst;
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through the loving obedience of your Mother Mary, you
brought salvation to the world; Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you pour out the Holy Spirit upon all who believe in you;
Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY

Several years ago, an elderly village woman became known for one unusual habit. Every morning before sunrise she walked nearly two kilometres carrying two empty clay jars. She filled them at a mountain spring and returned home. People wondered why she never collected rainwater or used the nearby river. Smiling, she would answer, "The river changes with every season, but the spring never fails." During one terrible drought, the river dried up completely, but the hidden spring continued to flow. The whole village survived because of that little fountain.

Today's Marian Mass invites us to think about another unfailing fountain—not a spring of ordinary water, but the fountain of God's saving grace.

The beautiful poetry from the Song of Songs describes a garden filled with fragrance, beauty, and flowing water. The Church has long seen these words as a beautiful image of Mary. She is the "sealed garden," preserved by God's grace. She is the "fountain" because through her God gave the world Jesus Christ.

Notice something important. A fountain does not keep water for itself. Its purpose is to let water flow. That is exactly Mary's mission. She never keeps our attention fixed on herself. She always points us to her Son.

At Cana she simply says, "Do whatever he tells you."

At the foot of the Cross she silently shares in Christ's sacrifice.
At Pentecost she prays with the disciples as they receive the Holy Spirit. Everything about Mary directs us towards Jesus.

There is an old story about a tourist visiting an ancient cathedral. He admired the magnificent stained-glass windows but complained that they looked dull and colourless. The guide smiled and invited him to step inside the church. Once the sunlight shone through the glass, the windows became breathtakingly beautiful.

The guide explained, "You were looking at them from the wrong side."

Many people look at Mary from the wrong side. They imagine that devotion to Mary distracts us from Jesus. But when we stand within the Church, illuminated by the light of Christ, we discover that Mary's whole beauty comes from him and leads us back to him.

In today's Gospel Jesus stands in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles and cries out with a loud voice: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." These words speak to every human heart.

People thirst for love.

They thirst for peace.

They thirst for forgiveness.

They thirst for purpose.

Some try to satisfy this thirst with wealth, success, pleasure or power, yet they remain empty.

St Augustine confessed, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you." Only Christ satisfies the deepest thirst of the human soul.

A little boy once tried to quench his thirst by drinking seawater while playing on the beach. The more he drank, the thirstier he became. His father quickly stopped him and gave him fresh water instead.

So often we behave like that little boy. We drink from the salty waters of selfishness, ambition, resentment or endless entertainment. They promise satisfaction but leave us thirstier than before. Jesus alone gives living water. Mary teaches us how to receive it.

One of the most beautiful features of Marian devotion is that it always leads to a deeper relationship with Christ. Consider Lourdes. Millions travel there every year. They certainly honour Our Lady, but why do they leave renewed? Because Mary continually directs pilgrims towards prayer, repentance, the Eucharist, reconciliation and trust in Jesus.

The same is true at Fatima, Guadalupe, Knock, and countless Marian shrines around the world.

Mary never says, "Come to me instead of Jesus."
She always says, "Come with me to Jesus."

There is another simple story: A schoolteacher gave each student a candle during a power outage. She lit only one candle and asked every child to light theirs from it. Soon the whole classroom was filled with light. The first candle lost nothing by sharing its flame.

Mary received Christ, the Light of the World. By bringing him into the world she did not diminish his light but allowed millions to receive it.

We are called to do the same.

Every Christian should become a little fountain for others.

Parents become fountains when they patiently teach their children to pray.

Teachers become fountains when they encourage hope instead of fear.

Doctors and nurses become fountains when they care with compassion.

Priests become fountains whenever they faithfully celebrate the sacraments.

Young people become fountains whenever they choose honesty over popularity.

Our world desperately needs such people.

Pope Francis often reminded us that Christians should not become stagnant pools but living streams of God's mercy. Water that remains still eventually becomes stagnant. Water that flows remains fresh.

The Holy Spirit wants to flow through us into our families, workplaces and communities.

Mary shows us how.

She remained humble.

She listened.

She believed.

She served.

She stood faithfully beneath the Cross.

She prayed with the Church.

Because she remained open to God's grace, she became a fountain through whom salvation entered history.

There is a touching story about Mother Teresa. A volunteer once asked her how she continued serving thousands of suffering people without becoming discouraged. She answered, "Every morning I spend time with Jesus. Otherwise I would have nothing to give."

That is the secret.

No one can become a fountain unless he first drinks from the source. We cannot give forgiveness unless we have received forgiveness. We cannot give peace unless we have received Christ's peace. We cannot share hope unless our own hearts have been renewed. Mary teaches us first to receive, then to give.

Let me conclude with another story: A grandfather took his granddaughter hiking in the mountains. They reached a crystal-clear spring bubbling from beneath a rock. The little girl asked, "Grandpa, where does all this water come from?"

He smiled and replied, "No one sees where it begins deep inside the mountain, but everyone enjoys its freshness."

Years later, after her grandfather had died, she remembered those words whenever she prayed before a statue of Our Lady.

Mary is like that hidden spring. She quietly leads us, not to herself, but to the infinite source hidden within her Son, Jesus Christ. Whoever comes to him will never thirst in vain. And whoever learns from Mary to drink deeply of his grace will become, in turn, a living fountain bringing hope, peace and salvation to a thirsty world. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ, the living water who satisfies every human thirst, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that, inspired by the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she may faithfully lead all people to Christ, the true Fountain of Salvation, we pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may seek justice, protect the dignity of every person, and work tirelessly to bring peace and reconciliation among nations, we pray to the Lord.
3. For all who thirst for meaning, hope, forgiveness, and love: that they may discover in Jesus the living water that alone satisfies every human heart, we pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that, nourished by God's Word and the Eucharist, we may become living fountains of kindness, compassion, and faith for those around us, we pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the lonely, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may comfort them with his healing grace, strengthen those who care for them, and welcome the deceased into the everlasting joy of heaven, we pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, hear the prayers we offer through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. May we always drink from the living water of Christ and faithfully share his life with the world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts, offered in longing for Christ, the living Water, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father, who never ceases to satisfy the thirst of his children.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, refreshed by the living water of your grace
and sustained through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
we may be free from sin and safe from all distress
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you promised that streams of living water would flow
from those who believe in you.
Fill our hearts with your Holy Spirit,
wash away all division and bitterness,
and grant your peace to your Church and to the whole world.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who alone satisfies the deepest thirst of every human heart. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother of his Son, fill you with every heavenly blessing. Amen.

May God the Son, the living water and Fountain of Salvation,
strengthen you in faith and refresh you with his grace. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who filled the Virgin Mary and pours living water into believing hearts, guide you always in holiness and peace.
Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, ✠
and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you forever.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, refreshed by Christ, the living Water. Like the Blessed Virgin Mary, lead others to the Fountain of Salvation.

**32. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
MOTHER AND TEACHER IN THE SPIRIT (A)**

Prov 8:17-21, 34-35; Jn 12:46-50

With Mary, the Spirit forms faithful disciples

INTRODUCTION

A teacher once placed a candle in the middle of a dark classroom. Without saying a word, she lit it. Then she invited each student to light a small candle from the first one. Soon the entire room was filled with light. "Knowledge," she said, "is meant to be shared, not kept." Every true teacher leads others from darkness into light.

In the first reading, Divine Wisdom invites those who seek her to find life and favour from the Lord. Those who patiently listen and learn from God's wisdom discover lasting riches that the world cannot give.

In today's Gospel, Jesus declares that He is the light sent by the Father, and that whoever accepts His word receives eternal life. Christ is both the Teacher and the Truth who leads humanity to the Father.

Today we honour Mary as Mother and Teacher in the Spirit. Filled with the Holy Spirit from the Annunciation and constantly attentive to God's word, Mary teaches us not merely by her words but by the witness of her life.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge the times we have failed to listen to God's teaching and ask for His mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You are the eternal Wisdom of the Father, and through Mary You teach us to listen with faithful hearts. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You gave us Your Mother to accompany us as Teacher in the school of the Holy Spirit. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us to keep Your word and walk in the light that leads to eternal life. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mother and Teacher in the Spirit*

Many years ago, a tourist visited the workshop of a famous violin maker. He noticed an old woman quietly sitting in one corner, saying nothing while the craftsman carefully shaped each violin. Curious, the visitor asked, "Does she also make violins?" The craftsman smiled and replied, "No. She simply watches. She has watched for forty years. Whenever I begin to hurry or lose patience, I only need to look at her peaceful face, and I remember how beautiful careful work can be."

Sometimes the greatest teachers are not those who speak the most but those whose lives quietly reveal wisdom.

That is exactly how the Church presents Mary today—as Mother and Teacher in the Spirit.

She was not a teacher because she held authority or occupied a classroom. She taught because she allowed the Holy Spirit to shape every part of her life. She listened before she spoke. She believed before she understood. She obeyed before she saw the outcome.

The Book of Proverbs speaks about Wisdom seeking those who seek her: "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." Wisdom is not simply intelligence. It is learning to see life through God's eyes.

Mary became the most perfect disciple because she allowed divine Wisdom to dwell within her.

When the angel Gabriel appeared, Mary did not understand everything. She asked only one sincere question: "How can this be?" Once she heard God's answer, she surrendered completely: "Let it be done to me according to your word." That is the first lesson every Christian must learn.

One spiritual writer said, "God speaks constantly. The problem is not His silence but our noise."

Modern life surrounds us with endless distractions. Phones vibrate every few minutes. News, entertainment and social media fill every quiet moment. Yet the Holy Spirit usually speaks softly.

Elijah discovered God not in the earthquake or the fire but in the gentle whisper.

Mary had learned the art of silence. That silence made her heart fertile ground for God's Word.

A young seminarian once asked an elderly monk, "How can I hear God's voice?" The monk replied, "Spend less time trying to say something to God and more time allowing Him to say something to

you." That is Mary's spirituality. She treasured everything in her heart.

Today's Gospel reminds us that Jesus came as the light of the world. He also says that He has spoken only what the Father commanded Him. Jesus Himself lived in constant obedience to the Father.

Mary lived in constant obedience to the Son.

The Holy Spirit united both their hearts in perfect harmony.

This is why Mary becomes our Teacher in the Spirit.

She teaches us that discipleship begins with listening.

Saint John Paul II beautifully described Mary as the first disciple. Before she carried Jesus in her womb, she carried Him in her heart.

How different our families would become if we first listened before reacting.

A father once admitted that whenever his teenage son made mistakes, he immediately began correcting him. One evening his wife quietly told him, "Before teaching him, try hearing him." The father changed his approach. Instead of beginning with criticism, he asked questions. Their relationship slowly healed.

Listening opened the door that arguments had closed.

Mary teaches that kind of listening.

She listened to Elizabeth.

She listened to Simeon.

She listened to Jesus.

She even listened beneath the Cross when almost every hope seemed lost.

The Holy Spirit forms patient listeners before He forms convincing speakers.

Mary also teaches perseverance.

At Cana, she noticed a simple problem before anyone else noticed it.

"They have no wine."

She did not panic.

She simply brought the need to Jesus.

Then she spoke perhaps the most important advice recorded in Scripture: "Do whatever He tells you."

Those five words summarise Mary's entire mission.

She never points to herself.

She always points to Christ.

A stained-glass artist was once asked why the figures in church windows always seem to glow. He answered, "The glass has no light of its own. It shines only because the sun passes through it."

Mary is like that beautiful stained glass.

She shines because Christ shines through her.

Every Christian is called to become another window through which people can see Jesus.

Our world desperately needs such witnesses.

Many people no longer read the Bible.

But they still read Christians.

They watch how we forgive.

They watch how we speak.

They watch how we treat strangers.

They watch how we care for the weak.

Whether we realise it or not, every believer becomes a teacher. The question is: what lesson are we giving?

Saint Francis of Assisi is often remembered for saying, "Preach the Gospel at all times; when necessary, use words."

Mary preached exactly that way.

She preached by humility.

She preached by faithfulness.

She preached by service.

She preached by hope.

Even after Jesus ascended into heaven, Mary remained with the disciples in prayer until Pentecost. She did not dominate them. She accompanied them. She prayed with them. She encouraged them.

She became the Mother of the Church because she first remained the disciple of the Spirit.

Perhaps that is why Christians throughout history have instinctively turned to Mary whenever they seek deeper faith.

She always leads us into the school of the Holy Spirit.

She teaches us to pray.

She teaches us to trust.

She teaches us to persevere.

She teaches us to love Christ more deeply.

There is an old story about a little girl learning to embroider. Sitting underneath the embroidery frame, she could see only tangled threads and loose knots. It looked messy and meaningless.

Then her mother invited her to stand beside her. From above, the child saw a beautiful pattern of flowers woven together.

"So that's what you were making!"

Often, we only see the knots of our lives.

Mary teaches us to trust the hands of God who sees the whole design.

The Holy Spirit is quietly weaving grace even through our struggles.

As we celebrate this Eucharist today, let us enter Mary's school once again.

May she teach us to listen before speaking, to trust before understanding, to obey before seeing, and to love Christ above everything else.

Then, like her, we too shall become living teachers—not because of impressive words, but because the Holy Spirit has transformed our lives.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathering our prayers with the confidence of Mary, Mother and Teacher in the Spirit, let us present our needs to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that guided by the Holy Spirit, she may faithfully proclaim Christ, the Light of the world, and lead all people to eternal life. Lord, hear us.

2. For world leaders: that the Spirit of Wisdom may guide them to govern with justice, compassion and respect for the dignity of every human person. Lord, hear us.

3. For parents, teachers, catechists and all who educate the young: that, like Mary, they may teach above all by the witness of holy and loving lives. Lord, hear us.

4. For our parish community: that we may become attentive listeners to God's word and joyful disciples who reflect Christ's light in our homes and workplaces. Lord, hear us.

5. For the sick, the elderly, the dying, and for all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the suffering, comfort to those who care for them, and everlasting life to those who have gone before us in faith. Lord, hear us.

Father of all wisdom, hear the prayers we offer with confidence through the intercession of Mary, Mother and Teacher in the Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary offered herself completely to the Holy Spirit, let us now offer bread and wine, together with our lives, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Following the example of Mary, who welcomed God's will with a trusting heart, let us pray together as Jesus Himself taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from everything that keeps us from listening to Your voice.

Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Teacher in the Spirit,

strengthen us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit,
fill our hearts with hope, and keep us faithful
as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you came as the Light of the world
and entrusted your Mother to be our guide in the Spirit.
Grant us the peace that comes from listening to your word,
reconciling with one another, and walking faithfully in your truth.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, the eternal Wisdom of the Father,
who teaches us through Mary to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit.
Blessed are those who come to this heavenly banquet.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the
Mother and Teacher in the Spirit, fill you with His heavenly wisdom.
Amen.

May the Son, the Light of the world, strengthen you to remain faithful
to His word. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit guide you each day, so that, like Mary, your lives
may become a living witness to the Gospel. Amen.

And may the blessing of Almighty God,
the Father ✠ and the Son ✠ and the Holy Spirit ✠
come down upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, walking in the light of Christ. Like Mary, be faithful
disciples led by the Holy Spirit.

32. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER AND TEACHER IN THE SPIRIT (B)

Prov 8:17-21, 34-35; Jn 19:25-27

With Mary, the Spirit forms faithful disciple

INTRODUCTION

A young violin student once asked his master, "How do I become a great musician?" The teacher smiled and replied, "Stay close to me. Watch not only my hands, but also my heart." Years later, the student became an accomplished musician because he had learned not merely techniques but the spirit of his teacher. Every great disciple needs a faithful teacher.

In the first reading from Proverbs, Divine Wisdom promises life and blessing to those who seek her diligently and listen attentively to her voice.

In today's Gospel, standing beneath the Cross, Mary receives every disciple as her child and becomes the Mother who continues to teach us how to remain faithful to Christ, even in suffering.

Today we honour Mary as **Mother and Teacher in the Spirit**. Filled with the Holy Spirit from the Annunciation until Pentecost, she teaches us not merely by words but by the example of a life completely surrendered to God's will.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge the moments when we have refused to learn from the Spirit's gentle guidance and ask God's mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you gave us Mary to be our Mother beneath the Cross.
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you sent your Holy Spirit through whom Mary became the first and perfect disciple. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to become faithful learners in the school of your Spirit. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mother and Teacher in the Spirit*

A little boy once watched his mother bake bread every Saturday morning. One day he asked, "Why do you always knead the dough so patiently?" His mother answered, "Because bread cannot become soft and nourishing unless someone lovingly shapes it." Years later, after his mother's death, the boy—now a father himself—found that whenever he baked bread, he remembered not simply the recipe but the patience, gentleness and love that had shaped his own life. His mother had taught him far more than baking; she had taught him how to live.

That is exactly who Mary is for every Christian. She does not merely give us instructions. She shapes our hearts. She is truly our Mother and our Teacher in the Holy Spirit.

Today's first reading from Proverbs speaks of Divine Wisdom searching for those who seek her. "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." Wisdom is not merely information. Wisdom is learning to see life through God's eyes.

Mary is the person who welcomed that divine Wisdom perfectly.
When the angel Gabriel announced God's plan, Mary did not understand everything. She had questions. Yet she allowed the Holy Spirit to guide her. She became the living dwelling place of Divine Wisdom because she first became the humble listener.

Someone once said, "The Holy Spirit speaks most clearly to those who have learned to be silent." That describes Mary perfectly.

There is a beautiful story about a monastery where a young novice constantly asked his spiritual director many complicated questions. Finally the old monk took him outside during sunrise and simply sat beside him in silence for twenty minutes.
The young monk eventually whispered, "Why are we sitting here?"
The old monk smiled. "Because before you learn to speak about God, you must first learn to listen to Him."

Mary spent her whole life listening.
She treasured God's word.
She pondered it.
She allowed it to shape every decision.
She became the first student in the school of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel brings us to Calvary.
Every disciple except John has fled.
Everything seems lost.
Yet Mary remains standing.
Notice something remarkable.
She does not preach.
She does not complain.

She simply remains faithful.
Sometimes the greatest lesson we teach others is simply remaining faithful when life hurts.

A hospital chaplain once visited a woman suffering from terminal cancer. She spoke very little because she was weak. Yet every nurse on the ward loved visiting her room because she always smiled and whispered, "God is still good."
After her death, one nurse admitted, "She never preached to me, but she brought me back to God."

That is Mary's way.
She teaches by presence.
She teaches by fidelity.
She teaches by hope.

At the foot of the Cross Jesus says, "Woman, behold your son."
Then to John, "Behold your mother."
Jesus was not simply making arrangements for Mary's future.
He was giving His Church a Mother.

And a mother always teaches.
The greatest lessons children receive rarely come from lectures.
They come from watching.
Children learn honesty because parents live honestly.
They learn kindness because kindness is shown.
They learn forgiveness because forgiveness is practiced.
Likewise, Christians become disciples by watching Mary.
She teaches us trust.
She teaches us humility.

She teaches us courage.
She teaches us prayer.
She teaches us to wait for the Holy Spirit.

After the Ascension, where do we find Mary?
Not directing the Apostles.
Not demanding attention.
She is praying with them.
Waiting with them.
Encouraging them.
She becomes the quiet heart of the first Christian community.

One missionary bishop once remarked that whenever he entered a village where the Rosary was faithfully prayed, he noticed something different. Families forgave more easily. Children respected their parents. People cared for the elderly. He concluded, "Mary had become their teacher."

That is still true today. Whenever we pray the Rosary attentively, we are entering Mary's classroom.
She patiently repeats the mysteries of Christ until they become the pattern of our lives.
Pope St John Paul II once called the Rosary "a school of Mary."
How beautiful that expression is!
Every decade teaches us something.
The Joyful Mysteries teach obedience.
The Luminous Mysteries teach discipleship.
The Sorrowful Mysteries teach faithful love.
The Glorious Mysteries teach hope.

Mary never points to herself.
Like every good teacher, she points to Christ.
At Cana she says only one lasting instruction:
"Do whatever He tells you." That remains her entire teaching.

Our world has many experts.
It has countless opinions.
It has endless information.
But it desperately needs wisdom.

Wisdom is found wherever people allow the Holy Spirit to transform their hearts. Mary shows us that path.
She reminds us that holiness is not spectacular achievements but daily faithfulness.
Listening.
Praying.
Serving.
Trusting.
Persevering.

Perhaps today each of us should ask one simple question:
"What lesson is Mary trying to teach me today?"
Perhaps it is patience.
Perhaps forgiveness.
Perhaps deeper prayer.
Perhaps courage.
Perhaps joyful surrender to God's will.

If we become willing students, the Holy Spirit will slowly shape us into the image of Christ.

Let me conclude with another story: A famous painter was once asked why one of his masterpieces looked so lifelike. He replied, "Because I spent years studying under a master. Every brushstroke carries something I learned from him."

When people look at our lives, may they also recognise whose students we have become.

May they see the compassion of Christ.

May they see the humility of Mary.

May they recognise the quiet work of the Holy Spirit.

Then Mary, our Mother and Teacher in the Spirit, will rejoice because her greatest lesson has succeeded—not that we admire her from a distance, but that we have learned from her how to live entirely for Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered with Mary, Mother and Teacher in the Spirit, let us confidently bring our prayers before our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that, guided by the Holy Spirit and inspired by Mary's example, she may faithfully lead all people to Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that the Spirit of Wisdom may inspire them to seek peace, justice and the dignity of every human person, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that parents, like Mary, may become loving teachers of faith, hope and charity to their children, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For all who seek God's will: that they may learn from Mary's attentive listening and generous obedience to the Holy Spirit, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the lonely, those approaching death, and for all our faithful departed: that Mary, Health of the Sick and Mother of Mercy, may comfort them and lead them to the everlasting joy of Christ's Kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of Wisdom, hear the prayers we offer through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Teacher in the Spirit. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary offered herself to the Father's will through the Holy Spirit, let us offer these gifts and our lives to God, and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Taught by Jesus and encouraged by Mary, who always leads her children to the Father in the Holy Spirit, let us pray with confidence:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.

Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother and Teacher in the Spirit,
strengthen us to listen faithfully to the promptings of the Holy Spirit,
so that, sustained by your mercy, we may be free from sin,
secure from all distress, and joyful in hope
as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you gave us your peace from the wood of the Cross,
where you entrusted your Mother to your beloved disciple.
Through her motherly intercession,
fill our hearts with the peace of your Holy Spirit,
unite us in charity, and make us faithful witnesses of your Gospel.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who gives us the Bread of Life
and the Wisdom that leads to eternal life.
Happy are we who, taught by Mary and filled with the Holy Spirit,
are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the
Mother of his Son, fill you with his wisdom and love. Amen.
May God the Son, who from the Cross gave Mary to us as our
Mother and Teacher, strengthen you in faithful discipleship. Amen.
May God the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary and formed Christ
within her, guide you always in holiness and peace. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, strengthened by the Holy Spirit and inspired by Mary to
bring Christ's wisdom and love to all.

33. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL(A) *Is 9:1-3, 5-6; Jn 2:1-11* With Mary, we trust Christ's wisdom

INTRODUCTION

There is an old story about a young sailor caught in a thick fog.
Unable to see the shore, he became frightened and confused. Then
he heard the steady voice of the old lighthouse keeper through a
loudspeaker: "Do not trust your eyes. Trust my voice, and keep
sailing toward it." He obeyed, and safely reached the harbour. Good
advice, given at the right moment, saved his life.

The prophet Isaiah announces that God gives us a Child who is
called "Wonderful Counsellor," the Prince of Peace, whose wisdom
brings light into every darkness.

In today's Gospel at Cana, Mary notices the needs of others before
anyone else does. As the Mother of Good Counsel, she gives the
best advice anyone has ever received: **"Do whatever he tells you."**
Her counsel always leads us to Christ, who transforms ordinary
water into the wine of abundant grace.

As we gather to celebrate this Marian Mass, let us ask Mary to guide
our decisions and teach us to trust God's wisdom more than our
own.

Aware of the times we have ignored God's voice and followed our
own ways, let us now prepare ourselves by acknowledging our sins.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you are the Wonderful Counsellor who leads us in the paths of truth. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through your Mother you teach us to trust your word without hesitation. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you transform our weakness into joy whenever we obey your will. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary, Mother of Good Counsel: Do Whatever He Tells You*

Many years ago, a university professor gave each student a complicated puzzle. One student struggled for hours and finally sought the advice of an elderly janitor who quietly watched him working. The old man simply smiled and said, "Turn it upside down." The student laughed but tried it anyway. Suddenly every piece fell into place. Later he admitted, "I was too proud to ask, and too proud to listen." Sometimes one simple piece of good advice changes everything.

Life is full of decisions. Some are small—which road to take, what job to accept, what to say to a friend. Others shape our whole future—whom to marry, whether to forgive, how to raise children, how to remain faithful when suffering comes. Every day we need good counsel.

Today's Marian Mass presents Mary under the beautiful title Mother of Good Counsel. This title reminds us that Mary never points to herself. She always directs us toward Jesus, the source of all wisdom.

Isaiah speaks of the coming Messiah as the Wonderful Counsellor. The Hebrew word means someone whose wisdom is beyond human understanding. Jesus is not merely a teacher who offers suggestions; He is divine Wisdom Himself. Every word He speaks gives life.

Mary knows this better than anyone. That is why, at Cana, she says only seven words: "Do whatever he tells you." These words are Mary's last recorded words in the Gospel. What a beautiful legacy! She does not say, "Do whatever I tell you." She says, "Do whatever He tells you."

That is true Christian discipleship.
The wedding feast had reached a crisis.
The wine had run out.

For us today, the wine often represents joy.
Many marriages lose their joy.
Many families lose their peace.
Many priests lose their enthusiasm.
Many young people lose hope.
Many elderly people lose courage.
Mary notices these empty jars before anyone else does.

That is one of the most comforting truths about our Blessed Mother. She notices.
Before we even speak, she sees.
Before we ask, she understands.

A little boy once fell while learning to ride his bicycle. Before he could cry, his mother was already running toward him. Later he said, "I didn't even call her. She just knew." That is motherhood.

Mary notices our hidden tears, silent disappointments and secret fears. Yet she does something remarkable.
She does not solve the problem herself.
She brings it to Jesus.

That is exactly what every mother should do.
That is exactly what every Christian should do.

Another beautiful lesson appears in today's Gospel.
Jesus tells the servants to fill six enormous stone jars with water.
Imagine what they must have thought. "We need wine, not water!"

God's instructions sometimes seem strange.
Naaman was told to wash seven times in the Jordan.
Noah was told to build an ark without seeing rain.
Abraham was told to leave everything.
Peter was told to lower the nets after catching nothing all night.
The servants at Cana obeyed.
And because they obeyed, the miracle happened.
Miracles begin where obedience begins.

A missionary once visited a poor village where people prayed daily for rain. On the appointed day only one little girl came carrying an umbrella. She alone truly expected God to answer. Faith listens before it understands. Mary invites us into that kind of faith.

There is another reason this Gospel is so encouraging.

Jesus performs His first public miracle not in the Temple, not in Jerusalem, not before kings, but at an ordinary family wedding. God enters ordinary life.

He blesses kitchens, dining tables, workplaces and family conversations. Holiness is not found only in monasteries. It grows wherever Christ is welcomed.

Saint John Bosco once said that holiness consists in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. Mary teaches exactly that.
She was never famous in worldly terms.
She spent most of her life cooking, cleaning, praying, caring for Joseph and raising Jesus.
Yet the greatest woman in history lived an ordinary life with extraordinary love.

Good counsel often comes through ordinary people.
Many of us remember a teacher who encouraged us, a grandparent who gave wise advice, or a priest who helped us during a difficult time. God speaks through people who listen to Him.

That is why parents have such an important mission.
Children today receive thousands of voices through social media, television and the internet.
But they still long for one trustworthy voice at home.
The greatest advice parents can give is not merely with words but by example. Children learn prayer by seeing parents pray.
They learn forgiveness by watching forgiveness.
They learn generosity by witnessing generosity. Mary teaches every parent to say through their lives: "Do whatever Jesus tells you."

Pope Francis once remarked that Mary is not the centre of our faith but the Mother who constantly leads us to the centre, which is Christ. Every Marian devotion should end there.
Every Rosary should end there.
Every pilgrimage should end there.
Every prayer to Mary should lead us closer to Jesus.
That is why she is truly the Mother of Good Counsel.

Finally, today's Gospel reminds us that Jesus transforms.
The servants filled the jars with ordinary water.
Jesus gave back extraordinary wine.
We offer Him our ordinary lives. He returns holiness.
We offer Him our weaknesses. He gives strength.
We offer Him our fears. He gives peace.
We offer Him our sins. He gives mercy.

One elderly woman kept a small framed card beside her bed.
It simply read: "God has never failed me."
Visitors often asked why she kept it there.
She would smile and reply, "I have forgotten many things in old age, but I never want to forget that." That is Mary's lesson today.

When life becomes confusing, when we no longer know which road to take, when our jars seem empty and our hearts discouraged, we need only remember the greatest advice ever given: "Do whatever He tells you."

If we listen to Jesus with Mary's trusting heart, He will once again transform the ordinary water of our lives into the new wine of joy, hope and eternal life. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ, the Wonderful Counsellor, and encouraged by the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, let us present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that Pope N., bishops, priests, deacons and all the faithful may always listen attentively to Christ and courageously proclaim his saving wisdom to the world. Lord, hear our prayer.
2. For leaders of nations: that they may seek God's wisdom above personal ambition and govern with justice, compassion and a sincere concern for peace. Lord, hear our prayer.
3. For families, married couples and young people: that Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, may guide them in every important decision and strengthen them to remain faithful to Christ.
Lord, hear our prayer.
4. For all who are confused, discouraged or searching for direction: that they may discover in God's word and in the Church trustworthy guidance leading them to hope and peace.
Lord, hear our prayer.
5. For the sick, the lonely, those suffering from anxiety or grief, and for all our departed brothers and sisters: that Christ may heal the living, comfort those who care for them, and welcome the faithful departed into the everlasting wedding feast of heaven.
Lord, hear our prayer.

Father of infinite wisdom, hear the prayers we make through Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, let us offer our lives with these gifts, and pray, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At Cana, Mary directed the servants to trust the words of her Son. Following her example and obedient to Christ's command, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every confusion, fear and wrong decision. Through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, grant us the wisdom to recognise your will, the courage to follow it faithfully, and the peace that comes from trusting your loving providence, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the Wonderful Counsellor and Prince of Peace.
Through the maternal guidance of Mary,
teach us to follow your voice in all things.
Grant peace to our hearts, our families,
your Church and the whole world,
so that walking in your wisdom
we may become instruments of your peace,
where you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary
and fills every empty heart with the new wine of his grace.
Happy are those who follow the counsel of Mary
and come to the banquet of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, whose eternal wisdom guides all creation, bless and keep you. Amen.

May the Son, the Wonderful Counsellor, strengthen you to do his holy will each day. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit enlighten your minds and fill your hearts with peace through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, listening to Christ and following the counsel of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel.

33. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL(B)

Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4; Jn 2:1-11

With Mary, we trust God's wisdom and timing.

INTRODUCTION

A mountain guide once led a group through a thick morning fog. The hikers could barely see a few metres ahead, but the guide confidently walked on. "How do you know the way?" someone asked. Smiling, he replied, "I cannot always see the destination, but I know the One who marked the path." Good advice often comes from someone who knows the way better than we do.

In the first reading, Mary remains with the disciples in prayer, patiently preparing them to receive the Holy Spirit who will guide the Church into all truth.

In today's Gospel, at Cana, Mary offers the best counsel ever given: "Do whatever he tells you." As Mother of Good Counsel, she teaches us that true wisdom always leads us to Jesus and to trusting his perfect timing.

Mary's counsel is more than wise advice; it is a way of life. She teaches us to listen before we act, to trust when we do not understand, and to lead others gently to Christ.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge the times we have ignored God's voice and ask for his mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you are the eternal Wisdom of the Father, yet we have often relied more on our own understanding than on your word. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through your Mother you continue to counsel your Church to trust and obey you, yet we have often resisted your guidance. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you poured out your Holy Spirit upon the praying Church gathered around Mary; strengthen us to walk faithfully in your ways. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *"Do Whatever He Tells You"*

A little boy was assembling a complicated model airplane. After nearly an hour, nothing seemed to fit. Frustrated, he threw the instructions aside and tried to build it his own way. Soon the pieces were scattered across the floor. His grandfather quietly picked up the instruction booklet and said, "The person who designed it also wrote the instructions. Trust the designer." Within minutes the model began taking shape.

Life often feels like that unfinished model. We try to solve problems by ourselves, following our own ideas, only to become confused and discouraged. Today's Marian Mass presents Mary as Mother of Good Counsel, the mother who gently hands us life's instruction book with one simple sentence: "Do whatever he tells you."

Those words spoken at Cana are the last recorded words of Mary in the Bible. It is remarkable that her final message is not about herself but about her Son. She does not say, "Listen to me," but "Listen to

him." That is why she is the Mother of Good Counsel. Her wisdom never draws attention to herself; it always directs us to Christ.

In today's Gospel, the wedding celebration is in danger of ending in embarrassment because the wine has run out. Before anyone else notices the problem, Mary notices it. Mothers have that gift. They often recognise our needs before we express them.

A young university student once admitted that during his exams his mother would quietly leave a sandwich and a cup of tea outside his room every evening. She never interrupted him or demanded thanks. Years later he said, "My mother always seemed to know what I needed before I knew it myself." Mary's maternal heart works in much the same way. She notices the hidden emptiness in our lives.

Yet Mary's words to Jesus sound surprising. Jesus replies, "My hour has not yet come." It almost seems as though he refuses.

But Mary does not argue.

She does not panic.

She simply tells the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

That is faith.

Good counsel is not merely giving advice. Good counsel inspires trust.

Many people today are surrounded by advice. Social media, podcasts, experts and influencers constantly tell us how to live, invest, eat, work and raise children. Yet despite all this information, many remain uncertain and anxious because information is not the same as wisdom.

Wisdom begins by listening to God. The Book of Proverbs says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight." Mary lived that wisdom from the Annunciation until Calvary.

The first reading shows another beautiful picture. After Jesus' Ascension, the apostles gather in the Upper Room with Mary. Imagine the uncertainty they must have felt. Their Master had ascended into heaven. The Church had not yet begun its mission. They did not know what lay ahead.

What does Mary do?

She does not give speeches.

She does not take control.

She prays.

Sometimes the best counsel we can give others is not immediate answers but faithful prayer.

There is a story of St John XXIII. A bishop once arrived at the Vatican carrying many complicated problems. He expected long discussions and detailed solutions. Instead, Pope John smiled and said, "First, let us pray." After several minutes of silent prayer, the Pope simply said, "Now we shall see things differently." The bishop later admitted that many of the problems became clearer after they had first listened to God. Prayer changes perspective.

That is exactly what happened in the Upper Room. Mary's presence helped prepare the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit whom Scripture calls the Counsellor or Advocate. Good counsel always opens hearts to the Holy Spirit.

The miracle at Cana also teaches another lesson. Jesus asks the servants to fill six large jars with water. Imagine how unreasonable that must have sounded. They needed wine, not water. Yet the servants obeyed. And their obedience became the doorway to the miracle.

God's guidance sometimes seems ordinary or even confusing. Forgive someone. Be patient. Pray more. Speak kindly. Tell the truth. Rest on Sunday. These instructions may appear simple, but when we obey them, God transforms the ordinary water of our daily lives into the joyful wine of grace.

A missionary once told of a village suffering from severe drought. An elderly woman faithfully watered a tiny tree every evening with the little water she could spare. People laughed at her. Months later the rains returned, and that small tree became the only one that survived because its roots had remained alive. Small acts of faithful obedience often prepare blessings we cannot yet see.

Mary understood that.
She trusted God's timing.
She trusted God's methods.
She trusted God's Son.
That is why the Church honours her as Mother of Good Counsel.

She continues to guide families making difficult decisions, young people discerning their vocation, parents worried about their children, priests facing challenges, and elderly people wondering what tomorrow will bring. Her counsel remains beautifully simple. Listen. Trust. Obey.

The Holy Spirit, whom the disciples received at Pentecost, continues to guide the Church today. But we must make room for his voice amid the noise of the world.

Perhaps before making an important decision we should first ask, "Have I prayed? Have I listened? Have I asked what Jesus wants?" Only then can we truly say that we are seeking good counsel.

The famous scientist Louis Pasteur once remarked, "Chance favours the prepared mind." The Gospel would add: grace favours the listening heart. Mary formed such a heart. May she form ours as well.

Let me conclude with another story: A sailor once crossed dangerous seas guided only by the stars. One night thick clouds covered the sky, and he became anxious. His elderly captain remained calm. "How can you still know the way?" the sailor asked. The captain replied, "The stars have not disappeared. I simply know where they are."

Life sometimes surrounds us with clouds of uncertainty—family worries, illness, difficult choices or unexpected disappointments. At those moments Mary, Mother of Good Counsel, gently points beyond herself to Jesus and quietly repeats the words that have guided countless saints throughout history: "Do whatever he tells you." If we follow that counsel, we shall never lose our way.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathering around Christ with Mary, the Mother of Good Counsel, let us present our prayers to our loving Father.

1. For Pope N., our bishops, priests and all who lead the Church, that guided by the Holy Spirit they may always offer wise counsel and faithfully lead God's people to Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For leaders of nations, educators, judges and all who advise others, that they may seek truth, justice and the common good rather than personal advantage, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families, engaged couples, parents and young people making important decisions, that through Mary's intercession they may always discern and follow God's will, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community, that we may become people of prayer, attentive to the voice of the Holy Spirit and ready to do whatever Christ asks of us, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, especially those who feel confused, anxious or discouraged, and for all who have died, that the Lord may grant them healing, peace and everlasting life, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of wisdom, hear the prayers we bring before you through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary directed the servants to Christ, let us offer ourselves with these gifts and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered with Mary, who prayed with the apostles while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father in the words our Saviour himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and grant us the wisdom to seek your will in every decision we make.
Through the loving counsel of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
strengthen our trust in your providence,
keep us steadfast in hope
as we await the blessed coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you transformed water into wine and filled hearts with joy.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church.
Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Good Counsel,
grant us the peace that comes from trusting your word,
and graciously unite us in charity and hope.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who alone has the words of eternal life.
Happy are those who, following the counsel of Mary, come in faith
to the banquet of the Lord.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, whose wisdom guides the universe, bless you and
keep you steadfast in his love. Amen.

May the Son, whom Mary always points us to with her loving
counsel, fill your hearts with trust and joyful obedience. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, the eternal Counsellor, enlighten your minds,
strengthen your hearts, and lead you safely along the path of
holiness. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go forth in peace,
listening to the voice of Christ,
following the loving counsel of Mary,
and bearing the joy of the Gospel to all.

34. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, CAUSE OF OUR JOY (A)

Zech 2:14-17; Lk 1:39-47

With Mary, Christ's presence becomes our joy.

INTRODUCTION

A little girl once asked her grandmother, "Why do you always smile
when you pray?" The grandmother replied, "Because every time I
pray, I remember that God is with me. When you know that God is
near, your heart cannot help but rejoice." Joy does not depend on
having an easy life; it comes from knowing that the Lord walks with
us.

In today's first reading, the prophet Zechariah invites the Daughter of
Zion to sing with joy because God Himself comes to dwell among His
people. God's presence is always the deepest reason for rejoicing.

In today's Gospel, Mary visits Elizabeth, and the joy of God's
presence overflows into both women. Elizabeth rejoices, the unborn
John leaps for joy, and Mary responds with her beautiful hymn of
praise, the Magnificat.

Today we honour Mary under the title **Cause of Our Joy**. She is the
Cause of Our Joy because she brought Jesus, the source of all joy,
into the world and continues to lead every believer to Him.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask
pardon for the times we have allowed fear, sadness and sin to rob us
of the joy of the Gospel.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you came to dwell among your people and fill every heart with lasting joy. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through the loving faith of your Mother you brought joy to Elizabeth and to all who welcome you. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to become bearers of your joy to a world burdened by fear and discouragement. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *True Joy Begins with Christ*

There is an old story about two stonecutters working on the same cathedral. A traveller asked the first man, "What are you doing?" He answered sadly, "I'm cutting stones all day." The traveller asked the second man the same question. With a radiant smile he replied, "I am helping to build a house where people will meet God." Both were doing exactly the same work, but one had only labour while the other had joy. Joy comes not from what we do, but from knowing why we do it.

Today's Marian celebration reminds us that Mary is rightly called Cause of Our Joy because she teaches us where true joy is found.

Many people confuse happiness with joy. Happiness often depends on circumstances. If everything goes well, we are happy. If difficulties arise, happiness quickly disappears. Christian joy is different. It is rooted not in circumstances but in God's presence.

The first reading from Zechariah is full of excitement. The prophet tells Jerusalem to sing because God Himself is coming to dwell among His people. Imagine hearing those words after years of fear

and disappointment. The greatest gift God could give was not riches or power but Himself.

That promise reaches its fulfilment in today's Gospel. God literally comes to dwell among His people—but not first in a palace or temple. He comes hidden within the womb of a humble young woman called Mary.

Notice what happens when Mary enters Elizabeth's house. No miracles are performed. No sermon is preached. Mary simply arrives carrying Jesus.

Immediately everything changes.

Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist leaps for joy.

Mary herself bursts into the Magnificat.

Where Jesus is present, joy follows.

A missionary once visited a poor village where families lived in simple bamboo huts. Yet he noticed that people smiled constantly. Curious, he asked an elderly woman, "Why are you so joyful when you have so little?" She answered, "Father, we may not have much food, but every evening Jesus visits our home when we pray together." That woman understood something the world often forgets. Joy grows wherever Christ is welcomed.

Mary teaches us another important lesson. Joy increases when it is shared. The Angel had announced wonderful news to Mary. She could easily have stayed at home, quietly enjoying her own blessing. Instead, she travelled a long and difficult journey through the hill country to help Elizabeth. Real joy never becomes selfish.

A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle. In the same way, joy grows when it is given away.

There is a lovely story about St Teresa of Calcutta. One day a volunteer complained, "Mother, I cannot smile today because I am tired." Mother Teresa gently answered, "Then smile for Jesus. Sometimes that is the most beautiful smile." Her joy was never superficial. She faced suffering every day, yet she carried peace because Christ lived at the centre of her life.

The Magnificat reveals the secret of Mary's joy.
She never speaks about her own achievements.
She speaks only about what God has done.
"My soul magnifies the Lord."
"My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."
"The Mighty One has done great things for me."

Joy begins when we stop making ourselves the centre and allow God to take His rightful place.

Modern life often steals joy.
People compare themselves constantly.
Social media encourages endless competition.
Many spend more time counting what they lack than thanking God for what they have received.
Someone wisely said, "Gratitude turns what we have into enough."
Mary's Magnificat is really a great prayer of gratitude.

Every family could learn from it. Imagine ending each day by asking not, "What went wrong today?" but "For what can I thank God today?" That simple habit changes hearts.

Pope Francis often reminded us that a Christian should never look like someone returning from a funeral. The Gospel is Good News. Even amid suffering we have reason for hope because Christ has conquered sin and death.

This does not mean Christians never cry.
Mary herself would stand beneath the Cross.
The same Mother who sang the Magnificat would later experience unimaginable sorrow.
Yet even beneath the Cross she never lost hope because she never lost Jesus.

