



PRACTICAL WAYS TO COME TO KNOW AND LOVE OUR LADY

Rev. Mother Mary Paul Cigich, SDG

I didn't experience an emphasis on *doing* rather than *being* in my home growing up, but it crept in by way of the world around me. When my dear mom was on her death bed, I was 22 years old, I said to her, "I'm going to make you proud of me, Mom." "Oh, Sheila," she so gently replied, "You don't have to DO anything; I'm already proud of you." ...And we want that, don't we??? We desperately want from our mom...now we have Our Blessed Mother Mary. Believe in her, choose her, will her to be part of your life, your guide, and enter into a relationship of healing and discovery of your true identity as beloved of the Father. She will come and present you all dressed up in purity to her Son, our Lord Jesus. Picture a mom helping her little girl getting ready for Church on Easter.


Mary must become real to us. I have found many things to be helpful. Be patient and persistent. Start talking to her, she is real flesh and blood. Then be quiet and listen. *Sit quietly and wait patiently for the Lord. Psalm 37*

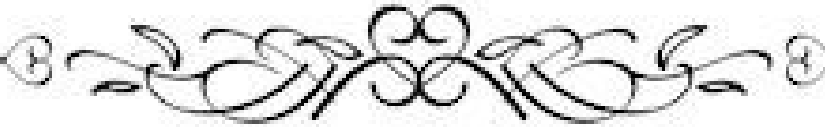
There is a way of being, a stance that we must adopt. It is as Mary herself: open, still, receptive, humble, surrendered. There is a silence, a quietness about her work in us, as there was with the Holy Spirit's work / formation in her. We ask and trust. She inconspicuously enters in and moves us, inclines us in one direction or another. This is not a transactional relationship: I ask for this and you give it to me. Rather, there is over time, (which we have been generously given so that we can orchestrate these things), a shift; the spot of light grows bigger and brighter, more illuminated, so that we can see more clearly and thus choose better. She enlightens our spiritual faculties, those parts of us that have been enlightened primarily by the world.

PRAYER AND STUDY: Set up a prayer table; choose a picture and/or statue; light a candle; honor her with flowers, celebrate feast days. Every Saturday offer a special sacrifice like giving up fruit, or fast, or put beautiful flowers by Mary's picture. Practice the First Saturday devotion. Make short ejaculations throughout the day: *O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.* Pray the Angelus 3X /day, no matter where you are or what you are doing. Pray a daily rosary with the Magnificat Rosary Companion. Read books about Our Lady. Consecrate yourself to Mary with St. Louis DeMontfort's, "Total Consecration."

START TALKING: When you arise each morning, make a decision to get to know Our Lady. Ask her help, to teach you, or be with you, and to make her presence known. Be intentional. "Oh Mary, I want to get to know you today...I want to be more patient today...Help me to know your Son." Call out to her for help throughout the day and encourage your children to do the same.

QUIET, Still, Open to Receive: Mary stood with Simeon, so quiet and open. She will come like that to us. Use quiet prayers to still our bodies and minds, like the rosary or a litany. We can ask for her help in a particular area. She comes with the Holy Spirit and gently inspires our faculties; little, subtle, quiet nudges to inspire us. We soon will notice that she has nudged us forward into holiness.





YES: Our Lady is a model for us. Each “yes” of self-sacrifice and mortification, or accepting with trust what Divine Providence sent her, was leaving herself and stepping into the Father. She grew in holiness with each “yes.” We can do the same. With each very small leaving of myself, I am emptying myself to make room for God. The very smallest, “OK, God, I will do it,” or “OK, dear Lord, I accept what is happening in my life and offer it to You,” is a step toward sanctification, for we must be empty of ourselves to make room for God. Ask Mary to offer us to God as she offered herself.

MARY- LIKENESS: Our interior dispositions need to be formed. We develop a different way of being: thinking, dressing, behaving, scheduling our day, career/work, virtues, goals...*Is this dress appropriate for your Son, Jesus, dear Blessed Mother? What is my outfit proclaiming? What is my demeanor saying to the world about your Son?* We must reverence our bodies and teach our children to do so. We truly are temples of the Holy Spirit.

DESIRE / SEEK: Desiring and seeking to be holier, to grow in virtue, to love more, to understand more...whatever it is, expands our hearts and souls and increases our capacity to receive. Sometimes God allows us to wait and wait so that He can fill us all the more. Keep desiring and keep seeking! Our Lord and Our Lady will work in you. They will come! Don’t worry; they are faithful, and they want more for you than you want for yourself. Patience! Trust!

PICTURE OF SELF AS A YOUNG CHILD: Meditation: Find a picture of yourself as a young child. Ponder this picture of yourself as a little child of God. This is how the Heavenly Father sees you. It helps in loving self and accepting our value and God’s love. Ask Mary to help you to love and embrace this little one, to feel connected, compassionate, and to fill her through the Holy Spirit with what is lacking. “Image” in your heart/mind this little one receiving what she needs: hugs, playing with mom, kind words of blessing and encouragement. Invite Mary and Jesus to be present. Soak in the filling of the Holy Spirit.

3 HAIL MARY’S ... “O Mary” Cards: Pray 3 Hail Mary’s and choose a card (use those created by the Sisters of Divine Grace or make up your own). Carry it with you throughout the day, referring to it often. Ask Our Lady to give you the grace to accomplish the stated task on the card.

THREE-MONTH PRAYER VIGIL: We are called by God to reveal the image of woman to the world, and therefore, we must know it rightly according to God’s design, and become transformed to resemble Our Lady. Our prayer to Our Lady is: *O dear Mary, guide me in discovering the truth of my womanhood and becoming the woman God wants me to be.* Pray this daily for 3 months. Then assess:

- *What is different in me?*
- *What do I know that I didn’t know before?*
- *How has my pondering and wondering changed?*
- *What have I discovered about myself, Our Lady, and God?*
- *How have my defenses changed, my way of behaving, my clothing, my posture?*

Created by the Sisters of Divine Grace, 2024: www.sistersofdivinegrace.com

