

one

This is Day Six of our Novena in preparation for the Feast of Pentecost.

What happened at Pentecost? Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the prayer of Mary Jesus was born in the souls of the disciples. That is why they gathered around Mary in the Upper Room before Pentecost because Jesus is always born according to the same pattern and plan of God: The Holy Spirit and Mary formed Jesus in her womb; the Holy Spirit and Mary formed Jesus in the disciples at Pentecost; and likewise, the Holy Spirit and Mary will form Jesus in you.

Therefore, in our preparation for Pentecost we gather around Mary and we try to become as close to her as possible so that the Holy Spirit may form Jesus within us. For the more we turn to Mary, the more we are turning to the Holy Spirit because Mary is the perfect human expression of the Spirit. She is the sacrament of the Spirit. A sacrament is a sign that signifies and makes present the grace proper to it. Mary signifies and makes the Holy Spirit present to us so that the Spirit may form Jesus within us.

I asked Fr. Gregor Bartosik, the greatest living scholar on the theology of Kolbe what he thought Maximilian would think of this idea that Mary is the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit. Fr. Bartosik became visibly excited, leaned forward in his chair and exclaimed, "That is exactly what Kolbe thought!"

Therefore, let us never waiver in our belonging to Mary, for when we turn to her, we are turning to the Holy Spirit since they always act as one.

two

This is amazing, when we look at Mary, we are in a sense seeing the face of the Holy Spirit.

On Wednesday December 9, 1998 St. John Paul II said:

"From the Cross the Savior wished to pour out upon humanity rivers of living water, that is, the abundance of the Holy Spirit. But he wanted this outpouring of grace to be linked to a mother's face, *his* Mother's."

Then, a little bit later John Paul says, "Calvary reveals the close and enduring link between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of Mary as mother...The link between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the motherhood of Mary emerges again at Pentecost, when she awaited with the disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit...therefore, as the bond with Mary grows deeper, so the action of the Spirit in the life of the Church grows more fruitful."

St. John Paul II is saying that the face of Mary expresses the face of the Holy Spirit and the more we develop a personal relationship with Mary the more fruitful will be the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

three

St. Paul tells us we should be led by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, we need to develop a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. Well, how do we relate to the Spirit. It is hard to relate to fire, or wind, living water or a dove...all symbols of the Holy Spirit.

This is why I think the Holy Spirit fashioned Mary to be the perfect expression of the Spirit because it is easy to relate to a mother. We relate directly with the Holy Spirit when we develop a personal relationship with Mary.

And how do we do this? Simply by talking with Mary.

St. Maximilian Kolbe explains this to one of his brothers in a letter when he writes that Mary herself will teach you the best way to do all things: "Frequent conversation heart to heart with Mary or at her feet will be a very good school to learn how to win an increasing number of souls...Do not worry; even if you may feel like you have one foot in hell, as long as you never tire of turning to her will full confidence..." Writings 897

four

Live a personal relationship with Mary

To accept Mary as your spiritual mother by Consecration is just the beginning of the relationship. We must go on to live in a relationship with Mary just as Jesus lived with Mary.

Devotion to Mary means to live in imitation of Jesus' relationship with Mary as he grew up under her care.

Imagine what the relationship between Jesus and Mary was like as He grew up. His first words each morning would have been "Mama!" And where would you find him throughout the day, if not in her arms or clinging to her leg, like any toddler? He wasn't anxious about what he was to eat, wear, or do. He didn't wake up at 3:00 am worried about things. He knew Mary had everything under control.

As a little child Jesus turned to Mary for all his needs. He remained close to her. He lived in her constant presence and she took care of Him.

If we want to live in imitation of Jesus, then live in imitation of that. We, on the other hand, live in pride and the radical self-reliance that results in anxiety, worry and exhaustion. Instead, imitate Jesus, belong to Mary, surrender to her and she will take care of everything.

five

I love the icon of Our Lady of Vladimir.

It teaches us how to live in union with Mary. This icon is a specific style called *The Mother of God "Tenderness"* because Mary presses her cheek to that of Jesus. If you want to live consecration to Mary, then live the message of this icon. Raise your little arms to Mary, ask her to pick you up, press your cheek to hers and let her carry you! In this way we learn to live in union with Mary and depend on her as a little child depends on his or her mother from moment to moment.

Look to Mary for inspiration, guidance, counsel, and protection. Carry on a constant conversation with her.

Since the Holy Spirit and Mary act as one, this is how we live in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.