That is why she remains the Cause of Our Joy. Not because she removed suffering, but because she remained faithful through suffering.

There is a touching story from the Second World War. A priest imprisoned in a concentration camp secretly celebrated Mass with a tiny piece of bread and a few drops of wine. One prisoner later recalled, "For those few minutes we forgot the barbed wire because heaven had entered the camp." Nothing around them had changed, yet everything had changed because Christ was present.

That is Christian joy.
It survives illness.
It survives poverty.
It survives disappointment.
It even survives death.

Today our world desperately needs joyful Christians.
Not noisy Christians.
Not superficial Christians.
But peaceful, hopeful people whose lives quietly proclaim, "The Lord is with us."

Every Christian should become another Mary.
Like Mary we carry Christ within us after Holy Communion.
Like Mary we visit others with kindness.
Like Mary we encourage those who are discouraged.
Like Mary we sing God's praises instead of our complaints.

Then our homes become places where Christ is welcomed, where children learn gratitude, where neighbours experience kindness, and where those who suffer discover hope.

An elderly violin maker once completed his final instrument after more than sixty years of work. Before giving it away he played one last hymn upon it. A young apprentice asked him, "Master, why are you smiling with tears in your eyes?" The old craftsman answered, "Because every violin I made was meant to create music long after my hands were gone."

Mary's life was like that violin. She offered herself completely to God so that the music of salvation could reach every generation. Even today she continues to bring people to Jesus. Whenever we welcome Christ as she did, our hearts too begin to sing. That is why, yesterday, today and forever, the Church lovingly calls her the Blessed Virgin Mary, Cause of Our Joy.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the loving care of God, who fills his people with joy through the gift of his Son, let us bring our prayers before him.

1. For the Church: that, following the example of Mary, she may bring Christ joyfully to every nation and become a sign of hope for all people. Lord, hear our prayer.
2. For world leaders: that they may work for justice, reconciliation and peace, enabling all peoples to live with dignity and hope. Lord, hear our prayer.
3. For families and communities: that they may discover lasting joy not in possessions but in faith, prayer and loving service of one another. Lord, hear our prayer.
4. For those who are discouraged, lonely, unemployed or burdened by anxiety: that the Lord may renew their hope and send people who will bring them comfort and encouragement. Lord, hear our prayer.
5. For the sick, especially those suffering in mind, body or spirit, and for all our departed brothers and sisters: that Christ, the source of everlasting joy, may grant healing to the living and eternal happiness to the faithful departed. Lord, hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Cause of Our Joy, hear these prayers we offer with confidence. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

With grateful hearts, let us offer these gifts to God through the intercession of Mary, Cause of Our Joy, and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by his divine teaching, let us pray with joyful confidence to our heavenly Father, whose love makes us his beloved children.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Free us from discouragement
and all that robs us of the joy of the Gospel.
Strengthened by the example and intercession
of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Cause of Our Joy,
may we await with hope the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you filled the hearts of Mary and Elizabeth
with the joy of your presence.
Look not on our sins but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her the peace and unity of your kingdom.
May your joy dwell in our hearts
and make us instruments of peace in our homes and in the world.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who is the true source of every joy and every blessing.
Happy are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the joyful dwelling place of his Son, fill your hearts with lasting peace and hope. Amen.

May the Son, born of the Virgin Mary, remain always with you and make you joyful witnesses of his Gospel. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who filled Mary and Elizabeth with holy joy, strengthen you to bring Christ to everyone you meet. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your lives, and like Mary, bring the joy of Christ to everyone you meet.

34. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, CAUSE OF OUR JOY (B)

Is 61:9-11; Lk 15:9-12

Mary Leads Us to Lasting Joy

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once asked his grandmother, "Why do you smile every time you pray?" She replied, "Because when I pray, I remember that God has never abandoned me." Years later, the boy said that he never forgot that answer. He discovered that true joy is not the absence of problems but the certainty that God is with us.

In the first reading, Isaiah rejoices because God clothes his people with salvation and makes them flourish like a beautiful garden before all nations.

In the Gospel, Elizabeth's unborn child leaps for joy at the presence of Jesus in Mary's womb, reminding us that the greatest joy is always found wherever Christ is present.

Today we honour Mary as the Cause of Our Joy. She is not the source of joy herself, but she brought Jesus—the true source of all joy—into the world, and she continues to lead every disciple to him.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for the times we have allowed fear, sin and discouragement to rob us of the joy of the Gospel.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you came that your joy might remain in us:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you filled Mary's heart with the joy of your saving presence: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to rejoice always because you are with your people: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: "*The Joy That Cannot Be Taken Away*"

A violin maker once displayed two violins. One was beautifully polished but had never been played. The other was old, scratched, and worn from years of concerts. When a famous musician performed on both, the audience was astonished. The old violin produced the richer, warmer sound. Afterwards someone asked why. The musician smiled and replied, "It is because this violin has learned to sing through every season."

The happiest people are often not those who have had the easiest lives but those who have learned to sing through every season because God has been faithful. Today's Marian celebration reminds us that authentic Christian joy is exactly that. It is not superficial excitement. It is the deep happiness that comes from knowing that God is with us.

Isaiah bursts into joyful praise. "I greatly rejoice in the Lord." Notice why he rejoices. Not because everything is perfect. Not because all problems have disappeared. He rejoices because God has clothed him with salvation.

Christian joy always begins with God, not with circumstances. Many people today believe joy depends upon possessions, success or comfort. Yet experience proves otherwise.

A journalist once interviewed several lottery winners years after they became millionaires. Surprisingly, many admitted that after the first excitement faded, their lives became just as empty as before. Money had changed their circumstances but not their hearts. Joy cannot be bought. Isaiah knew this centuries ago.

The Responsorial Psalm gives us Mary's own song, the Magnificat. "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." Mary is called **Cause of Our Joy** because she carried Jesus to the world. Notice something beautiful. Mary's first action after receiving Jesus was not to keep him for herself. She hurried to Elizabeth.

Real joy is never selfish. It always wants to be shared. The Gospel illustrates this wonderfully. The unborn John the Baptist leaps for joy inside Elizabeth's womb. Imagine that scene.

No words. No miracles. No sermons. Only the silent presence of Jesus carried by Mary. Even before birth, John recognizes the Saviour. The greatest joy comes simply from Christ's presence.

There is a lovely story about St Philip Neri, often called the saint of joy. People constantly found him smiling. Someone asked him why he was always cheerful. He answered, "Because heaven is our home, and we are only travelling." His joy came from hope.

The Christian never walks toward darkness but toward eternal life. Mary lived with that hope every day. Yet Mary's life was far from easy. She experienced misunderstanding. She fled into Egypt. She searched anxiously for Jesus. She stood beneath the Cross. Still, the Church calls her Cause of Our Joy. Why? Because joy is deeper than suffering. The Cross did not destroy Mary's joy because she trusted God's promises.

Pope Francis once observed that Christians sometimes look as though they have just returned from a funeral instead of celebrating the Resurrection. His point was simple. The Gospel should make a visible difference.

Joy becomes a form of evangelization. People are attracted to joyful believers.

There is another simple story: A nurse in a hospital became known for greeting every patient with warmth and hope. One elderly patient finally asked her, "How can you smile every day in this place?" She answered, "Because every bed holds someone loved by God." That answer transformed the atmosphere of the ward.

Joy changes environments. Mary entered Elizabeth's house, and joy filled it. We are called to do the same. Our homes should become places where Christ is welcomed.

Our parishes should become places where people leave encouraged.
Our workplaces should become places where kindness overcomes bitterness.
Every Christian is invited to carry Christ just as Mary did.
Sometimes we lose our joy because we focus too much on ourselves.

A little girl once carried her baby brother on her back while climbing a steep hill. Someone said, "That must be a heavy load."
She replied, "He isn't a load. He's my brother."
Love changed the burden.

The same happens with faith. When Christ becomes the centre of our lives, even sacrifices take on new meaning.
Mary teaches us that.
Her "yes" brought responsibilities beyond imagination.
Yet it also brought immeasurable joy.
Joy grows wherever God is welcomed.
That is why today's title is so meaningful.

Mary does not replace Jesus.
She always points to him.
She is the Cause of Our Joy because she gave the world its Saviour and continues to lead us to him.

Whenever we pray the Rosary, whenever we imitate her faith, whenever we say "yes" to God's will, Christ enters our lives more deeply. And where Christ is present, joy follows.

Perhaps some of us arrive today carrying worries about family, health, work or the future.
Mary understands every one of those concerns.
She invites us not to ignore our crosses but to carry them with confidence because Christ walks beside us.

Joy is not pretending everything is fine.
Joy is knowing that God remains faithful even when life is difficult.

Let us therefore leave this Eucharist determined to become people who spread hope instead of discouragement, gratitude instead of complaint, forgiveness instead of resentment and confidence instead of fear.
Then our families, our parish and everyone we meet will discover something of Mary's mission. They will encounter Christ.

An elderly parish priest once retired after more than fifty years of ministry. At his farewell celebration someone asked him, "Father, after all these years, what have you learned?"

He smiled and answered, "Wherever people welcomed Jesus, I found joy. Wherever they forgot him, I found sadness."

That simple answer beautifully summarizes today's celebration.

May Mary, the Blessed Virgin, Cause of Our Joy, carry each one of us ever closer to her Son, so that the joy we receive at this Eucharist may remain in our hearts, shine through our lives, and one day become the everlasting joy of heaven. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered with Mary, the Cause of Our Joy, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that she may always proclaim the joy of the Gospel and lead all people to encounter Christ with renewed hope.
Lord, hear our prayer.
2. For world leaders: that they may govern with wisdom, justice and compassion, bringing hope and peace to those who suffer.
Lord, hear our prayer.
3. For families: that, inspired by Mary's generous faith, they may become homes filled with love, forgiveness, prayer and lasting joy.
Lord, hear our prayer.
4. For those who have lost hope through loneliness, anxiety, poverty or disappointment: that the presence of Christ may renew their hearts with courage and peace.
Lord, hear our prayer.
5. For the sick, the elderly, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the afflicted, comfort to their families, and everlasting joy to those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith.
Lord, hear our prayer.

Father of everlasting joy, hear these prayers which we offer through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Cause of Our Joy. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts, offered with joyful hearts through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by his divine teaching, let us pray with joyful confidence to the Father who has made us his beloved children.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Through the loving intercession of Mary, Cause of Our Joy,
strengthen us in hope, that, sustained by your mercy,
we may remain free from sin and safe from all distress
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you filled Mary's heart with the joy of your saving presence
and brought peace to all who welcomed you.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who is the true source of our joy.
Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to rejoice in his saving love, fill your hearts with lasting joy. Amen.

May the Son, born of the Virgin Mary, remain always with you and make you faithful witnesses of the joy of the Gospel. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary and filled her with grace, strengthen you to bring Christ's joy to everyone you meet. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives filled with the joy of Christ.

35. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, PILLAR OF FAITH

Judith 13:14, 17-20; Lk 11:27-28

Hearing God's Word, Living by Faith

INTRODUCTION

A traveller once crossed an old mountain bridge that had stood for more than two hundred years. Looking at its ancient stone pillars, he asked the guide, "How has this bridge survived so many storms?" The guide smiled and replied, "The secret is not in the bridge itself but in the pillars that carry it." Throughout history, God's people have also needed pillars who quietly supported the faith of others.

In today's first reading, the people praise Judith because her courageous faith became a source of strength and hope for the entire nation. Her trust in God made her a pillar that upheld God's people in a time of danger.

In today's Gospel, a woman praises the mother of Jesus, but Jesus reminds us that the greatest blessing belongs to those who hear the Word of God and keep it. Mary is truly blessed because she listened, believed, and remained faithful throughout her life.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as the **Pillar of Faith**. She stood firm beneath the Cross when many others fled and continues to strengthen the faith of the Church.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge the times when our own faith has been weak and ask the Lord for mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you call us to hear your word and keep it faithfully:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us Mary as the Pillar of Faith to strengthen
your Church: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you remain faithful even when our faith grows weak:
Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary: The Pillar That Never Crumbled*

Many years ago, after a violent earthquake, rescue workers entered an old cathedral expecting to find only ruins. The roof had partially collapsed, stained-glass windows were shattered, and walls were cracked. Yet in the middle of the church stood four massive stone pillars that had hardly moved. One engineer quietly remarked, "Because these pillars remained standing, the whole building was saved."

Life often feels like that earthquake. Families experience illness. Young people struggle with uncertainty. Parents worry about their children. Society questions faith. Many people wonder where they can find something that never collapses.

Today's Mass gives us the answer. We celebrate Mary as the Pillar of Faith. A pillar does not attract attention to itself. It simply stands, carries weight, and supports others. That is exactly what Mary did throughout her life.

The first reading introduces another remarkable woman—Judith. Israel was terrified by a powerful enemy. Instead of giving in to fear,

Judith trusted completely in God. Through her courage, God delivered his people. That is why the people exclaimed, "You are the glory of Jerusalem... the highest honour of our race."

The Church sees Judith as a beautiful image of Mary. Both women trusted God when everything seemed impossible. Both became instruments through whom God defeated evil. Both gave hope to God's people.

Yet Mary's faith reaches even higher because through her "Yes," the Saviour himself entered the world.

Someone once asked Mother Teresa how she managed to continue working among the dying despite enormous difficulties. She answered simply, "I am not called to be successful. I am called to be faithful." That is Mary's secret too.

The Gospel contains a surprising moment. A woman in the crowd enthusiastically cries out, "Blessed is the womb that bore you!" Jesus does not reject this praise of his mother. Instead, he explains *why* Mary is truly blessed. "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

Mary's greatness lies not only in giving birth to Jesus but in believing every word God spoke.

When the angel announced God's plan, she believed.

When Joseph could not understand, she trusted.

When Jesus remained behind in the Temple, she pondered.

When people rejected Jesus, she stayed beside him.

When he died on Calvary, she never abandoned him.

When the disciples were frightened after the Resurrection, she prayed with them.

Her entire life was one uninterrupted act of faith.

There is an old story about a lighthouse keeper. Every evening he climbed hundreds of steps carrying fuel for the great lamp.

A neighbour asked, "Doesn't it become tiring to climb those stairs every day?"

The keeper answered, "Perhaps. But ships depend on that light. If I fail, others may perish."

Mary understood that faith is never merely personal. Our faith always becomes light for someone else.

Parents become pillars for children.

Grandparents become pillars for grandchildren.

Teachers become pillars for students.

Priests become pillars for their communities.

Religious become pillars through prayer.

Every Christian is called to become someone upon whom another person can safely lean. Many of us remember someone whose faith strengthened our own.

Perhaps it was a grandmother who prayed the Rosary every evening.

Perhaps it was a father who never missed Sunday Mass.

Perhaps it was a parish priest who remained joyful despite suffering.

Without realising it, these ordinary believers became pillars supporting countless lives.

An elderly woman once entered a church every morning before sunrise. One day someone asked, "What do you say to God for so long?" She smiled and replied, "I don't say much. I simply let him know that I still trust him."

That simple faith may appear insignificant, yet it strengthens the whole Church more than we imagine.

Mary's faith was exactly like that.

She never preached great sermons.

She performed no public miracles.

She wrote no books.

She simply believed.

And because she believed, the Church still stands upon the witness of her faith.

Pope Benedict XVI once observed that faith is not merely accepting ideas about God but entrusting one's whole life to him. Mary did exactly that.

Sometimes we think faith means always feeling certain. It does not. Mary experienced darkness too. She did not understand every event.

She had questions.

She suffered.

She watched her innocent Son die.

Yet she continued believing.

Real faith is trusting God even when we cannot see the whole picture.

There is a beautiful African proverb: "When the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the wind."

Mary's roots reached deeply into God.
That is why no storm could uproot her.
Today's world desperately needs such pillars.
Children need adults who pray.
Young people need examples of integrity.
Marriages need faithful spouses.
Parishes need joyful believers.

The world does not need perfect Christians.
It needs steadfast Christians.

Every Rosary prayed in faith...
Every hidden act of charity...
Every quiet forgiveness...
Every faithful Sunday Eucharist...
Every patient endurance of illness...
All these become stones that strengthen the Church.

Mary never lived for herself.
Like every pillar, she carried others.
Even today she continues supporting us through her maternal
intercession.

Whenever we pray the Rosary, she quietly leads us back to Jesus.
Whenever we lose hope, she whispers the same words spoken at
Cana: "Do whatever he tells you."
She never points to herself.
She always points to Christ.

A guide once took visitors through the ruins of an ancient Roman
temple. Almost everything had disappeared except one enormous

marble column standing alone against the sky.
One tourist asked, "Why didn't this pillar fall like the others?"
The guide replied, "Because it was built on solid rock."
As the visitors walked away, one little boy looked back and quietly
said, "I want my life to be like that."

That is today's invitation.
May our lives, like Mary's, be built firmly upon Christ.
May our homes become places where faith is lived.
May others find strength because we have remained faithful.

And one day, when the storms of life have passed, may the Lord say
to each one of us what every faithful servant longs to hear:
"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your
Master." Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in God, who strengthened Mary to become the Pillar of
Faith, let us present our prayers with confidence.

1. For the Church: that, strengthened by Mary's example, she may
remain steadfast in proclaiming the Gospel amid every challenge,
we pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may build societies founded on truth,
justice, and respect for human dignity rather than fear and division,
we pray to the Lord.
3. For parents, grandparents, catechists, and all who hand on the
faith: that they may become living pillars of faith for the next
generation, we pray to the Lord.

4. For those whose faith is wavering because of suffering, disappointment, or doubt: that the Lord may strengthen them through the loving intercession of Mary, we pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that Christ, the Light of the world, may comfort the suffering, grant peace to those nearing the end of life, and welcome the departed into the joy of heaven, we pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, you made Mary a firm pillar of faith for your Church. Hear these prayers and strengthen us to follow her example through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Let us pray that, following Mary's example of faith, we may offer ourselves with these gifts; and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Mary, whose entire life was a trusting "Yes" to the Father, let us pray with confidence in the words that Jesus himself has taught us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every doubt that weakens faith and every fear that keeps us from following your will. Through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pillar of Faith, strengthen us to persevere in hope as we await the blessed coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you sustained your Mother beneath the Cross with unwavering faith and filled her heart with your peace. Grant that, strengthened by her example, we may become instruments of peace in our homes, our communities, and throughout the world. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who nourishes and strengthens all who believe in him. Happy are we who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father strengthen you in faith through the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pillar of Faith. Amen.

May the Son deepen your love for his word and keep you steadfast in hope. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit make you faithful witnesses of the Gospel and a firm support for others in faith. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, strengthened by Mary's faith to hear God's word, live it, and strengthen others in faith.

36. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF FAIREST LOVE

Sirach 24:17-21; Lk 1:26-38

True Love Begins with God

INTRODUCTION

A little girl once asked her grandmother, "How do I know if someone really loves me?" The grandmother smiled, took the child's hand, and said, "Real love is not proved by beautiful words but by beautiful sacrifices." Those simple words remained with the child throughout her life because she discovered that true love always gives itself.

In today's first reading from Sirach, Divine Wisdom is portrayed as a beautiful tree bearing sweet and abundant fruit. It reminds us that whoever remains close to God's wisdom discovers the beauty and fullness of authentic love.

In the Gospel, the Angel Gabriel invites Mary to become the Mother of the Saviour, and her humble "Let it be done to me according to your word" becomes the most beautiful act of love ever offered to God. Mary's loving obedience opens the door for Christ to enter our world.

Today we honour Mary as the Mother of Fairest Love. She teaches us that the fairest and purest love is not selfish possession but generous self-giving, rooted in God's will.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask forgiveness for every time our love has lacked generosity, patience, and fidelity.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you revealed the perfect love of the Father through your life and sacrifice. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through Mary's loving "Yes," you became one of us to bring salvation to the world. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to love God and one another with sincere and faithful hearts. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mother of Fairest Love*

A famous violin maker once crafted what became his finest instrument. When visitors admired its beauty, they asked him, "What makes this violin so extraordinary?" He answered, "It is not the wood alone, nor the varnish, nor even my skill. Every piece was carefully chosen, patiently shaped, and lovingly offered for one purpose—to produce beautiful music."

Mary's life was much like that violin. God prepared her with extraordinary grace, but what made her truly beautiful was not simply that she was chosen. It was that she freely allowed God to make beautiful music through her life.

Today's feast calls Mary Mother of Fairest Love. In a world where the word "love" is often misunderstood, Mary teaches us what true love really looks like.

Our society often identifies love with feelings, attraction, or personal happiness. Advertisements tell us that love is getting everything we desire. Social media often portrays love as perfect photographs and romantic moments.

Yet feelings change. Beauty fades. Circumstances fluctuate.
God's love does not.

The first reading from Sirach compares divine wisdom to flourishing vines, olive trees, roses, cypresses and palms. These images remind us that true love is fruitful, life-giving and enduring.

Mary became the living home of that divine wisdom.
When Gabriel arrived in Nazareth, he did not simply ask Mary to become a mother. He invited her into God's great plan of salvation. Mary could not understand everything.
She knew there would be misunderstanding.
She knew people might question her.
She knew her future would become uncertain.
Still she answered, "Let it be done to me according to your word."
That is the fairest love.

There is an old story about a young nurse working in a hospital. Every evening after finishing her shift she quietly visited an elderly woman suffering from Alzheimer's disease. The woman no longer recognised anyone—not even her own children.
A colleague asked, "Why do you keep visiting her? She doesn't even know who you are."
The nurse smiled. "She may not know me, but I know who she is."
That is love.

Love continues even when nothing is received in return.
Mary loved like that.
She loved Jesus in Bethlehem.
She loved Him in Nazareth.

She loved Him when crowds admired Him.
She loved Him when the crowds shouted, "Crucify Him."
The same faithful love remained.

The Gospel today ends before the Cross, but Mary's "Yes" at the Annunciation already contained the Cross within it. Every "Yes" to God eventually requires sacrifice.

St Maximilian Kolbe once wrote that love alone creates. Hatred destroys. Selfishness divides. But genuine love always gives life. That is exactly what Mary's life accomplished.

One day Mother Teresa picked up a dying man from the streets of Calcutta. As the sisters cleaned his wounds, someone asked him what he had experienced during his miserable life.
He quietly replied, "I have lived like an animal, but I will die like an angel because someone has loved me."

Nothing had changed materially.
But love had transformed everything.
Mary has done exactly that throughout history.
Millions have experienced her motherly care because she always leads people to Jesus.

Notice something beautiful in today's readings.
The Bridegroom in the Song of Songs says, "Arise, my beloved."
God never forces.
Love always invites.
Gabriel also invited Mary.
God respects freedom.
Mary freely responded.

Love can never be imposed. It must always be chosen.

There is another touching story: During an earthquake, rescuers found a mother lying lifeless beneath the collapsed roof of her house. Under her body they discovered her baby alive. The mother had instinctively stretched herself over the child, absorbing the falling stones.

Inside the baby's blanket they found a mobile phone with one final message. "If you survive, remember that your mother loved you." The child never heard his mother's voice. But her sacrifice spoke louder than words. That is the language of love.

That is the language Mary speaks.
At Calvary she stood beneath another collapsing world.
She could not stop the nails.
She could not remove the Cross.
She simply remained.
Sometimes love is not solving every problem.
Sometimes love is simply refusing to abandon someone.

Many parents understand this.
Many spouses understand this.
Many caregivers understand this.
Many priests understand this.
Remaining is often the greatest expression of love.

The title Mother of Fairest Love therefore does not simply praise Mary's beauty. It praises the beauty of her love.
The fairest love is humble.

The fairest love listens.
The fairest love obeys.
The fairest love forgives.
The fairest love remains faithful.
The fairest love always leads others to Jesus.

Every Christian family needs this kind of love.
Our parishes need it.
Friendships need it.
The Church needs it.
The world desperately needs it.

If every husband loved his wife as Christ loves the Church...
If every wife reflected Mary's faithful love...
If every parent sacrificed lovingly for their children...
If every Christian placed God's will before personal convenience...
Our homes would become little Nazareths.
Our parishes would become schools of love.
Our world would become more recognisably the Kingdom of God.

There is a legend about a stained-glass window in an old cathedral. During the day visitors admired its brilliant colours shining in the sunlight. One evening a child asked the caretaker, "Why can't I see the colours now?" The old man answered, "The window shines only when the light passes through it."
Mary shines because God's light passed completely through her life.
May the same happen to us.
Then our lives, too, will become beautiful windows through which others discover the fairest love of all—the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ through the loving heart of Mary.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathering our prayers with the loving heart of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love, let us confidently present our petitions to our heavenly Father.

1. For Pope N., our bishops, priests, religious and all who serve the Church, that they may reveal God's beautiful and faithful love to all entrusted to their care, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders and all who govern nations, that they may reject hatred, violence and selfish ambition, and work for justice, reconciliation and lasting peace, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For married couples, families, engaged couples and young people discerning their vocation, that Mary may teach them to build relationships founded upon fidelity, sacrifice and God's will, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For all who struggle to believe they are loved—for the lonely, the abandoned, the broken-hearted, and those whose families are divided—that they may discover the healing love of Christ through the compassion of His people, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, especially those burdened by loneliness, chronic illness or despair, and for all our departed brothers and sisters, that the Lord may grant healing to the living and eternal joy to the faithful departed, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, you gave us Mary as the Mother of Fairest Love. Through her maternal intercession, hear these prayers and grant them according to your holy will. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts, offered with loving hearts and united with the perfect obedience of Mary, the Mother of Fairest Love, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father, asking that His love may shape our hearts after the example of Mary.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by your merciful love
and strengthened through the maternal intercession of Mary,
Mother of Fairest Love,
we may be free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you revealed the Father's perfect love
and gave us your Mother as the model of faithful love.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will,
who live and reign for ever and ever.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, Love made flesh, whom Mary welcomed with perfect love.

Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, whose eternal love chose Mary from all generations, fill your hearts with His blessing. Amen.

May the Son, born of the Virgin Mary for our salvation, make you steadfast in faith, hope and love. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin and formed Christ within her, transform your lives into living witnesses of God's fairest love. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of faithful love, following the example of Mary, Mother of Fairest Love.

37. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE HOPE

Sirach 24:9-12, 18-21; Lk 2:1-11

Hope Trusts in God's Promises

INTRODUCTION

A little boy was once flying a kite on a cloudy day. Soon the kite disappeared behind the thick clouds. A passer-by asked, "How do you know the kite is still there if you can't see it?" The boy smiled and replied, "I know because I can still feel the tug." Hope is like that. We may not always see God's plan, but we can still feel His loving hand guiding us.

In today's first reading from Sirach, Mary is presented as the one chosen by God from all eternity, whose life bears the sweetest fruits for those who seek her and whose presence fills God's people with hope.

In today's Gospel, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem reveals that God's greatest promise has become flesh. In the Child laid in a manger, hope enters our world, bringing joy to all who welcome Him.

Today we honour Mary as **Mother of Divine Hope**. She believed God's promises before she saw them fulfilled, and she continues to encourage us never to lose hope in Christ.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for the times we have doubted God's love and failed to trust in His providence.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you came into our world as the fulfilment of every promise and the hope of all nations. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through the faith of your Blessed Mother, you teach us to trust your Father's plan even in difficult times. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you remain with your Church, strengthening all who place their hope in you. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mother of Divine Hope*

Years ago, during a devastating earthquake, rescue workers searched tirelessly through the ruins of a collapsed school. Beneath the broken concrete they discovered a mother who had died while protecting her little child. She had curved her body over him like a shield. Miraculously, the child was still alive. In his tiny hand was a note written by his mother before she died: "If you survive, never forget that I love you." That little boy grew up saying that those words gave him hope whenever life became difficult.

Every mother gives hope to her child. Today the Church celebrates Mary as the Mother of Divine Hope, because through her, God gave the world not simply encouraging words but Jesus Himself, our everlasting hope.

The Book of Sirach speaks in beautiful poetic language of the one whom God prepared from all eternity. "Before the ages, in the beginning, he created me." The Church sees these words fulfilled perfectly in Mary. Long before Bethlehem, long before Nazareth, God had already prepared a woman who would cooperate freely with His saving plan.

Hope is different from optimism. Optimism depends on circumstances. Hope depends on God.

Optimism says, "Everything will probably turn out well."

Hope says, "Whatever happens, God will never abandon me."

Mary lived by hope, not by certainty. When the angel appeared, she did not understand everything. She did not know how people would react. She could not foresee Herod's violence, Simeon's prophecy, the flight into Egypt, or Calvary. Yet she trusted the God who had spoken.

Someone once asked St. John Paul II what gave him strength through wars, communism, suffering and illness. He answered simply: "Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors to Christ." That was the language of hope. Hope does not eliminate suffering; it transforms it.

The Gospel today takes us to Bethlehem. It is remarkable that God's greatest gift arrived in the poorest circumstances imaginable. There was no palace, no comfortable room, no royal welcome.

Only a stable.

Only a manger.

Only ordinary shepherds.

God often enters our lives in ways we least expect.

Many people pray, "Lord, show yourself," while overlooking the quiet places where He is already present—in family life, in daily work, in illness patiently endured, in the Eucharist received with faith.

A little girl once planted a seed in her garden. Every morning she dug it up to see whether it had begun growing. Of course, nothing happened. Finally her grandmother laughed and said, "Hope means trusting what is happening underneath the soil even when you cannot see it."

That is exactly how God works.
Mary waited.
She pondered.
She trusted.
She believed before she understood.

Our world desperately needs hope.
Many families worry about finances.
Young people worry about their future.
Parents worry about their children.
The elderly fear loneliness.
The sick fear tomorrow.

Many Christians become discouraged because evil seems so powerful. Into every one of these fears comes Mary gently saying what she herself lived: "God keeps His promises." That is why she is Mother of Divine Hope.

There is a beautiful story about Cardinal Nguyễn Văn Thuận of Vietnam. Imprisoned for thirteen years, nine of them in solitary confinement, he had almost nothing. Yet he secretly celebrated Mass with three drops of wine and a tiny piece of bread hidden in his hand. Years later he said that prison became his school of hope because he learned to live one day at a time with Christ.

His circumstances offered no optimism.
But his faith gave him hope.
Mary would have understood him perfectly.
Hope does not ignore suffering.
Hope carries suffering with Christ.

Notice something beautiful in today's Gospel.
The first people invited to see Jesus were shepherds.
They were poor.
Often ignored.
Considered unreliable by society.
Yet God chose them first.
Hope always begins with humility.
People who know they need God are the first to recognise His gifts.

Pope Benedict XVI once wrote that the one who has hope lives differently. Hope changes the way we face every day.

Imagine two patients entering hospital for the same serious operation:
One believes no one cares about him.
The other knows that his family waits outside praying for him.
Their medical condition may be identical.
But their hope changes everything.

Faith does not always change our circumstances immediately.
It changes the way we live through them.
Mary teaches precisely this lesson.

She stood beneath the Cross when every human reason for hope seemed gone.

The disciples fled.
Darkness covered the land.
Jesus died.
Yet Mary continued believing that God's final word would not be death.

And Easter proved her right.
Perhaps some among us carry heavy burdens today.
A broken relationship.
A grieving heart.
Financial anxiety.
Loneliness.
A child who has drifted from the faith.
An illness with no easy cure.

Mary does not promise an immediate solution.
She offers something deeper.
She offers her Son.
Where Christ is present, hope never dies.

There is an old Christian saying: *"Hope has two beautiful daughters: anger at the way things are, and courage to make them better."*

Mary possessed both. She recognised the world's need for salvation, and she courageously said, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

She teaches us not merely to wait for hope but to become people who bring hope to others.

Sometimes that means making a phone call.
Sometimes visiting a lonely neighbour.
Sometimes forgiving someone.
Sometimes simply listening.
Every act of love tells another person, "God has not forgotten you."

Let us conclude with another story: A lighthouse keeper faithfully lit the lamp every evening. One stormy night a ship safely reached the harbour. The captain later said, "Throughout the storm I could not see the coastline. I could not see the harbour. I could not even see the stars. But I could see the lighthouse, and because of that light I knew where home was."

Mary never points to herself.
Like every lighthouse, she simply points to Christ.

She is the Mother of Divine Hope because she always leads us to Jesus, the Light that no darkness can overcome.

May we leave this Eucharist holding firmly to that hope, and may others find Christ because they see His light shining through us.
Amen

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in God whose promises never fail, and encouraged by Mary, Mother of Divine Hope, let us bring our prayers before Him.

1. For the Church: that she may always proclaim Christ as the hope of the world and accompany those who are discouraged with faith, compassion and love, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that they may work for justice, peace and respect for every human life, bringing hope to nations burdened by war, poverty and division, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that parents, grandparents and all who care for children may imitate Mary's faith, encouraging one another never to lose hope in God's providence, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For all who are anxious, unemployed, lonely or burdened by suffering: that through the support of Christian communities they may rediscover confidence in God's loving care, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, especially those who have lost hope, and for all the faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the suffering, consolation to their families, and eternal joy to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Divine Hope, hear these prayers and strengthen our trust in your unfailing love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary trusted in God's promises, let us offer ourselves with these gifts and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with the confidence of children whose hope rests entirely in our loving Father.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil and graciously grant peace in our days. Strengthened by the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Hope, keep us steadfast in faith and joyful in hope as we await the blessed fulfilment of your promises and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you came into our world as the long-awaited hope of every nation. Through the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of Divine Hope, fill our hearts with your peace, unite us in charity, and make us instruments of hope wherever fear and despair prevail. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
May we receive with faith the living Hope whom Mary first bore to the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, the source of all hope, fill your hearts with unwavering trust. Amen.

May God the Son, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary, strengthen you with his presence and lead you in the way of eternal life. Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit renew your courage, deepen your faith, and make you witnesses of hope in the world. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, strengthened by this Eucharist,
to bring Christ's hope to all, with Mary, Mother of Divine Hope.

38. HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF UNITY (A)

Zeph 3:14-20; Jn 11:45-52

Mary Gathers Us into Christ's Unity.

INTRODUCTION

A traveller once came upon an old village where two families had been bitter enemies for generations. One elderly woman quietly crossed the dividing road every Christmas to leave fresh bread at the neighbour's doorstep without revealing her name. Years later, when both families discovered her secret, they were moved to tears. Her simple act of love accomplished what arguments never could—it began healing hearts and restoring unity.

The prophet Zephaniah invites Jerusalem to rejoice because God Himself comes to gather His scattered people, remove fear, and restore them with His faithful love.

In today's Gospel, although the religious leaders plot against Jesus, Caiaphas unknowingly prophesies that Christ will die to gather into one all the scattered children of God.

Today we honour Holy Mary, Mother of Unity. Standing faithfully beside the Cross and praying with the disciples at Pentecost, Mary became the loving Mother of the united Church, teaching us that true unity is born from faith, humility, forgiveness, and love.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord to make us instruments of reconciliation.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You came to gather into one the scattered children of God: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You gave us Mary as the Mother of your united Church: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us to forgive one another and live as one family in your love: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *United in Christ, One Family*

During the construction of a magnificent cathedral in Europe, visitors often noticed a little boy sitting quietly beside an old stonemason. One day someone asked the boy, "What is your grandfather doing?" The child smiled and replied, "He's not cutting stones. He's building a home where everyone can meet God." The old man understood something many people forget. Every stone mattered because every stone belonged to the same building.

Today's readings remind us that God is not merely building individuals; He is building one family. The title of today's Mass, Holy Mary, Mother of Unity, beautifully expresses God's dream for humanity—a family united in Christ.

The first reading from Zephaniah overflows with joy. "Shout for joy... The Lord has taken away your judgments... The King of Israel is in your midst." God is portrayed not as a distant ruler but as a loving Father gathering His children home. Israel had experienced division, exile and suffering because of sin. Yet God promised restoration, healing and reunion.

Notice how often the reading speaks about gathering. God does not rejoice in scattered people. He rejoices in a united people.

The Gospel reveals how that promise is fulfilled. Ironically, it is Caiaphas, the high priest who opposes Jesus, who speaks God's hidden truth. "It is better that one man should die for the people."

St John immediately explains that Jesus would die "to gather into one the scattered children of God." That single sentence reveals the entire purpose of Christ's Passion.

Jesus did not simply come to forgive individual sins. He came to restore broken relationships—with God and with one another.

Sin always divides. Grace always unites. This is why Satan is called "the divider," while the Holy Spirit creates communion.

An elderly priest once told a story from his parish. Two brothers inherited a farm after their father's death. A misunderstanding about a boundary fence became a lawsuit. For fifteen years they never spoke. One day one brother became seriously ill. Their parish priest visited him and gently asked, "Would you like to see your brother?" After many tears he whispered yes. The brother arrived. Neither spoke for several minutes. Finally, the sick man simply stretched out his hand. The other brother took it. Neither remembered who had been right. Both remembered they were brothers.

The priest later said, "That handshake was the greatest sermon I ever witnessed."

Unity begins not with winning arguments but with opening hearts.
No one understood this better than Mary.

She appears quietly throughout the Gospel, never drawing attention to herself.

At Cana she notices a family's embarrassment and gently leads everyone toward Jesus.

At Calvary she remains faithful when others flee.

After the Resurrection she is found praying with the apostles as they await the Holy Spirit.

Where Mary is present, people are gently led toward Jesus and toward one another.

She never creates division.

She creates communion.

There is a beautiful African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together."

The Church has travelled for over two thousand years not because every member agreed on everything but because Christ continued gathering His people despite their weaknesses.

Every parish knows disagreements.

Every family experiences misunderstandings.

Communities have different opinions, personalities and cultures.

Unity does not mean everyone thinks alike.

The apostles themselves were very different.

Peter was impulsive.

John was contemplative.

Matthew had been a tax collector.

Simon had belonged to a revolutionary movement.

Thomas questioned everything.

Yet Christ united them into one Church.

Unity is not uniformity. It is harmony.

Think of an orchestra. The violin does not sound like the trumpet.

The flute is different from the drum.

If every instrument played the same note, there would be no music.

Beautiful harmony comes when different instruments follow the same conductor. Jesus is our conductor.

Mary continually points us toward Him.

St Teresa of Calcutta often reminded her sisters: "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

Those simple words summarise today's Gospel.

We belong to one another because we first belong to Christ.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to unity today is not hatred but indifference.

Families eat together while staring at different screens.

Neighbours live side by side without knowing each other's names.

Parishes celebrate together but sometimes remain strangers.

Mary invites us to rebuild the simple habits that unite hearts.

Listening before speaking.

Forgiving before judging.

Serving before demanding.
Praying before complaining.

A teacher once gave each student several sticks and asked them to break one. Everyone easily snapped a single stick.
Then she tied ten sticks together and asked them to break the bundle. No one could. The lesson was unforgettable.
Separated, we become weak. United, we become strong.
That is exactly what Jesus desired for His Church.

The Eucharist we celebrate today is the greatest sacrament of unity.
Many grains become one bread.
Many grapes become one cup.
People of every language, nation and culture become one Body in Christ.

Every Communion is God's invitation to become what we receive.
Not isolated believers.
One family.
Perhaps each of us can ask today: Whom do I need to forgive?
With whom should I begin a conversation again?
Where have I contributed to division through gossip, harsh words or stubborn pride?
How can I become a bridge instead of a wall?

Mary, Mother of Unity, does not ask us to accomplish extraordinary things. She asks us to say our daily "yes" to Christ.
Every smile offered.
Every apology made.
Every prayer for someone who hurt us.

Every act of patience.
Every word of encouragement.
These become small stones building God's living temple.

Let me conclude with a true story: After the Second World War, volunteers rebuilding a bombed church carefully collected broken statues from the rubble. They managed to restore nearly everything except the hands of the large statue of Christ. They could not find them. Instead of carving new hands, they placed beneath the statue a simple inscription: "Christ has no hands but ours."

What a beautiful reminder.
Christ gathers His scattered children through our hands.
Through our words.
Through our forgiveness.
Through our love.

May Holy Mary, Mother of Unity, teach us to become builders of communion in our families, our parish, our communities and our world, until all God's children are gathered around His eternal table where every division finally disappears and perfect unity lasts forever. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Gathered as one family in Christ, let us confidently present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For Pope, bishops, priests and all who lead the Church, that under the protection of Mary, Mother of Unity, they may strengthen communion among all believers, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders, that they may seek peace instead of conflict, dialogue instead of hatred, and justice instead of violence, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families, parishes and religious communities, that forgiveness, patience and mutual love may overcome every division and misunderstanding, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For Christians of every tradition, that the Holy Spirit may lead us ever closer to the full unity for which Christ prayed, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For all who are sick, lonely or suffering, and for our departed brothers and sisters, that the Lord may grant them healing, eternal joy and the fullness of His peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, gather all your children into one through your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as we place these gifts upon the altar, the Lord may unite our hearts in charity, so that this sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United as one family through Christ,
and encouraged by the loving care of Mary, Mother of Unity,
let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially the divisions that wound your people.
Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of Unity,
strengthen us in peace,
keep us faithful in charity,
and preserve us in joyful hope
as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you died to gather into one the scattered children of God.
Through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of Unity,
fill our hearts with your peace,
reconcile all who are divided,
and make your Church a living sign of unity and hope
for the whole world.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who gathers into one the scattered children of God.
Happy are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who has called you into one family through His Son, fill you with His love. Amen.

May the Son, who gave His life to gather God's scattered children into one, strengthen you in unity and peace. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit make you instruments of reconciliation, communion and joy through the loving intercession of Holy Mary, Mother of Unity. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you forever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by building unity in the love of Christ.

38. MARIAN MASS: HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF UNITY (B)

1 Timothy 2:5–8; Jn 17:20–26

United in Christ, Builders of Unity

INTRODUCTION

A father once gave each of his four children a single stick and asked them to break it. They did so easily. Then he tied four sticks together into one bundle. None of them could break it. "As long as you remain united," he said, "you will be strong." That simple lesson remained with them throughout their lives.

In the first reading, St. Paul reminds us that there is one God and one Mediator, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for everyone and calls us to pray together in peace.

In today's Gospel, Jesus prays at the Last Supper that all who believe in him may be one, just as he and the Father are one, so that the world may believe.

Today we honour Holy Mary, Mother of Unity. Standing faithfully beneath the Cross, Mary became the mother of Christ's disciples and gathered them in prayer before Pentecost, helping the first Christian community remain united in faith and love.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us ask forgiveness for every division, resentment and lack of charity that weakens the unity Christ desires for his Church.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS Lord Jesus, you came to reconcile humanity with the Father and with one another. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you prayed that all who believe in you might be one in faith and love. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you give us Mary as Mother of Unity to lead us towards peace and communion. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: "One Heart in Christ"

A traveller once came upon an old bridge built entirely of stones. Curious about its strength, he asked the elderly builder, "Which stone holds the bridge together?" The old man smiled and replied, "None of them alone. Every stone depends on the others. Remove one after another, and eventually the bridge collapses."

The Church resembles that bridge. Every believer matters. Every act of forgiveness strengthens it. Every act of selfishness weakens it. Unity is not created by one extraordinary person but by many ordinary people who choose love every day.

Today's readings speak about that beautiful unity. Saint Paul tells Timothy that there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity—Jesus Christ. Because Christ unites us with the Father, Christians are also called to be united with one another. Paul even says that he wants everyone to pray "without anger or argument." How relevant those words remain today! Families argue. Parishes disagree. Communities become divided. Even within our own hearts there are conflicts between selfishness and generosity.

Then comes the Gospel, one of the most moving prayers in the entire Bible. Before going to Calvary, Jesus does not pray for success, popularity or power. Instead he prays: "May they all be one."

Notice that Jesus does not ask that everyone become identical. Unity is different from uniformity.

A choir is beautiful not because every singer sings the same note but because every voice contributes to one harmony. The Church is called to be like that choir. Mary understood this perfectly.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the frightened disciples gathered in the Upper Room. Scripture tells us that Mary was there among them.

She did not preach.
She did not command.
She simply prayed.

Her quiet presence helped fearful people remain together until the Holy Spirit came. That is why the Church honours her today as Mother of Unity.

There is a beautiful African proverb: *"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."*

The Church is not running a short race but walking a pilgrimage toward heaven. We need one another.

A priest once visited an elderly couple who had been married for sixty years. He asked them how they had managed never to separate.

The husband smiled. "We belonged to a generation that repaired things instead of throwing them away."

That answer applies not only to marriage but also to friendships, parish life and Christian communities.

Today many relationships are discarded instead of healed.

Yet Christ asks us to become repairers of unity.

Pope St. John XXIII once said: *"Whenever possible, overlook the faults of others; whenever necessary, forgive them."*

How much suffering would disappear if every Christian lived those simple words.

Mary certainly did. Imagine her standing beneath the Cross.

Around her were Roman soldiers, mocking crowds, frightened disciples and religious leaders filled with hatred.

She could easily have become bitter.

Instead she remained full of faith.

She became a silent bridge between heaven and earth.

There is another touching story: Two brothers inherited a farm. After an argument they built a fence between their properties and refused to speak for years.

One day a carpenter arrived looking for work.

One brother said, "Build me a high fence so I never have to see him again." When the carpenter finished, there was no fence.

Instead he had built a beautiful bridge across the stream.

Seeing the bridge, the two brothers slowly walked towards each other and embraced in tears.

The carpenter quietly packed his tools.

When they asked him to stay for another project, he answered, "I cannot. I have many more bridges to build."

That carpenter reminds us of Christ.

Jesus did not build fences. He built bridges.

Every time we forgive, we continue his work.

Every time we gossip, we destroy his work.

Every time we judge harshly, another stone disappears from the bridge.

Every time we reconcile, another stone is restored.

Our world desperately needs bridge-builders.

Nations remain divided.

Families stop speaking.

Communities split over opinions.

Social media often encourages anger rather than understanding.

Even within parishes people sometimes become separated because of personalities, preferences or misunderstandings.

Jesus still prays: "Father, may they all be one."

That prayer has not expired.

It remains God's dream for humanity.

Mary helps us realise that dream.

She gathered the Apostles around prayer rather than arguments.

Prayer changes people.

When people pray together sincerely, resentment slowly loses its

power. Perhaps that is why Paul insists today that Christians should lift up holy hands in prayer without anger. Prayer and bitterness cannot comfortably live in the same heart.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, each of us can ask ourselves some honest questions:

Is there someone I refuse to forgive?

Have I contributed to division in my family?

Do my words unite or separate?

Do I listen before judging?

Am I willing to become a bridge instead of another wall? Unity always begins with one converted heart.

Mother Teresa once said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." How true.

The Eucharist itself is the sacrament of unity.

Many grains become one bread.

Many grapes become one cup.

Many believers become one Body of Christ.

Every Mass teaches us visibly what Jesus prayed spiritually.

Let us therefore entrust ourselves to Mary, Mother of Unity.

May she gather divided families.

May she heal wounded friendships.

May she strengthen our parishes.

May she unite Christians.

May she bring peace among nations.

May she teach each of us to become instruments of reconciliation.

A stained-glass artist was once asked which piece of coloured glass was the most important in a magnificent church window.

He replied, "None of them alone. When sunlight shines through them together, people see the beauty." That is the Church.

Different people.

Different gifts.

Different cultures.

One light.

When Christ shines through united hearts, the world finally sees the face of God.

May Mary, Mother of Unity, keep us together in that light until we all become one forever in the Father's Kingdom. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

United in Christ and encouraged by Mary, Mother of Unity, let us present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For Pope N., our bishops, priests, deacons and all Christians, that they may faithfully promote unity, reconciliation and charity within the Church, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders, that they may seek peace through dialogue, justice and mutual respect rather than conflict and violence, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families, marriages and communities divided by misunderstanding, resentment or indifference, that the grace of Christ may restore love and harmony, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community, that nourished by the Eucharist we may become authentic builders of unity, forgiveness and hope, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For all the sick, the lonely and the dying, and for our departed brothers and sisters, that the Lord may grant healing, consolation and eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, hear the prayers we offer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that our gifts, offered in the spirit of reconciliation and love, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray as one family united in Christ:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially the evil of division.
Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by your mercy
and united in faith and charity
through the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of Unity,
we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you prayed that all your disciples might be one.
Through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of Unity,
remove every division from our hearts,
strengthen us in mutual forgiveness
and fill us with your peace,
that together we may bear joyful witness to your Gospel,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who gathers into one the scattered children of God.
Happy are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who has called you into the unity of his family, bless
and keep you. Amen.

May the Son, who prayed that all his disciples might be one, fill your
hearts with his peace and love. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit strengthen you to become faithful witnesses of
reconciliation and unity wherever you go. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and
the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by living in Christ's love and unity.

39. HOLY MARY, QUEEN AND MOTHER OF MERCY (I)

Esther C:12, 14-15, 25, 30; Jn 2:1-11

Mary, Mother of Mercy, Leads Us to Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy accidentally broke his grandmother's favourite vase. Frightened, he hid behind his mother. Instead of scolding him, the mother took him by the hand, brought him to the grandmother, and said, "He is sorry. Please look at him through my love." The grandmother embraced the child immediately. Love became the bridge to mercy. That is what Mary always does for us.

The Book of Esther presents Queen Esther courageously interceding for her people, trusting in God's mercy at a moment of great danger.

In the Gospel at Cana, Mary notices the needs of others before anyone else does and leads the servants to Jesus, whose first sign reveals that God's mercy transforms emptiness into overflowing joy.

Today we honour **Holy Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy**. As Queen, Mary shares in the glory of her Son; as Mother of Mercy, she lovingly intercedes for all who seek her help and gently leads us to the source of every grace, Jesus Christ.

Let us now acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord, rich in mercy, to forgive and renew us.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you came into the world to reveal the Father's infinite mercy through your saving love. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through the loving intercession of your Mother, you continue to transform our weakness into grace. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to become instruments of mercy and compassion for one another. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary Leads Us to Christ's Mercy.*

Many years ago, a severe drought struck a farming village. Wells dried up, crops withered, and families feared they would not survive. One elderly woman quietly placed a jug outside her small house every morning. Neighbours laughed because the jug remained empty day after day. She simply replied, "When God sends the rain, I want to be ready." Weeks later the rain finally came, and while others searched for containers, her jug was already waiting. Hope had prepared her to receive God's blessing.

Today's Gospel begins with another shortage—not of water but of wine. At first glance it seems like a small social embarrassment. Yet St. John tells us it is the beginning of Jesus' signs because it reveals something much greater. Whenever human resources run out, God's mercy begins to overflow.

The first reading introduces another remarkable woman—Queen Esther. She stands before God not with pride but with humility. Her people face destruction, and she knows she cannot save them by her own strength. She places herself entirely in God's hands and pleads for mercy. Esther becomes an image of Mary. Both women

stand before God on behalf of others. Both trust completely in the Lord. Both teach us that genuine greatness is found in loving intercession.

That is why the Church honours Mary today as Queen and Mother of Mercy.

She is Queen because her Son is the King whose kingdom has no end. Yet unlike earthly queens who rule by power, Mary's queenship shines through humility, service and compassion. She never draws attention to herself. Her only desire is to bring every person closer to Christ.

She is Mother of Mercy because she never stops caring for her children. At Cana, nobody asks her to intervene. She notices the problem before anyone else. "They have no wine." Those four words reveal the heart of a mother. She sees needs that others overlook.

There is an old Jewish saying: "The mother hears the cry that no one else hears." That perfectly describes Mary. She hears the silent prayers we cannot even express. She brings them to Jesus with the confidence of a loving mother.

Notice something beautiful in today's Gospel. Mary never tells Jesus what miracle to perform. She simply presents the need. Then she turns to the servants and says, "Do whatever he tells you."

These are among the last recorded words of Mary in the Gospels. They are also her lifelong message to every Christian. She never says, "Look at me." She says, "Listen to him."

A young violin student once asked the famous violinist Jascha Heifetz how he became such a great musician. He replied, "Every day I listened more carefully than I played." The greatest disciples first learn to listen. Mary listened to God at Nazareth. The servants listened to Jesus at Cana. The saints listened throughout their lives. Listening always comes before miracles.

The servants also teach us another lesson. Jesus asked them to fill six huge stone jars with water. It must have seemed unnecessary and exhausting. They could have argued that water would never solve a shortage of wine. Yet they obeyed completely.

Sometimes God asks us to do simple things that seem ordinary—offering forgiveness, praying daily, visiting a lonely neighbour, reconciling with a family member, remaining faithful during suffering. We may not understand why these actions matter. But obedience often becomes the doorway through which God's grace enters.

Mother Teresa once said, "God has not called me to be successful; He has called me to be faithful." The servants were not asked to understand the miracle. They were asked to obey. The miracle belonged to Jesus.

Mary continually teaches this same lesson. A little girl once asked her grandmother, "Why do we pray to Mary if Jesus can hear us?" The grandmother smiled and answered, "When you want to surprise your father on his birthday, don't you often ask your mother to help you?" The child nodded immediately. The grandmother continued, "Your father loves you directly, but your mother knows exactly how to present your love. That is how Mary helps us."

This simple explanation reflects the heart of today's feast. Mary never replaces Jesus. She brings us to him. Every Marian devotion that is truly Christian always ends in Christ.

The miracle itself carries deep symbolism. Water used for ceremonial purification becomes the finest wine. The old gives way to the new. External rituals give way to the abundant grace of the Kingdom. Jesus does not merely solve a wedding problem. He reveals that God's mercy is richer than human expectation.

That is also our story. Sometimes our hearts resemble those empty jars. We experience disappointment, regret, broken relationships, loneliness, illness or uncertainty. We feel we have nothing left to offer. Yet Mary notices our emptiness long before we speak about it. She quietly whispers to her Son, "They have no wine."

Jesus still fills empty lives. He transforms fear into courage, guilt into forgiveness, bitterness into peace, despair into hope and ordinary people into joyful witnesses.

Pope Francis frequently reminded us that the Church is called to be "a field hospital" where mercy heals wounded hearts. Mary stands at the entrance of that field hospital, welcoming every sinner, every struggling family, every lonely person and every searching heart.

We can also become instruments of mercy. Every time we forgive instead of taking revenge, encourage instead of criticising, or listen instead of judging, we continue the miracle of Cana in our own families and communities.

Let us return to the woman with the empty jug. She kept it outside every day because she believed the rain would come. Mary teaches us to keep the empty jars of our lives open before Christ. Never hide your emptiness from him. Bring it to him. Trust him. Obey him. His mercy is always greater than our need.

There is an old tradition that after the miracle at Cana, people remembered not only the excellent wine but also the quiet woman who first noticed that something was wrong. That is Mary's way. She works silently, lovingly and faithfully, always pointing beyond herself to Jesus.

May we leave this Eucharist with her words written upon our hearts: "Do whatever he tells you." If we live those words each day, Christ will continue transforming the ordinary water of our lives into the joyful wine of his mercy. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in God's infinite mercy and encouraged by the loving intercession of Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, let us present our prayers.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully proclaim God's mercy and become a welcoming home for all who seek forgiveness and hope, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may govern with justice, compassion and respect for the dignity of every human person, especially the poor and the vulnerable, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that, following Mary's example, they may notice one another's needs, practise forgiveness and grow in love and unity, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For all who feel discouraged, burdened or spiritually empty: that Christ may transform their lives with the joy of his grace through Mary's loving intercession, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the sick, comfort to those who care for them, and eternal joy to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Merciful Father, hear the prayers we offer through the loving intercession of Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we offer these gifts, may Christ, through the intercession of Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, fill our hearts with his abundant mercy, let us pray, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United as God's beloved children, and encouraged by Mary, the Mother of Mercy who always leads us to her Son, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour has given us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil,
and free us from hearts hardened by fear, selfishness and despair.
Through the loving intercession of Mary, Queen
and Mother of Mercy, strengthen us to trust your providence,
so that, filled with hope
and awaiting the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ,
we may become witnesses of your mercy in the world.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you transformed water into wine
and brought joy where there was need.
Through the maternal prayers of Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy,
grant peace to our hearts, our families and our world,
so that we may live as instruments of your reconciling love,
for you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who pours out the riches of God's mercy
for the life of the world.
Happy are those who come to this sacred banquet.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, whose mercy never fails, fill your hearts with hope. Amen.

May the Son, who transformed water into wine and revealed the abundance of divine mercy, strengthen you in faith and love. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit make you living witnesses of compassion and peace. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, trusting in Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, and proclaim Christ's mercy by your lives.

39. HOLY MARY, QUEEN AND MOTHER OF MERCY (II)

Eph 2:4-10; Lk 1:39-55

Mercy Received, Mercy Shared.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once broke his neighbour's window while playing. Terrified, he ran home expecting punishment. Before his father spoke a word, his mother quietly took him by the hand, walked with him to the neighbour, helped him apologise, and together they repaired the damage. Years later, the man would say, "That day I learned that mercy is not escaping justice, but being lovingly led back to what is right."

In today's first reading, St Paul reminds us that God, rich in mercy, has saved us not because of our own merits but through his boundless grace, making us his new creation in Christ.

In the Gospel, Mary visits Elizabeth, and her Magnificat becomes a joyful hymn celebrating God's mercy that reaches from generation to generation for all who fear Him. As Queen and Mother of Mercy, Mary never keeps God's mercy to herself but brings it wherever she goes, teaching us to become instruments of that same compassion.

As we gather around this altar, let us ask Mary to lead us once again to the merciful Heart of her Son.

Aware that we have often failed to show mercy to others, let us now acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you reveal the Father's infinite mercy to sinners and saints alike. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through your holy Mother you continue to bring hope, comfort and compassion to all who seek you. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to become living witnesses of your mercy in our homes, our Church and our world. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mercy Received Becomes Mercy Shared*

During World War II, in a small European village, a young soldier accidentally wandered into enemy territory. Frightened and exhausted, he knocked on the door of a farmhouse. An elderly widow opened the door. She immediately recognised from his uniform that he belonged to the enemy army—the same army responsible for the death of her husband and son. For a long moment she stood silent. Then she simply said, "Come in." She gave him food, washed his wounds, and hid him until it was safe for him to leave. Before departing, the soldier asked, "Why did you help me?" She replied, "Because hatred has already taken too much from me. Mercy is the only thing I still have to give." That woman reflected something of God's own heart.

Today's liturgy invites us to contemplate Mary under the beautiful title Queen and Mother of Mercy. She is Queen because she shares in the glory of her risen Son. She is Mother because from the Cross Jesus entrusted her to the whole Church. Above all, she is Mother of Mercy because she constantly leads sinners, the weak, and the broken to Jesus, who is Mercy itself.

The first reading from the Letter to the Ephesians is one of the greatest summaries of the Gospel. St Paul tells us, "God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive together with Christ." Notice that Paul does not first speak about our goodness. He first speaks about God's mercy.

Christianity does not begin with what we do for God.

It begins with what God has done for us.

We often imagine that we must become perfect before approaching God. The Gospel teaches the opposite. We approach God because we are imperfect. His mercy transforms us from within.

Pope Francis once said that the name of God is mercy. Every page of Scripture confirms that truth.

The Psalm echoes the same message: *"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and rich in mercy."*

The Gospel then shows us what mercy looks like in daily life. Mary has just learned that she will become the Mother of the Saviour. She could have remained quietly at home, overwhelmed by her own extraordinary vocation. Instead, she immediately sets out into the hill country to help Elizabeth.

Mercy is never passive. Mercy always moves.

Mary carries Jesus within her, and wherever Jesus arrives, joy follows.

Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist leaps in the womb.

Hope is renewed.

Mercy has entered the house.

One of the first signs that Christ truly lives within us is that we begin noticing the needs of others.

A woman once visited Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying in Calcutta. She watched one sister gently washing the wounds of a dying man covered with disease. The visitor quietly said, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars."

The sister smiled and replied, "Neither would I. But I gladly do it for Jesus."

That is mercy.

Mercy does not ask, "What will I gain?"

Mercy asks, "How can I love?"

Mary teaches exactly that.

Her Magnificat is not a song about herself.

It is a song about God's mercy.

She repeats again and again that God lifts up the lowly, feeds the hungry, remembers his promises and extends mercy from generation to generation.

Notice something remarkable.

Mary never says that she deserves these blessings.

Everything is gift.

Everything is grace.

This humility makes Mary the perfect Mother of Mercy.

She knows that she herself has received everything from God.

Therefore she gladly shares everything with others.

There is an old Jewish story about two brothers who owned neighbouring fields. One brother had a large family. The other lived alone.

Each night, the brother with many children secretly carried a sack of grain into his brother's barn because he thought, "My brother has no children to care for him in old age."

At the same time, the unmarried brother secretly carried grain into his brother's barn because he thought, "My brother has many mouths to feed." One night they met while carrying their sacks. Instead of arguing over whose grain it was, they embraced.

According to tradition, that place later became the site chosen for God's Temple. Whether historical or not, the story teaches a profound truth. God dwells where mercy meets mercy.

Our families need mercy.

Marriages need mercy.

Parishes need mercy.

Communities need mercy.

Nations need mercy.

Many divisions continue because everyone waits for someone else to make the first move.

Mary never waited.

She travelled to Elizabeth.

Jesus never waited.

He came searching for us.

Mercy always takes the first step.

St Faustina wrote that the greater the sinner, the greater the right he has to God's mercy.
That does not encourage sin.
It encourages hope.

No one here is beyond God's forgiveness.
No family situation is hopeless.
No past failure is too great for Christ.

Every Confession is another Visitation, where Jesus comes to meet us through his mercy.

The title "Queen and Mother of Mercy" also reminds us that Mary intercedes constantly for us.
At Cana she noticed the embarrassment of a young couple before anyone else did.
She simply told Jesus, "They have no wine."
She still notices our needs today.
She notices lonely hearts.
She notices anxious parents.
She notices young people searching for purpose.
She notices the elderly who fear being forgotten.
Like every loving mother, she quietly brings these concerns before her Son.
But Mary's final recorded instruction in Scripture remains her greatest lesson: *"Do whatever he tells you."*

Mercy is not only something we receive.
It becomes something we practise.
Forgive someone.

Visit someone.
Comfort someone.
Speak kindly to someone.
Pray for someone.
Offer your time.
Listen patiently.
These simple acts allow Christ's mercy to continue flowing into the world.

There is a beautiful story about Abraham Lincoln. During the American Civil War, a young soldier was sentenced to death for falling asleep while on guard duty. His widowed mother pleaded for mercy. Lincoln carefully reviewed the case and signed the pardon. Someone criticised him for being too compassionate. Lincoln replied, "I think the boy looks too young to die." That act of mercy gave the young soldier another chance at life.

God has given every one of us another chance.
Indeed, He gives us another chance every single day.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us thank God for the immeasurable mercy He has poured into our lives.

Let us ask Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, to help us become people whose words heal, whose hands serve, whose hearts forgive and whose lives proclaim the mercy of Christ.

A young girl was once asked what she thought heaven would be like. She answered, "I think heaven is where everyone finally understands how much God loves them." That is a beautiful description.

Mary already understands that love perfectly.
She now invites us to discover it more deeply every day and to share it generously with everyone we meet.

May we leave this church today carrying the mercy we have received, so that through our lives many others may discover the loving face of Christ. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the infinite mercy of God, and encouraged by the loving intercession of Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, let us present our prayers.

1. For the Church: that she may always proclaim God's mercy with compassion, welcoming sinners, comforting the suffering and bringing hope to the world. Let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may choose reconciliation over conflict, justice over revenge, and always work to protect the dignity of every human person. Let us pray to the Lord.
3. For families: that through Mary's loving example they may become places of forgiveness, patience, unity and generous love. Let us pray to the Lord.
4. For all who feel burdened by guilt, loneliness, addiction or despair: that they may discover in Christ the healing power of God's unfailing mercy. Let us pray to the Lord.

5. For our sick, our elderly, all who care for them, and for our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the sick, strength to their carers, and eternal joy to those who have died. Let us pray to the Lord.

Merciful Father, hear the prayers we offer with confidence through the intercession of Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, as we offer these gifts upon the altar, God's mercy may transform our hearts, so that, following Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray to our heavenly Father, whose mercy has made us his beloved children.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and through the loving intercession of Mary,
Queen and Mother of Mercy, free us from discouragement,
resentment and fear.
Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by your mercy,
we may always be free from sin and safe from all distress
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you revealed the Father's mercy through your life, death and resurrection. Through the maternal intercession of Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, fill our hearts with your forgiveness and peace, so that reconciled with you and with one another, we may become joyful builders of peace in our families and throughout the world. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world and nourishes us with the Bread of Mercy.

Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, whose mercy is without measure, fill your hearts with hope. Amen.

May the Son, who redeemed you by his precious Blood, strengthen you to become witnesses of his mercy. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, through the loving intercession of Mary, Queen and Mother of Mercy, guide you always in the ways of compassion and peace. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by lives of mercy, and, like Mary, bring Christ's compassion to all.

40. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Is 66:10-14; Jn 2,1-11

With Mary, God provides all we need.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy was flying a kite on a cloudy day. Soon the kite disappeared behind the clouds. A passer-by asked, "How do you know it's still there?" The boy smiled and replied, "Because I can still feel the tug on the string." We may not always see God's hand, but we can trust His loving providence guiding our lives.

In the first reading, Isaiah portrays God as a loving mother who comforts, nourishes and restores His children, reminding us that God's providence never abandons those who trust in Him.

In the Gospel, Mary notices the need of the newly married couple before anyone else and gently leads them to Jesus, whose first miracle at Cana reveals that God's providence often comes quietly, abundantly and through Mary's loving intercession.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as **Mother of Divine Providence**, the Mother who constantly watches over God's family and confidently directs us to her Son with the words, "Do whatever He tells you."

As we entrust our worries, fears and hopes to her maternal care, let us acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You are the Father's loving providence for all who trust in You. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, You provide far more than we ask or deserve. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You invite us to place our lives completely into Your hands. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mother of Divine Providence: Trusting God's Care*

During World War II, a small orphanage in England had almost no food left. The sisters gathered the children and invited them to pray before breakfast, although the pantry was empty. Just as they finished praying, there was a knock at the door. A baker explained that he had been unable to sleep during the night because he felt strongly that the children would need bread that morning. A few minutes later, a milk truck broke down outside the orphanage. Rather than let the milk spoil, the driver donated it all to the children. Their breakfast came exactly when they needed it—not earlier, not later.

That is often how God's providence works. He may not answer according to our timetable, but He never ceases to care for His children.

Today's celebration honours Mary as **Mother of Divine Providence**. Providence means that God lovingly guides history, provides what is necessary for our salvation, and never abandons those who place their trust in Him. Mary is called Mother of Divine Providence because she constantly leads us to the God who knows our needs before we even ask.

The first reading from Isaiah paints one of the most beautiful images of God in the Bible. God promises to comfort His people as a mother comforts her child. Jerusalem becomes a place of nourishment, joy and peace.

Our world often makes us anxious. We worry about our health, our finances, our children, our future, our work and even about the future of the Church. Anxiety can slowly steal our joy.

Psalm 131 gives us the answer. The psalmist says, "I have stilled and quieted my soul like a child with its mother."

A child resting in its mother's arms does not understand everything, but it feels safe because it trusts the one holding it. Mary teaches us this childlike confidence.

The Gospel presents the familiar wedding feast at Cana. At first glance, it seems like a small domestic problem—they have run out of wine. Yet Mary notices what nobody else has noticed.

That is what mothers do.

She does not create panic.

She does not embarrass the family.

She simply brings the need to Jesus.

"They have no wine."

These four words express the whole mission of Mary.

She notices.

She intercedes.

She leads people to Christ.

Then she speaks the most important instruction she ever gives:

"Do whatever He tells you."

These words are the secret of Divine Providence.
God's providence unfolds when we obey Him, even when we do not understand His plans.
The servants must have found Jesus' command rather strange.
Fill six huge jars with water.
Carry some to the steward.
Imagine their thoughts.
"How can water solve the problem?"
Yet because they obeyed, they witnessed the miracle.
Very often God asks us to take small steps of faith before He reveals His greater plan.

A young man once complained to an elderly priest, "Father, I cannot see God's plan for my life."
The priest handed him a candle and said, "Go outside tonight."

When the young man returned, the priest asked, "How far could you see?"
"Only about ten metres."
"But how far did the candle carry you?"
"All the way home."
The priest smiled. "God usually gives enough light for the next step, not for the entire journey."

That is Divine Providence.
Mary herself lived this way.
She accepted the Annunciation without knowing every detail.
She fled into Egypt without knowing how long the exile would last.
She stood beneath the Cross without understanding how such suffering could become salvation. She trusted.

Providence is not about knowing everything.
It is about trusting the One who knows everything.

St John Bosco often spoke about Divine Providence. When he began building churches, schools and homes for poor boys, he frequently had no money. His friends warned him to stop. Don Bosco would simply reply, "God has always paid His bills." Again and again, unexpected benefactors appeared at the right moment. His confidence was not in miracles but in God's faithful love.

Many of us can recognise similar moments in our own lives.
A chance meeting.
An unexpected job.
A doctor who found the illness just in time.
A stranger who became a lifelong friend.
A word of encouragement when we were about to give up.
Looking back, we realise these were not accidents.
They were signs of God's providence.

Sometimes, however, providence does not mean removing suffering. Sometimes God provides strength rather than escape.
St Paul prayed for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed. Instead, God answered, "My grace is sufficient for you."
Providence means that God always gives what is necessary for our salvation.
Mary understands this better than anyone.
She is not only present at Cana.
She is also present at Calvary.
At Cana she says, "Do whatever He tells you."
At Calvary she silently lives those same words.

Even there, when everything appeared lost, God was accomplishing His greatest work.

Perhaps someone today is praying for a miracle.

Perhaps someone is worried about a child who has left the faith.

Perhaps someone fears the future.

Perhaps someone is carrying financial burdens or illness.

Mary says to each of us exactly what she said at Cana: "Bring your need to Jesus."

She does not promise that every problem will disappear immediately.

She promises that Jesus will never abandon those who trust Him.

A missionary once visited a poor family in Africa. Their house had almost nothing. Yet hanging on the wall was a simple wooden plaque that read: "The Lord will provide."

When asked why they kept it there, the mother answered, "Every day we read those words before breakfast. Some days we know how God will provide. Other days we do not. But every evening we thank Him because somehow He always has."

That is the faith Mary wants to teach us.

As we celebrate this Eucharist, let us place our lives into the loving hands of Jesus through the Mother of Divine Providence.

May we leave this church with quieter hearts, deeper trust and renewed confidence that our heavenly Father already knows what we need.

Like the little boy flying the hidden kite, we may not always see God's hand. But if we continue to feel the gentle pull of His grace, we can be certain that He is still holding us, still guiding us, and through the loving care of Mary, still providing everything we truly need. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in the loving providence of God, and encouraged by the maternal intercession of Mary, Mother of Divine Providence, let us bring our prayers before the Lord.

1. For the Church: that Pope, bishops, priests, religious and all the faithful may lead people to Christ with Mary's confidence and teach them to trust in God's loving providence, we pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may govern with wisdom, compassion and justice, providing for the needs of the poor, refugees and all who suffer from war, disaster or poverty, we pray to the Lord.
3. For families: that parents may imitate Mary's loving care, and children may grow in faith, gratitude and confidence in God's providence, we pray to the Lord.
4. For those burdened by anxiety, unemployment, loneliness or uncertainty: that they may discover God's faithful care through the kindness of others and never lose hope, we pray to the Lord.
5. For the sick, the dying and our departed brothers and sisters: that the Lord may strengthen the sick, comfort those who care for them, and welcome the faithful departed into the joy of His heavenly kingdom, we pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, You never fail those who trust in You. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Divine Providence, hear these prayers which we make through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as we place these gifts of bread and wine upon the altar, we may also entrust our cares to God's loving providence, and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with the confidence of children who know that their heavenly Father lovingly provides for all their needs.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and free us from the fears and anxieties that weaken our trust.
Through the maternal intercession of Mary,
Mother of Divine Providence,
keep us confident in Your loving care
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
at Cana You transformed ordinary water into the wine of joy.
Transform our fears into trust, our divisions into unity,
and our hearts into instruments of Your peace,
that under the loving care of Mary
we may always live in the confidence of Your providence.
You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who never ceases to nourish His people with the Bread of Life.

Happy are those who trust in His providence and are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, whose loving providence watches over all His children, keep you always in His care. Amen.

May the Son, who revealed His glory at Cana through the intercession of His Blessed Mother, strengthen your faith and hope.
Amen.

May the Holy Spirit fill your hearts with peace and unwavering trust in God's loving plan. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, trusting always in God's loving providence and following Mary's invitation: "Do whatever He tells you."

41. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF CONSOLATION (A)

Is 61:1-3, 10-11; Mt 5,1-12

With Mary, Christ consoles and sends us

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once sat quietly beside his grandmother after the death of his grandfather. Someone asked him what he had said to comfort her. The child replied, "Nothing. I just helped her cry." Sometimes the greatest consolation is not found in words but in loving presence.

Isaiah proclaims that God sends his Anointed to heal the broken-hearted, comfort those who mourn, and clothe them with joy instead of sorrow. God's consolation always opens the door to new hope.

In the Gospel, Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes, promising God's blessing to the poor, the sorrowful, the merciful, and all who remain faithful amid suffering. True happiness is found in trusting God's loving care.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as **Mother of Consolation**. Standing beneath the Cross, she shared humanity's deepest sorrow, and through her maternal love she continues to comfort all who seek refuge in her Son.

Let us now acknowledge our sins and ask God to renew us with his mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you came to bind up the broken-hearted and bring hope to those who mourn: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us your Mother to console and strengthen your Church: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to bring your compassion and peace to a suffering world: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mother of Consolation: Comforted to Console*

A devastating earthquake struck a small town many years ago. Rescue workers searched tirelessly through the ruins. They eventually found an elderly woman sitting beside the body of her husband. She had lost everything. One young volunteer sat quietly beside her for hours. He offered no speeches or explanations. Before leaving, she simply held his hand and whispered, "Thank you for not leaving me alone." His presence became her consolation.

That is how God consoles us. He does not always remove suffering immediately. Instead, He comes to us, stays beside us, and assures us that we never suffer alone.

Today's readings reveal a God whose first instinct is mercy and consolation.

Isaiah speaks of the Messiah who comes "to bind up the broken-hearted" and "comfort all who mourn." God does not ignore tears. Every tear matters to Him. His mission is not only to forgive sins but also to heal wounded hearts.

We all carry hidden wounds. Some mourn the death of loved ones. Others carry disappointments, loneliness, family conflicts, illness, or broken dreams. Many people smile on the outside while suffering deeply within.

There is an old saying: "Be kind, because everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about."

God knows every hidden battle.

Jesus continues this message in today's Gospel through the Beatitudes. At first they sound surprising.

Blessed are the poor.

Blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are the persecuted.

How can suffering be called blessed?

Jesus is not praising suffering itself. Rather, He promises that those who trust God in the midst of suffering will never be abandoned. Their tears will not have the final word. God's consolation is stronger than pain. Mary understood this better than anyone.

From Bethlehem to Calvary her life was marked by both joy and sorrow.

She knew the anxiety of fleeing into Egypt.

She knew the pain of searching for the lost twelve-year-old Jesus.

She watched Him rejected, mocked, condemned and crucified.

Standing beneath the Cross, she experienced the deepest sorrow a mother could know.

Yet she never lost hope.

For this reason the Church honours her as **Mother of Consolation**.

She does not console us by removing every difficulty. She consoles us by leading us to Jesus, who transforms suffering into new life.

A beautiful story is told about St John Bosco: One of his boys had become seriously ill and was frightened of dying. Don Bosco gave him a small picture of Our Lady and simply said, "Whenever you are afraid, look at your heavenly Mother. She will never abandon you."

The boy recovered, but throughout his life he always kept that picture because he said it reminded him that someone was always praying for him.

Mary reminds us that we are never alone.

But today's feast invites us to do more than receive consolation.

We are called to become consolation.

St Paul says elsewhere, "God comforts us in all our afflictions so that we may comfort others."

Every Christian should become a messenger of hope.

Sometimes we imagine that consolation requires great wisdom.

Not necessarily.

A listening ear.

A gentle smile.

A phone call.

A visit to a lonely neighbour.

A meal for a grieving family.

A handwritten note.

These simple acts often become God's own consolation.

Mother Teresa once said that the greatest disease is not leprosy but feeling unwanted and unloved.

One day a volunteer asked her what he could do to change the world.

She answered, "Go home and love your family."

Consolation always begins close to home.

Parents console frightened children.

Children comfort ageing parents.

Friends strengthen one another.

Parish communities support the lonely.

This is how Christ continues His work through us.

There is another touching story: A little girl was frightened during a violent thunderstorm. Her father called from the next room, "Don't worry. God is with you."

She answered, "I know God is with me—but right now I need someone with skin on."

That is exactly what Christians are meant to be.

We become God's visible presence.

People should experience Christ's compassion through us.

Mary herself did this.

After the Annunciation she immediately travelled to help Elizabeth.

At Cana she noticed a young couple's embarrassment before anyone else.

At Calvary she remained faithfully beside Jesus.

After the Resurrection she strengthened the frightened disciples.

Wherever she went she brought quiet hope.

Our world desperately needs this ministry of consolation.

Wars continue.

Families are divided.

Many suffer depression.

Young people struggle with anxiety.

The elderly often feel forgotten.

Refugees search for safety.

Countless people silently ask whether anyone cares.

As disciples of Christ we cannot solve every problem.

But we can become signs that God has not forgotten His people.

Pope Francis often reminded us that tenderness is not weakness but one of God's greatest strengths.

Every act of genuine compassion reflects the heart of Christ.

Perhaps today each of us should ask ourselves three questions.

Who has comforted me in difficult moments?

Have I thanked God for those people?

Whom is God asking me to console this week?

Maybe there is someone waiting for a visit.

Someone waiting for forgiveness.

Someone hoping for encouragement.

Someone who simply needs us to stay beside them.

Mary, Mother of Consolation, teaches us that love is often silent, faithful and present.

A few years ago a hospital chaplain visited a dying man who had no family. The priest expected to stay only a few minutes. After praying together, the man quietly asked, "Father, would you just hold my

hand until I fall asleep?" The priest remained there for over an hour. The man died peacefully with someone beside him.

When the priest later reflected on that evening, he realised he had done nothing extraordinary. He had simply stayed.

That is exactly what Mary does for us.

She stays beside us.

She leads us to Jesus.

She reminds us that God's love is stronger than suffering, stronger than loneliness, and even stronger than death.

May we leave this Eucharist consoled by Christ, strengthened by His Mother, and ready to become instruments of God's consolation wherever we go.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

With confidence in our heavenly Father, who comforts his children in every trial, let us present our prayers.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully proclaim Christ's message of hope and become a refuge of consolation for all who suffer, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For world leaders: that they may work tirelessly for peace, justice, and the protection of all who are afflicted by war, poverty, and oppression, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For those who mourn, the lonely, the discouraged, and all who carry hidden burdens: that through the love of God's people they may experience comfort and renewed hope, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that inspired by Mary, Mother of Consolation, we may become compassionate listeners and generous

servants to all in need, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, especially those suffering in mind, body, or spirit, and for all our faithful departed: that the Lord may grant healing to the living and eternal joy to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of all consolation, hear these prayers we offer through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that as we place these gifts upon the altar, we may also entrust our joys and sorrows to Christ through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Consolation, and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United as God's beloved children and strengthened by the consolation of Christ, let us pray with confidence in the words our Saviour gave us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Comfort those who suffer,
strengthen those who have lost hope,
and, through the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of Consolation,
keep us steadfast in faith
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the source of every consolation and the Prince of Peace.

Through the loving intercession of your Blessed Mother, calm every troubled heart, heal divisions among peoples, and fill our homes and our world with your lasting peace. You live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who heals the broken-hearted and comforts those who trust in him. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who is the source of all consolation, strengthen you with his unfailing love. Amen.

May the Son, who comforts the sorrowful and blesses those who trust in him, fill your hearts with lasting hope. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit make you instruments of peace, compassion, and consolation for all whom you meet. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, consoled by Christ. Through Mary, Mother of Consolation, bring hope and comfort to all.

41: THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER OF CONSOLATION (B)

2 Cor 1:3-7; Jn 14:15-21, 25-27

With Mary, Christ's consolation becomes our mission.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once fell from his bicycle and came home in tears. Before anyone could ask what had happened, he ran straight into his mother's arms. She could not remove the pain immediately, but her embrace gave him courage to smile again. Sometimes the greatest consolation is not having every problem solved but knowing that someone lovingly stays beside us.

In today's first reading, St Paul praises God as "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation," who comforts us in every affliction so that we, in turn, may comfort others.

In today's Gospel, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit and leaves his disciples the gift of his peace, assuring them that they will never be abandoned.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as **Mother of Consolation**. Having experienced suffering at the foot of the Cross, she understands every human sorrow and gently leads all who suffer to the consoling love of her Son.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask for God's mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you are the source of all consolation for those who suffer: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you gave us your Mother to comfort us in our trials: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you fill our hearts with the peace of your Holy Spirit: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mother of Consolation: Comforted by Christ, Comforting Others*

A famous story is told about the devastating earthquake that struck Armenia in 1988. Amid the collapsed buildings, a father desperately searched for his young son. Rescue workers eventually gave up hope, but the father continued digging with his bare hands for nearly two days. Finally, from beneath the rubble, he heard a faint voice: "Dad, I knew you would come." The child survived because he never lost confidence that his father would not abandon him.

That story captures something every human heart longs for—the certainty that, even in our darkest moments, someone will come looking for us.

Today's readings tell us that God is exactly that kind of Father. St Paul begins with one of the most beautiful descriptions of God found in Scripture: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation."

Notice that Paul does not simply say God gives consolation. He calls Him the God of all consolation. Consolation is part of God's very nature.

The Greek word translated as consolation also means encouragement, strengthening, standing beside another. God does not merely remove suffering. He walks through suffering with us.

Mary understood this better than anyone.

She knew the anxiety of Bethlehem.

She knew exile in Egypt.

She knew the worry of losing Jesus for three days.

She knew misunderstanding.

Most of all, she knew what it meant to stand beneath the Cross and watch her innocent Son die. That is why Christians throughout the centuries have instinctively turned to Mary in moments of sorrow. Not because she replaces Christ, but because she always brings us closer to Him.

There is a touching story about St John Bosco. Whenever one of his boys was discouraged or homesick, he would quietly tell him, "Go and speak to your heavenly Mother." Many boys later testified that praying to Mary gave them new courage to face their difficulties.

Mary consoles because she first listened to the Consoler.

Jesus promises in today's Gospel: "I will not leave you orphans."

How beautiful those words are. One of the deepest wounds people experience today is loneliness.

Many elderly people live alone.
Many young people have thousands of online friends but feel completely isolated.
Many married couples silently carry burdens without sharing them.
Many people smile outside while crying inside.

Jesus knows this.
That is why He says, "I will not leave you orphans."
He sends the Holy Spirit.
He gives us His peace.
He gives us His Mother.

There is another story about a nurse working in a hospice. A dying patient repeatedly whispered, "Please don't leave me." The nurse simply held his hand throughout the night. Years later she said, "I realised that sometimes healing is impossible, but comforting is always possible."

That is exactly what Christian consolation means.
Often we cannot change another person's circumstances.
We cannot cure every illness.
We cannot erase every grief.
But we can be present.
We can listen.
We can pray.
We can hold a hand.
We can remind people that God has not forgotten them.

St Paul says something remarkable.
God comforts us **so that we may comfort others**. Notice the order.

We cannot give what we have never received.
People who have experienced God's mercy become merciful.
People who have known forgiveness become forgiving.
People who have discovered hope become hopeful.
God never comforts us merely for ourselves.
He comforts us so that we become His instruments.

Mary lived exactly this way.
After the Annunciation she immediately visited Elizabeth.
She did not keep God's joy to herself.
She carried consolation to another family.
Imagine Elizabeth's relief when Mary arrived.
Two expectant mothers.
Two miraculous pregnancies.
Two women encouraging one another.
Sometimes the greatest ministry is simply showing up.

Pope Francis often reminded us that the Church must become "a field hospital."
People come carrying wounds.
Some wounds are visible.
Others remain hidden.
A harsh word spoken years ago.
A broken relationship.
A failed marriage.
A lost child.
Financial stress.
Fear of the future.
Disappointment with oneself.

The Church cannot ignore these wounds.
She must offer Christ's healing and Mary's tenderness.

There is a lovely legend about a violin maker. One day someone brought him a cracked violin and asked if it was beyond repair. The craftsman smiled and said, "It has not lost its music. It only needs patient hands."

That is how God looks at us.
Sometimes life cracks us.
Failure cracks us.
Sin cracks us.
Grief cracks us.

But God never throws us away.
With patient hands He restores our music.
Mary stands beside Him as the Mother of Consolation.

Today's Gospel also gives us another precious gift.
Jesus says, "My peace I give you."
Notice He does not say,
"My success."
"My comfort."
"My wealth."
"My popularity."

He promises peace.
Christian peace does not depend on perfect circumstances.
It comes from knowing Christ remains with us whatever happens.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe, imprisoned in Auschwitz, amazed fellow prisoners because he remained calm, joyful and prayerful amid terrible suffering. His peace came not from the prison around him but from Christ within him.

That same peace is offered to us.
Perhaps someone here today feels discouraged.
Perhaps someone is grieving.
Perhaps someone is carrying anxiety that nobody else knows.

Mary says gently, "Come to Jesus."
Jesus says, "I will not leave you orphans."
The Holy Spirit whispers, "Do not be afraid."

If we leave this church today comforted by Christ, then we must become comforters ourselves.
One encouraging phone call.
One visit to someone lonely.
One sincere apology.
One act of forgiveness.
One patient conversation.
One Rosary prayed for someone in pain.
These simple acts become channels through which God's consolation reaches the world.

Let us conclude with one final story: After a violent storm, a little girl could not sleep because she was frightened by the thunder. Her mother brought her to the window and pointed to the sky where the clouds were beginning to break apart. Through a small opening, the

moon shone brightly. "Remember," her mother whispered, "the moon was always there. The clouds only hid it for a while."

Life sometimes surrounds us with dark clouds of sorrow and uncertainty. But God's love has never disappeared.

Christ is always present.

The Holy Spirit is always at work.

And Mary, Mother of Consolation, never stops pointing us to her Son, until every cloud gives way to the everlasting light of God's peace.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in God, the Father of mercies and the source of all consolation, let us bring before Him our prayers.

1. For the Church: that she may always be a place where the sorrowful find hope, the lonely find friendship, and the wounded discover Christ's healing love, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that they may work tirelessly for peace, justice and reconciliation among nations and peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For all who suffer from grief, loneliness, anxiety or despair: that through the Holy Spirit and the loving care of Christians they may experience God's consolation, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that, inspired by Mary, Mother of Consolation, we may comfort one another through kindness, compassion and generous service, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying and all our faithful departed: that Christ may strengthen those who suffer, grant serenity to those nearing death, and welcome the departed into the joy of eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercies, hear these prayers which we make with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that these gifts, offered with trusting hearts through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of Consolation, may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, encouraged by the motherly consolation of Mary, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Comfort those who suffer,
strengthen those who are discouraged,
and through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of Consolation,
keep us steadfast in hope
as we await the blessed coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your Apostles:

Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.

Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.

May your peace dwell in every troubled heart,
bringing consolation to all who suffer.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who comforts the weary,
heals the broken-hearted and gives us the peace the world cannot
give. Happy are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, strengthen
you in every trial. Amen.

May the Son, who has given us His peace and His Blessed Mother
as our comfort, remain always at your side. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, the Consoler, fill your hearts with hope and make
you instruments of God's compassion and peace. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and
the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, comforted by Christ and, with Mary,
Mother of Consolation, bring hope and peace to all

42. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS

Rev 12:1-3, 7-12ab, 17; (OR Gen 3:1-6, 13-15); Jn 2:1-11

With Mary, Christ leads us to victor

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, during a fierce storm at sea, a small fishing boat
was being tossed by enormous waves. Just when the sailors thought
all was lost, they noticed the light of a lighthouse cutting through the
darkness. Following that light, they safely reached the harbour.
Afterwards one sailor said, "The lighthouse did not calm the storm,
but it showed us the way home."

The first reading presents Mary as the Woman clothed with the sun,
standing firm while evil wages war against God's people, reminding
us that God's victory is certain despite every struggle.

*(Or, in the alternative reading from Genesis: After humanity's first
sin, God promises that the offspring of the woman will ultimately
crush the serpent, revealing the first glimmer of hope and the
beginning of God's plan of salvation.)*

In the Gospel, Mary notices the needs of a young couple at Cana
and gently leads the servants—and us—to Jesus with her timeless
advice: **"Do whatever he tells you."**

Today we honour Mary as **Help of Christians**, the Mother who
accompanies the Church in every trial, strengthens our faith, and
always leads us to her Son.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us
acknowledge our sins and ask for God's mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, through Mary you continue to strengthen your Church in every age. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through Mary you teach us to trust and to do whatever you command. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, through Mary you lead us to the victory of your Resurrection. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary Shows the Way to Christ*

A village once built its houses at the foot of a mountain. Every rainy season landslides threatened the people. One elderly woman insisted that every family should remember the narrow path leading to higher ground. Many laughed at her because the path was steep and difficult. One night heavy rains came, the mountain began to crumble, and panic spread. The only families who escaped safely were those who followed the old woman along that forgotten path. Later someone asked her, "How did you know?" She smiled and answered, "I didn't stop the storm. I simply knew the safe way."

That simple story beautifully captures today's celebration. Mary does not replace Christ. She does not remove every difficulty from our lives. She simply knows the surest way to Jesus and lovingly leads us there. That is why the Church calls her **Help of Christians**.

The title has deep historical roots. Christians have invoked Mary under this name during times of persecution, wars, epidemics, and personal suffering. Pope Pius VII established today's feast after being released from imprisonment, recognising Mary's maternal protection over the Church. Since then countless believers have

experienced her help—not because she works independently of Christ, but because she always brings us closer to Him.

The Book of Revelation presents one of Scripture's most powerful images. A woman clothed with the sun appears while a dragon seeks to destroy God's plan. The dragon represents every force opposed to God: hatred, violence, despair, temptation, pride, and sin.

The battle described is not merely about the past. It continues today. Every family experiences it. Every parish experiences it. Every Christian heart experiences it.

Yet Revelation gives us remarkable confidence. Evil makes much noise, but it does not have the final word. God's victory has already begun through Christ.

*(The Church also offers us **the alternative first reading from Genesis (3:1–6, 13–15)**. At first it seems to be a story only about humanity's failure. Adam and Eve fall into sin, and the harmony God intended is broken. Yet, in the very moment of judgment, God speaks a promise of hope. He declares that there will be lasting enmity between the serpent and the woman, and that **her offspring will ultimately crush the serpent's head**. Christians have long seen in this passage the first proclamation of the Gospel—the Protoevangelium—and a foreshadowing of Mary, the New Eve, whose perfect obedience would stand in contrast to Eve's disobedience. If Eve listened to the voice that led humanity away from God, Mary listened to the voice of God and led the world back to Christ. As **Help of Christians**, she continues to stand beside her*

children in the battle against sin, always leading us to the victory won by her Son.)

Mary stands in the middle of that victory. Notice something important. She is not portrayed as frightened or defeated. She stands with complete confidence because she belongs entirely to God. That is why Christians have turned to her for centuries whenever darkness seemed overwhelming.

St John Bosco understood this well. During difficult years, when many young people were abandoning the faith, he placed everything under Mary's protection. He built the great Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. Whenever someone congratulated him for his achievements, he would simply reply, "It was Our Lady who did everything."

He knew that Mary's greatest help was not spectacular miracles but leading hearts back to Christ. The Gospel of Cana illustrates exactly how she helps. The wedding is joyful until disaster strikes.

"They have no wine."

Only Mary notices.

How often mothers notice needs before anyone else! They recognise sadness hidden behind a smile. They hear worries that are never spoken aloud.

Mary sees the need and quietly brings it to Jesus.

Notice she does not dictate how Jesus should act.

She simply presents the problem with complete trust.

Then she turns to the servants and gives what may be the shortest and greatest piece of advice ever spoken:

"Do whatever he tells you."

Those words summarise the whole Christian life.

Mary never says, "Look at me."

She always says, "Listen to Him."

Every genuine Marian devotion ends there.

A young musician once asked a famous conductor how to become great. The conductor answered, "Do not spend your life trying to be noticed. Spend your life listening carefully."

Mary teaches exactly that kind of listening.

Sometimes we pray asking God to change our circumstances.

Mary teaches us first to listen.

Sometimes we ask God for immediate solutions.

Mary teaches patient trust.

Sometimes we become discouraged because we cannot see God's action.

Mary reminds us that Jesus is already working, even before we understand His plan.

At Cana the servants probably wondered why they were filling huge jars with water when wine was needed.

Yet they obeyed.

Only after obedience came the miracle.

The same pattern appears throughout Scripture.

Noah built before the rain.

Abraham travelled before seeing the land.

Peter cast the nets after a disappointing night.

The servants filled the jars before tasting the wine.

Faith always walks before sight.
That remains true today.
Parents trying to raise children in faith sometimes wonder whether
their efforts matter.
A husband praying for his wife.
A wife praying for her husband.
A son praying for elderly parents.
A daughter caring for a sick mother.
Someone quietly forgiving an old wound.
Someone remaining honest when dishonesty seems easier.

These acts may appear ordinary.
Yet these are the very places where God's grace quietly transforms
water into wine. Mary accompanies us there.

There is another beautiful lesson.
Jesus transforms ordinary water.
He does not begin with something extraordinary.
He begins with what is already present.
That is how grace works.

God starts with our ordinary lives—our work, our families, our
weaknesses, our disappointments—and transforms them into
something beautiful. Mary helps us offer those ordinary jars to Christ.

Pope St John Paul II, whose episcopal motto was *Totus Tuus*,
entrusted his whole life to Mary. After surviving the assassination
attempt in 1981, he famously said, "One hand fired the bullet;
another hand guided it." He believed Mary's intercession had
preserved his life so that he could continue serving Christ.

Yet even he understood that Mary's greatest miracle was not saving
his earthly life but helping him remain faithful to Jesus. That is the
real meaning of today's feast.

Mary is Help of Christians because she helps us become true
disciples.
She helps us persevere when faith is difficult.
She helps us trust when answers are delayed.
She helps us remain hopeful when evil seems powerful.
She helps us keep our eyes fixed on Christ.

There is an old custom among mountain climbers. The guide always
walks ahead, not to attract attention, but to show where each foot
should be placed. The climbers succeed not because they are
stronger than the mountain but because they trust the guide.

Mary walks ahead like that.
She has already completed the journey.
She knows every dangerous path.
She knows every shortcut that leads nowhere.
She knows the only safe road—the road to Jesus.

When we follow her simple instruction, "Do whatever he tells you,"
we discover that Christ can still transform ordinary water into
extraordinary wine, fear into courage, sadness into hope, weakness
into strength, and sinners into saints.

May Mary, Help of Christians, continue to lead every one of us safely
to her Son, until together we reach the eternal wedding feast where
Christ's joy will never end. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Confident that Mary, Help of Christians, intercedes for the Church, let us bring our prayers before our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that, strengthened by Mary's maternal protection, she may courageously proclaim Christ in every nation.

Lord, hear us.

2. For world leaders: that they may work for justice, peace, and respect for the dignity of every human person. Lord, hear us.

3. For Christian families: that Mary may help parents and children remain faithful to Christ and grow in love and unity.

Lord, hear us.

4. For all who struggle with temptation, fear, discouragement, or persecution: that they may find strength through Mary's intercession and the grace of Christ. Lord, hear us.

5. For the sick, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that the Lord may comfort them through Mary's maternal care and bring the departed into everlasting joy. Lord, hear us.

Father of mercy, hear the prayers we offer through the loving intercession of Mary, Help of Christians. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary offered her whole life to God's saving plan, let us now offer these gifts and ourselves, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United with Jesus, and trusting in the maternal intercession of Mary, Help of Christians, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil
and strengthen us in every trial.

Through the loving intercession of Mary, Help of Christians, keep us steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and generous in love, as we await the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you brought peace to the wedding feast at Cana
and continue to fill our hearts with your abundant grace.
Through the prayers of Mary, Help of Christians,
grant peace to our families, our communities, and our world,
where you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who transforms ordinary lives by His extraordinary grace.
Happy are we who follow Mary's invitation to do whatever He tells us
and are now called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May Almighty God bless you. May the Father, who chose Mary to be the Mother and Help of Christians, strengthen you in faith. Amen.

May the Son, whom Mary always leads us to, fill you with His grace and peace. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin, guide and protect you every day of your life. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, strengthened by Christ and, with Mary, Help of Christians, be faithful witnesses of hope.

43: OUR LADY OF RANSOM

Judith 15:8-10; 16:13-14; Jn 19:25-27

Through Mary, true freedom is found in belonging to Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a little boy wandered away during a crowded festival. Terrified and crying, he searched for his parents. His mother never stopped looking for him. When she finally found him, she embraced him so tightly that he later said, "I thought I was lost forever, but my mother never gave up on me." That embrace changed fear into peace.

The first reading presents Judith as the courageous woman who saves her people from slavery and oppression. Her victory becomes a hymn of thanksgiving because God always raises faithful servants to bring freedom and hope.

In today's Gospel (*John 19:25–27*), Jesus gives us His greatest earthly gift before His death: "Behold your mother." Standing beneath the Cross, Mary becomes the Mother of every disciple, never ceasing to search for her children until they are safely united with Christ.

Today we honour Our Lady of Ransom, whose title reminds us of Mary's loving care for Christians once held captive and, even more, for all who are imprisoned by sin, fear, despair, or addiction. She continually leads us to the One who paid the true ransom for our salvation. Let us ask pardon for every time we have refused the freedom Christ offers us.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You came to set captives free from the slavery of sin:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You gave us Mary as our Mother beneath the Cross to
lead us safely to You: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You call us to become instruments of freedom, mercy,
and hope for others: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Come Home to Christ*

A young missionary once visited a prison where many inmates had
been forgotten by their families. One elderly prisoner quietly showed
him a faded photograph of his mother. "She died years ago," he said,
"but every night I look at this picture. It reminds me that someone
once loved me before I made all my mistakes."

The missionary later wrote, "I realised that prison walls are not
always made of stone. Some are built from guilt, loneliness, fear and
hopelessness."

Today's celebration of Our Lady of Ransom speaks exactly to people
imprisoned by visible and invisible chains.

The title "Our Lady of Ransom" goes back to the thirteenth century
when many Christians had been captured during wars and sold into
slavery. Inspired by Mary's maternal care, Saint Peter Nolasco
founded the Mercedarian Order to rescue captives. The friars were
even prepared to offer themselves as hostages if necessary so that
prisoners could return home.

What a beautiful image of Christian love!
Yet today's feast reaches far beyond historical slavery.

Many people today walk freely through our streets while living in
prisons that no one else can see.

Some are imprisoned by resentment that has lasted for decades.

Some are trapped in addictions.

Others are prisoners of anxiety, depression, loneliness or fear of
failure.

Many young people have become captives of social media approval,
constantly measuring their worth by the opinions of strangers.

The greatest captivity of all is sin, which quietly convinces us that we
no longer belong to God.

Into these prisons comes Mary.

The first reading presents Judith.

She was not a warrior by profession.

She possessed neither an army nor political power.

She trusted completely in God.

Because of her courage and faith, an entire nation was rescued from
oppression. The people praised her because they recognised that
God had worked through her.

The Church has long seen Judith as a foreshadowing of Mary.

Just as Judith helped save Israel from destruction, Mary freely
cooperated in God's greater plan of salvation by giving the world its
Saviour.

Her greatness never came from herself.

Everything she was came from her complete trust in God.

That is why her own song, the Magnificat, echoes today's
Responsorial Psalm.

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord."

Mary never points to herself.

She always points to Christ.

There is a touching story from the Second World War: A young woman was hiding Jewish children in her home despite enormous danger. Someone asked why she continued risking her life. She replied simply, "If my mother had not taught me to see Christ in every child, I would never have had the courage."

Love received becomes love given.

That is exactly Mary's mission.

She forms hearts capable of freeing others.

The Gospel takes us to Calvary.

Nearly everyone has fled.

The soldiers remain.

The crowd mocks.

Darkness covers the earth.

Yet Mary stands.

She does not run away.

She cannot remove the Cross.

She cannot stop the suffering.

But she remains present.

Sometimes the greatest act of love is simply refusing to abandon someone.

How many people today need not answers but presence?

A sick husband.

An elderly parent.

A grieving widow.

A troubled teenager.

Often we cannot solve their problems.

But we can stand beside them, just as Mary stood beside Jesus.

Then Jesus speaks: "Woman, behold your son."

"Behold your mother."

Those words were spoken first to John, but the Church has always understood that every disciple is represented by him.

Mary becomes our Mother. Notice something beautiful.

Jesus gives us His Mother at the very moment when He appears to have nothing left.

He has already given His teaching.

He has given His miracles.

Soon He will give His life.

Before breathing His last, He gives His Mother.

It is His final family gift.

A famous artist once painted Mary at the foot of the Cross.

Someone criticised the painting because Mary's hands were empty.

The artist answered, "Her hands are empty because they are waiting to receive every child whom Jesus entrusts to her."

That is still true today. No one is outside Mary's embrace.

No sinner is too lost.

No wound is too deep.
No past is beyond redemption.

But Mary's motherhood always has one purpose—
to bring us to Jesus.
She never replaces Christ.
She always leads us to Him.
That is why the title "Our Lady of Ransom" remains so relevant.
Christ alone paid the ransom.

As Saint Peter writes, we were redeemed not with silver or gold but
with the precious blood of Christ.
Mary leads us to the Redeemer.
She teaches us to accept the freedom He has already won.
Perhaps each of us should ask today: What imprisons me?
Fear?
Bitterness?
Pride?
Comfort?
Lack of forgiveness?
Despair?

Whatever those chains may be, Christ has already broken them
through His Cross.
Mary simply leads us to place our hands into His.
There is an old legend about a lighthouse keeper.
Every evening he climbed the tower to light the great lamp.

One stormy night a sailor later said, "I never saw the keeper. I only
saw the light, and it brought me safely home."

Mary is like that lighthouse.
She never asks us to admire the lighthouse itself.
She simply keeps pointing us toward Christ, the Light of the World.

Let us become like her.
Let our words free rather than wound.
Let our forgiveness release rather than condemn.
Let our kindness become a ransom for someone's loneliness.
Let our presence rescue someone from despair.

Then others will discover, through us, the freedom that Christ alone
gives.

I return to the story of the forgotten prisoner: Before leaving, the
missionary asked him, "If your mother were alive today, what would
she tell you?"
The old man smiled through his tears. "She would tell me to come
home."

Every Mass is precisely that invitation. Through Mary, our Mother of
Ransom, God whispers to every captive heart:
"Come home.
The door is open.
The price has already been paid.
You belong to Me."
May we answer that invitation today with grateful and trusting hearts.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ, who has redeemed us by His Cross, and confident in the loving intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Ransom, let us present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that she may faithfully proclaim the freedom won by Christ and become a refuge of mercy for all who seek hope, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For nations and their leaders: that they may work tirelessly to end every form of slavery, human trafficking, violence, and oppression, protecting the dignity of every human person, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For all who are imprisoned physically, emotionally, or spiritually, especially those struggling with addiction, fear, despair, or broken relationships, that they may discover Christ's healing freedom through the love of others, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that, inspired by Mary, we may become instruments of reconciliation, bringing hope, forgiveness, and compassion wherever people feel abandoned or forgotten, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying, and all our faithful departed: that Christ may strengthen the sick, comfort those approaching eternal life, and welcome the deceased into the everlasting freedom of His heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son to redeem the world and gave us Mary as our Mother. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we offer these gifts with Mary, Our Lady of Ransom, let us entrust to Christ all that binds us, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father, whose Son has redeemed us and whose Mother lovingly accompanies us on our journey home.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the slavery of sin, discouragement, and division.
Through the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Our Lady of Ransom,
keep us steadfast in hope
as we await the blessed coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
You came to proclaim liberty to captives
and peace to troubled hearts.
Free us from whatever separates us from You and from one another,
that, united in Your love and guided by Mary our Mother,
we may become witnesses of Your peace,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who has paid the price of our redemption and calls us to the freedom of the children of God.

Happy are those who are invited to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who created you in love, keep you steadfast in faith. Amen.

May the Son, who redeemed you by His precious Blood, set you free from every form of sin and fear. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit fill your hearts with hope, and through the loving intercession of Mary, Our Lady of Ransom, lead you safely to the eternal home prepared for you. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, redeemed by Christ and, with Mary, Our Lady of Ransom, bring hope and freedom to all.

44. THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, HEALTH OF THE SICK

Is 53:1-5, 7-10 (Or Gen 3:1-6, 13-15); Lk 1:39-56

Through Mary, Christ heals every wounded heart.

INTRODUCTION

A little boy once visited a hospital every day after school to see his grandmother. One day the nurse asked him why he never seemed afraid of the hospital. He smiled and said, "Because Grandma says that Jesus walks these corridors before the doctors do." His faith brought hope wherever he went.

In today's first reading from Isaiah, the Suffering Servant bears our wounds and carries our sorrows. Through His suffering, God begins the work of healing humanity.

In the Gospel, Mary hastens to visit Elizabeth, bringing with her the hidden presence of Jesus, whose very arrival fills Elizabeth and John the Baptist with joy. Wherever Mary goes, Christ's healing and saving presence follows. *(Alternatively: In the optional first reading, Genesis 3:1–6, 13–15, God promises that the offspring of the woman will crush the serpent's head. Mary, the New Eve, becomes the Mother through whom the Saviour enters the world to restore the health lost through sin.)*

Today we honour Mary as **Health of the Sick**. She does not replace Christ the Divine Physician but lovingly brings every suffering person to Him, comforting us in illness of body, mind and soul.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for His mercy and healing.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, You carried our sicknesses and bore our sufferings:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through Your Blessed Mother You continue to bring
comfort and hope to those who suffer: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You are the Resurrection and the Life, healing us
through Your mercy and grace: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary Leads Us to the Divine Physician*

A doctor once recalled one unforgettable patient. An elderly woman was seriously ill, and although every medical treatment was provided, what amazed the staff was that she never lost her peace. One young nurse finally asked her, "What gives you such strength?" The woman reached beneath her pillow and pulled out a small, worn rosary. "Every bead," she said, "reminds me that I am never alone. My Mother is holding my hand, and she is leading me to her Son." The nurse later admitted that this simple testimony strengthened her more than many medical textbooks ever had.

That is the beautiful truth we celebrate today. Mary is honoured as **Health of the Sick**, not because she performs healing by her own power, but because she always leads us to Jesus, the Divine Physician. Every Marian title ultimately points to Christ.

Isaiah presents the mysterious Servant of the Lord who "has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases." Hundreds of years before Calvary, Isaiah describes Jesus with astonishing clarity. Christ does not heal humanity from a distance. He enters into our suffering. He

accepts pain, rejection and death so that suffering would never again be meaningless.

Every person eventually discovers that illness is part of life. Some illnesses affect the body. Others wound the heart. Many carry invisible burdens—loneliness, depression, anxiety, grief, broken relationships or spiritual emptiness. Often these wounds hurt even more than physical sickness.

A priest once visited a man who had survived a major accident. The man said, "Father, everyone asks how my broken bones are healing. Nobody asks how my heart is healing." Physical recovery had begun, but inside he was overwhelmed with fear and uncertainty. The priest simply prayed with him, listened patiently and reminded him that Christ had carried every human sorrow. Later the man said that conversation marked the beginning of his real healing.

Isaiah reminds us that Jesus came precisely for these hidden wounds.

The Gospel shows Mary setting out "with haste" to visit Elizabeth. Mary herself has just received the astonishing news that she will become the Mother of the Messiah. Yet she does not remain absorbed in herself. Love immediately becomes service.

Notice something remarkable. Mary has spoken hardly a word before Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and John leaps for joy within her womb. Mary brings healing simply because she brings Jesus.

This remains Mary's mission today. People sometimes wonder why Catholics have such confidence in Mary's intercession. The answer

is found in today's Gospel. Wherever Mary goes, Christ goes. She never keeps our attention on herself. Like a loving mother, she quietly says, "Come to my Son."

St. Bernadette of Lourdes once said, "I do not promise to make you happy in this world but in the next." Millions have travelled to Lourdes seeking healing. Some receive extraordinary physical cures. Many more return home without a miraculous cure but with something perhaps even greater: peace, forgiveness, renewed faith and courage. They discover that God's greatest miracle is often the healing of the heart.

Our world desperately needs this healing.
Families suffer from divisions.
Young people struggle with anxiety.
Older people fear loneliness.

Many silently carry guilt that no medicine can remove.
Only Christ can heal the deepest sickness of sin.
That is why today's Psalm joyfully proclaims:
"He forgives all your guilt and heals every one of your ills."
Notice the order. Forgiveness comes first. Spiritual healing is always the deepest healing because it restores our friendship with God.

A missionary doctor once told the story of a village where medicines were scarce. Whenever she visited patients, an elderly catechist accompanied her carrying a Bible. At first she thought only medicine mattered. But after many years she concluded that some patients recovered because of medicine, while others faced death peacefully

because they had discovered hope in Christ. Both forms of healing were precious.

Mary teaches us this balance. She encourages doctors, nurses, researchers and caregivers in their noble work. She also reminds us that every human person needs the healing that only God can give.

Today's title, Health of the Sick, has become especially meaningful after recent years when illness, pandemics and mental health struggles have touched almost every family. Many people now understand more deeply how fragile life really is.

Yet Christians never face suffering alone.
Mary stood beneath the Cross.
She knows what it means to watch someone she loved suffer.
Therefore she understands every hospital room, every nursing home, every bedside, every anxious family waiting for test results.
She remains a mother there too.

Pope St. John Paul II, who himself endured Parkinson's disease and immense physical suffering, once said that suffering becomes a place where love is revealed. His own weakness became one of his greatest sermons. Millions saw that dignity does not disappear when health fades.

Perhaps some of us are carrying illnesses today.
Perhaps someone we love is seriously sick.
Perhaps our greatest wound is invisible to everyone else.

Today Mary invites us to place every burden into the hands of Jesus.
Healing may come through medicine.
Healing may come through reconciliation.

Healing may come through forgiveness.
Healing may come through the Sacraments.
Healing may come through the grace to carry the cross with hope.

God always answers prayer, although not always in the way we expect. The greatest healing is eternal life.

An old parish priest once noticed that an elderly man came every afternoon and sat quietly before a statue of Our Lady. He rarely spoke. One day the priest asked him what he prayed about for so long. The man smiled gently and answered, "Father, I don't always have the words. I simply let a mother introduce me to her Son."

That is perhaps the simplest definition of today's feast.
Mary, Health of the Sick, introduces every suffering heart to Jesus.
She comforts without taking His place.
She accompanies without replacing Him.
She points beyond herself to the One whose wounds have healed the world.

As we continue this Eucharist, let us place upon the altar every sickness of body, mind and spirit. Let us entrust our families, our hospitals, our doctors, our caregivers and especially those who have lost hope. And may Mary, Health of the Sick, gently take each one of us by the hand and lead us always to Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician, who alone heals, saves and gives eternal life. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in Christ, the Divine Physician, and encouraged by the loving intercession of Mary, Health of the Sick, let us present our prayers to our heavenly Father.

1. For the Church: that she may continue Christ's healing ministry through the proclamation of the Gospel, the Sacraments and compassionate service to all who suffer, let us pray to the Lord.
2. For doctors, nurses, caregivers, hospital chaplains and medical researchers: that God may strengthen them with wisdom, patience and compassion in caring for the sick, let us pray to the Lord.
3. For those burdened by illness of body, mind or spirit: that through Mary's loving intercession they may experience Christ's healing presence, renewed hope and lasting peace, let us pray to the Lord.
4. For our parish community: that we may become instruments of God's healing by visiting the lonely, comforting the sorrowful and supporting those who are suffering, let us pray to the Lord.
5. For all the sick, especially those seriously ill, those nearing death, and for our departed brothers and sisters: that the Lord may grant healing according to His will, comfort to their families, and eternal life to the faithful departed, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, You sent Your Son to heal and save us. Hear the prayers we offer with confidence through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, as we offer this bread and wine, we may also place before the Lord every burden, illness, and anxiety, that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father, asking not only for our daily bread but also for healing of body, mind and soul.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil,
especially despair, loneliness and sickness that burden Your people.
Through the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
strengthen us with hope
as we await the joyful coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
Divine Physician of our souls and bodies,
You brought peace to the troubled and hope to the suffering.
Through the intercession of Mary, Health of the Sick,
heal the divisions among us and grant us Your peace,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb, who heals our infirmities and strengthens us with His Body and Blood.

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, the source of all life and healing, bless and protect you. Amen.

May Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician who bore our infirmities and healed us by His Cross, strengthen you in every trial. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit fill your hearts with hope and peace through the loving intercession of Mary, Health of the Sick. Amen.

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by bringing Christ's healing compassion to all, through the loving care of Mary, Health of the Sick.

45 THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, QUEEN OF PEACE

Is 9:1-3, 5-6; Lk 1:26-38

Peace enters the world through hearts that say "Yes" to God.

INTRODUCTION

A guide once brought visitors into the ruins of a city that had been destroyed by war. Amid the broken buildings stood one small garden, lovingly cared for by an elderly woman. When asked why she continued planting flowers in such a devastated place, she smiled and replied, "Every flower tells the world that hatred has not won." Peace often begins with one faithful heart.

Isaiah announces the coming of the Prince of Peace, whose kingdom will bring justice, joy and lasting peace to all peoples.

In the Gospel, Mary's humble "Yes" to the angel opens the way for the Prince of Peace to enter our world. Through her obedience, God begins the work of reconciling heaven and earth.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as **Queen of Peace**. She is Queen not because she ruled by power but because she welcomed the Prince of Peace with perfect faith and continues to lead her children to him.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us ask pardon for the times we have allowed anger, division and selfishness to disturb the peace Christ wishes to establish in our hearts.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace who reconciles humanity with the Father: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, through the obedient faith of Mary you entered our world to bring reconciliation and hope: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to become peacemakers in our families, our Church and our world: Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary, Queen of Peace: A Heart that Says "Yes"*

A king once wanted to reward the artist who could paint the perfect picture of peace. One artist painted a calm lake surrounded by majestic mountains beneath a cloudless sky. Everyone admired its beauty. Another artist painted a violent storm crashing against dark cliffs. At first the king was puzzled. Then he noticed, hidden in a small crack of the cliff, a tiny bird peacefully feeding her chicks. The king chose the second painting. "Peace," he said, "is not the absence of storms but the presence of confidence in the midst of them."

That is exactly the peace we celebrate today as we honour Mary, Queen of Peace.

Many people think peace simply means that there are no wars, no arguments or no problems. Yet we all know families where no one speaks loudly, but everyone carries silent resentment. We know countries without war that are filled with anxiety, loneliness and injustice. True peace is much deeper than external quiet. It is the gift of Christ living within us.

Isaiah gives us one of the most beautiful prophecies in the Bible. Into a world filled with darkness, fear and oppression, God promises a child: "A son is given to us." Among his glorious titles is one that fills every human heart with hope: **Prince of Peace**.

Notice that Isaiah does not promise better politics or stronger armies. He promises a person. Peace comes through someone, not merely through circumstances. Wherever Christ is welcomed, peace begins.

The Gospel shows us precisely how that happened. The angel Gabriel comes not to a palace but to a humble village. He does not announce God's plan to the powerful but to a young woman named Mary.

Mary is troubled. She asks questions. She does not fully understand God's plan. Yet after listening with faith she simply says, "Let it be done to me according to your word."

That single sentence changed history.
One simple "Yes" allowed the Prince of Peace to enter the world.

There is an old story about St Francis of Assisi. One day he was asked why people were always attracted to him. He replied, "Because I try to let Christ live in me." Francis became an instrument of peace not because he was naturally peaceful but because he constantly allowed Christ to shape his heart.

Mary did exactly that in the most perfect way. She teaches us that peace begins not in conferences but in conscience; not first in governments but in hearts surrendered to God.

How often do we pray for peace while refusing to forgive someone?
How often do we ask God to end wars while continuing little wars within our own homes?

The family is often the first battlefield where peace is either built or destroyed.

A grandmother once gave each of her grandchildren a small nail. Whenever they fought with one another, they had to hammer a nail into an old fence. At the end of the month the fence was covered with nails. Then she told them to remove one nail every time they performed an act of kindness or forgiveness. Eventually all the nails disappeared. But the holes remained.

"Words spoken in anger," she said gently, "leave wounds. Peace begins before the first hurtful word is spoken."

Mary understood this wisdom.
Throughout her life she remained peaceful even when everything around her seemed to collapse.
She experienced misunderstanding in Nazareth.
She fled as a refugee into Egypt.
She searched anxiously for the lost twelve-year-old Jesus.
She watched her Son rejected, mocked and crucified.

Yet nowhere do we see Mary consumed by bitterness or hatred.
Why?
Because her peace rested in God rather than in circumstances.

St John Paul II frequently called Mary the Queen of Peace because she continually directs every generation to Christ. At Cana she spoke only five recorded words to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you."

Those words remain the secret of peace today.
Imagine what would happen if every Christian family seriously lived those words.
Marriages would become stronger.
Children would grow up learning forgiveness.
Parishes would become places of welcome instead of criticism.
Communities would become witnesses to Christ. Peace spreads quietly, just as violence spreads quietly.

A teacher once placed a bowl of still water before her students. She dropped one tiny pebble into the centre. The ripples slowly reached every edge of the bowl. "Every kind word," she explained, "creates ripples you may never see."

The same is true of peace.
One apology...
One act of forgiveness...
One patient conversation...
One prayer...
One generous decision...

These small acts travel much farther than we realise.
Mary's simple "Yes" became the greatest ripple in history.
Because of her faith, Christ entered the world.
Because Christ entered the world, sinners found forgiveness.
Because sinners found forgiveness, humanity received peace with God.

The Psalm today beautifully proclaims: "Justice and peace shall embrace." That embrace happened perfectly in Jesus.

On the Cross, justice and mercy met.
Sin was conquered.
Death was defeated.
Peace with God became possible.

After the Resurrection, the first gift Jesus offered his frightened disciples was not advice or criticism.
He simply said: "Peace be with you."
Those same words are repeated at every Mass.
Before Holy Communion the priest says, "The peace of the Lord be with you always." That peace is not merely a greeting.
It is Christ himself, offering us reconciliation before we receive his Body and Blood.

Mary, Queen of Peace, prepares us to receive that gift with open hearts.

Pope Francis often reminded us that peace is built through small daily gestures. Greeting someone kindly, listening patiently, refusing gossip, helping the lonely, praying for enemies—these are not insignificant actions. They are seeds from which God's peace grows.

Today our world desperately longs for peace.
Wars continue.
Families break apart.
Communities become divided.
People carry hidden fears, anxieties and loneliness.
The answer begins where it always has: with hearts willing to say "Yes" to God.

Like Mary.

Like the saints.

Like every disciple who allows Christ to reign within.

There is a beautiful story from the Second World War. During the Christmas truce of 1914, soldiers from opposing trenches cautiously emerged into no-man's-land. They sang Christmas hymns together, exchanged simple gifts and even played a football match before returning to their positions. For a brief moment, they remembered that they were brothers before they were enemies.

That fragile peace did not last, but it revealed something profound: even in humanity's darkest moments, the longing for peace never dies.

Mary points us toward the peace that does last—the peace that comes from her Son. If, like her, we open our hearts each day and say, "Let it be done according to your word," then Christ, the Prince of Peace, will reign not only in our churches but also in our homes, our relationships and our world.

May Mary, Queen of Peace, teach us to become men and women whose lives quietly proclaim that hatred has not won because Christ is our peace. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

United with Mary, Queen of Peace, let us confidently bring our prayers before God, the Father of all.

1. For the Church: that she may always proclaim Christ, the Prince of Peace, and become a powerful sign of reconciliation among all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders: that the Holy Spirit may inspire them to seek justice, dialogue and lasting peace instead of violence and hatred, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For families: that Mary, Queen of Peace, may help every home become a place of forgiveness, understanding and love, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For our parish community: that, by saying "Yes" to God's will as Mary did, we may become peacemakers wherever we live and work, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the suffering, and all our faithful departed: that Christ may grant healing to the sick, comfort to those who mourn, and eternal peace to those who have died, let us pray to the Lord.

Father of mercy, hear the prayers we offer through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace. Grant that your Son may reign in every heart and bring lasting peace to the whole world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace, we and these gifts may become pleasing to God, the almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father, asking that his kingdom of peace may come into our hearts and into our world.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace,
strengthen us to overcome hatred with love,
division with forgiveness, and fear with trust,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, you came into our world
through the faithful "Yes" of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Fill our hearts with your peace, heal the wounds of division,
strengthen all who work for reconciliation,
protect those suffering because of war and violence,
and make us instruments of your love.
May Mary, Queen of Peace, accompany us
until your peace reigns in every heart
and throughout the whole world.
For you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, the Prince of Peace, who takes away the sins of the world.

May we receive him with the trusting faith of Mary, Queen of Peace.
Happy are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who sent his Son as the Prince of Peace, fill your hearts with every heavenly blessing. Amen.

May the Son, born of the Virgin Mary, strengthen you to become faithful instruments of reconciliation and hope. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit make your homes and this community places where the peace of Christ always reigns. Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by being peacemakers in your homes, your community and the world.

46: THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, GATE OF HEAVEN

Rev. 21:1-5a; Mt 25:1-13

Mary, Gate of Heaven: Keeping Our Lamps Burning

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a little boy stood before the massive gates of a famous cathedral. Looking up, he asked his father, "Who lives behind those doors?" His father smiled and replied, "God welcomes everyone who comes with faith." The child never forgot that moment because he discovered that every door can lead to a home, and God's greatest home is heaven.

In the Book of Revelation, St John gives us a vision of the new Jerusalem where God dwells with his people, wipes away every tear, and makes all things new.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, reminding us to keep the lamp of faith burning as we await the coming of the Bridegroom.

Today we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary as the **Gate of Heaven** because through her loving "Yes" the Saviour entered our world, opening heaven to humanity. Mary continues to lead all who trust in Christ towards eternal life and encourages us to remain ready for the heavenly banquet.

As we prepare to celebrate these sacred mysteries, let us acknowledge our sins and ask the Lord for mercy.

KYRIE INVOCATIONS

Lord Jesus, you came into the world through the obedience of the Virgin Mary to open for us the gates of heaven. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you call us to keep our lamps burning with faith, hope and love as we await your coming. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you prepare a place for those who persevere faithfully until the end and rejoice with you forever. Lord, have mercy.

HOMILY: *Mary, Gate of Heaven: Keeping Our Lamps Burning*

A traveller once arrived at an ancient city just after sunset. The great gates had already been closed. He pleaded with the gatekeeper to let him enter before the night became dangerous. The old gatekeeper looked kindly at him and said, "The gates are closed now, but if you stay awake and wait, they will open again at dawn." The traveller spent the night with hope because he knew the gate would open. As the first rays of sunlight appeared, the gates slowly opened, and he entered the safety and joy of the city.

Every Christian lives with that same hope. Heaven is not a dream or a legend. Heaven is our true home. Today's readings invite us to lift our eyes beyond the struggles of today and to remember where our journey ends.

The Book of Revelation paints one of the most beautiful pictures in the whole Bible. St John sees "a new heaven and a new earth." He sees the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God. Then comes one of Scripture's most comforting promises: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death shall be no more."

These words were written to Christians who were suffering persecution. Many had lost family members. Some had seen their churches destroyed. Yet God tells them that suffering is never the final chapter. The final chapter is life with Him forever.

Our world often closes doors. Illness closes doors. Failure closes doors. Old age closes doors. Death itself appears to close every door. But Christ opens the only door that truly matters—the door of eternal life.

Mary is honoured today as the **Gate of Heaven** because she became the doorway through which Jesus entered our human history. St Bernard beautifully called her the "Gate of Heaven" because through her consent, heaven came to earth, and through Christ, earth can now enter heaven.

Notice something important. Mary is not the destination. She always points beyond herself to Jesus. A gate never asks people to stop at the entrance. Its whole purpose is to lead people inside.

There is an old story about a mountain guide. Visitors admired him because he knew every path leading safely to the summit. One tourist said, "You must be proud that everyone praises you." The guide smiled and answered, "If they stop looking at the mountain and only look at me, I have failed." Mary would say exactly the same. She always points us to Christ.

Today's Gospel tells us about ten young women waiting for the bridegroom. Five were wise because they brought extra oil. Five were foolish because they assumed there would always be enough

time later. The difference between them was not intelligence but preparedness.

Someone once asked an elderly nun how she managed to remain joyful after sixty years of religious life. She answered simply, "Every morning I ask myself, 'If Jesus came today, would I welcome Him with joy?' Then I try to live that day well."

That is the oil Jesus speaks about. Oil represents all the hidden acts of faithful living: daily prayer, forgiveness, kindness, honesty, patience, generosity, humble service, and trust in God.

No one else can provide that oil for us.

Parents cannot lend it to their children.

Children cannot borrow it from their parents.

Priests cannot supply it to parishioners.

Friends cannot give it away.

Each of us must fill our own lamp every day.

Our Psalm today sings with joy: "I rejoiced when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" Jerusalem was the place where God's people encountered Him. For Christians, heaven is the eternal Jerusalem where every longing of the human heart finds fulfilment.

Many people spend years preparing for retirement. They save money, build houses, and make careful plans. Yet Jesus asks a deeper question: "Are you preparing for eternity?"

A man once spent decades building a magnificent mansion. Shortly after moving in, he died unexpectedly. People admired the beautiful house, but one neighbour quietly remarked, "He prepared very well

for twenty years on earth, but I wonder how much he prepared for forever."

Jesus never tells this story to frighten us. He tells it to awaken us.
Readiness is not fear.
Readiness is faithful love.

Mary herself lived in readiness. At the Annunciation she said, "Let it be done to me according to your word." At Bethlehem she welcomed God's plan. At Calvary she remained faithful beneath the Cross. At Pentecost she prayed with the Church. Her entire life was one burning lamp.

Perhaps that is why so many saints loved to pray the Rosary. Each mystery teaches us how to keep our lamp filled with the oil of faith.

St John Bosco once dreamed that the Church was sailing through a violent storm. The ship found safety only when anchored securely between two great pillars—one bearing the Holy Eucharist and the other the Blessed Virgin Mary. That dream still speaks today. Mary always leads us to Jesus truly present in the Eucharist, the Bread of eternal life.

The title "Gate of Heaven" also reminds us of something comforting. Gates exist because someone is expected to enter.
God created heaven with us in mind.
Jesus Himself said, "I go to prepare a place for you."
He does not merely prepare a place; He prepares **our** place.

Every Mass gives us a glimpse of heaven. We join the angels, saints and the whole Church in praising God. The Eucharist is the foretaste of the eternal banquet.

Whenever we receive Holy Communion worthily, we receive the One who opens heaven.

The saints often spoke of death not as the end but as going home. St Thérèse of Lisieux said she was not dying but entering life.

This hope changes everything.
Christians grieve, but never without hope.
Christians suffer, but never without purpose.
Christians work, forgive and love because eternity has already begun in Christ.

As we honour Mary today, let us ask her to teach us three simple lessons: to say "yes" to God every day, to keep our lamps burning through prayer and charity, and never to lose sight of heaven as our true home.

The ancient traveller waited patiently through the dark night until the city gates finally opened at dawn. Our earthly life is sometimes like that long night. There are disappointments, tears and uncertainty. But the dawn is coming. Christ, the Bridegroom, will come again. Then the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem will open, every faithful disciple will enter with joy, and Mary, the Gate of Heaven, will rejoice to see all her children gathered safely in the Father's house forever. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Trusting in God, who prepares an eternal home for his faithful people, let us offer our prayers.

1. For Pope N., bishops, priests and deacons, that they may faithfully guide God's people along the path that leads to eternal life, let us pray to the Lord.

2. For world leaders, that they may work for justice, peace and respect for every human life, so that the world may reflect something of God's heavenly kingdom, let us pray to the Lord.

3. For all Christian families, that, inspired by the example of Mary, they may become homes of faith where the lamp of God's love always burns brightly, let us pray to the Lord.

4. For those who have grown discouraged or lost hope, that the promise of the heavenly Jerusalem may strengthen them with renewed faith and courage, let us pray to the Lord.

5. For the sick, the dying, and all our departed brothers and sisters, that Christ may comfort them with his peace and welcome them into the everlasting joy of heaven, let us pray to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, hear the prayers we offer through the loving intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Gate of Heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that, through the intercession of Mary, Gate of Heaven, these gifts and our lives may be pleasing to God, our almighty Father.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, let us pray with confidence to our heavenly Father, whose house is our eternal home.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days.
Strengthened by the example
and intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Gate of Heaven,
keep our lamps burning with faith and hope
as we await the glorious coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you opened for us the gates of heaven
by your death and resurrection.
Through the prayers of your Blessed Mother,
fill our hearts with your peace,
unite your Church in charity,
and lead the whole human family towards your everlasting kingdom,
where you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who opens the gates of eternal life to all who believe.
Happy are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

FINAL BLESSING

May the Father, who has prepared for you an everlasting home,
bless you. Amen.

May the Son, who has opened the gates of heaven through his
Cross and Resurrection, keep you faithful. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit fill your hearts with hope as you journey towards
the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, ✠ and the Son, and
the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, keeping your lamps burning as you follow Mary,
Gate of Heaven, to eternal life.