

- The great medieval mystic, reformer, and Cistercian abbot, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who is also one of the saints most dedicated to Our Lady, once wrote of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
- *With her for your guide, you shall never go astray; while invoking her, you shall never lose heart; so long as she is in your mind, you are safe from deception; while she holds your hand, you cannot fall; under her protection you have nothing to fear; if she walks before you, you shall not grow weary; if she shows you favor, you shall reach the goal.*
- His point, of course, is that there is no one more capable of helping us get through this earthly life virtuously and in a manner that better prepares us for Heaven than Mary.
- She is the Mediatrix of all graces, she is the Mother of Good Counsel, the Virgin Most Powerful, the Seat of Wisdom and Cause of our Joy. Mary is the Gate of Heaven, the Refuge of Sinners, and the Help of Christians. She is the Queen of All Saints and Queen of Peace.
- And she, who is our life, our sweetness, and our hope; she who is as fair as the moon and bright as the sun, is also as awesome as an army in battle array. Being the very embodiment of humility, Mary makes even the devil himself tremble with fear.
- One of my sorrows of being raised Protestant is that I grew up knowing practically nothing about her. And my greatest regret is that, while studying Catholicism and learning about the Marian dogmas, I initially bristled at them. My first reaction was to reject them.
- Even as all my other misunderstandings about and prejudices against Catholicism fell away, I still had trouble accepting all that the Church teaches and believes about Our Lady.
- But in due time, as I followed through on a commitment to pray the Rosary every day, Our Lady gradually won my heart. And now I cannot imagine living my life – let alone my priesthood – without her.
- It's for all of these reasons that, every year, I invite you to do the 33 days of preparation and solemnly consecrate yourself to her, which is really just a matter of consecrating yourself more deeply to Jesus *through* the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- As St. Louis de Montfort teaches, solemnly consecrating oneself to Our Lady is “the surest, easiest, shortest, and the most perfect means” to becoming a saint. And becoming a saint, my dear brothers and sisters, is the very reason we exist.
- True and lasting sanctity is the purpose for which God has created us all! No one goes to Heaven without being purified of all of his or her sins first. To enjoy the eternal embrace with God that Heaven is, requires that we be sanctified, that we be holy.
- Furthermore, St. Maximilian Kolbe once said, “If anyone does not wish to have Mary Immaculate for his Mother, he will not have Christ for his Brother.”
- St. Maximilian's point is that salvation is a precarious thing, and if we don't give ourselves to Mary and have her motherly help in our lives, it's likely we won't know Jesus as we should.
- It is Our Lady's vocation, if you will, to round up souls for her Son, to bring us to her Son. And it is Mary who keeps us close to Jesus once we've found Him. This is why we Catholics have such a devotion to her, why we have her image everywhere, why we pray the Rosary.
- We don't worship her; we simply ask her for her prayers. We trust her as a mother.
- And our Lady's intercession is so powerful, so influential, so effective that no wayward soul is beyond her reach. If anyone comes to her in humility and faith – no matter how grave his sins – she will not leave him bereft of her help.

- Our readings today speak of our Lord's desire to save souls, to help even those who do not know Him, those who are foreign to Him.
- In our first reading from Isaiah, our Lord says that even "foreigners who join themselves to the Lord," who love "the name of the Lord, and [become] His servants" will be brought to His holy mountain.
- In our second reading from his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul speaks to Gentiles. While strictly speaking Gentiles were simply the non-Jews of Jesus' day, the Jews – priding themselves on being the "chosen people" – used the term "gentile" in a pejorative way.
- The Jews of Jesus' day held the Gentiles in contempt because they did not worship the one, true God. But St. Paul makes clear that even they are eligible for God's mercy.
- Lastly, in our Gospel we have the story of the Canaanite woman, another foreigner, who comes to Jesus looking for healing for her daughter who is tormented by a demon. While Our Lord rigorously tests the Canaanite woman's faith, He eventually does as she asks.
- What we learn from our readings is that no one is beyond God's mercy. Even those who are the greatest sinners, those who are most foreign to our Lord, can be saved.
- Yet, those of us who do know God – who are so blessed to be a member of His Body, the Church – should take advantage of the great gift of knowing His mother.
- Giving ourselves over to Mary, especially in the total manner that the consecration requires makes us holier people. And holy people go to Heaven.
- Our Lady never loses sight of a child truly dedicated to her. In those moments when we try to turn away from our Lord, Mary has this gentle way of bringing us back.
- Like a mother trying to mediate an argument between a father and son, she pleads with us, she appeals to our nobler instincts, and she makes us realize how, deep down, we really want to be right with our Lord – even if it means abandoning our own will in some matters.
- In this way, Our Lady leads us to repentance. She leads us to trust her Son and to submit to His humble yoke. And She leads us to our Lord's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- [For our brothers and sisters receiving Sacraments this evening, I pray that you will make a point to embrace Our Lady with the love and devotion she deserves.]
- Our readings today make it clear that God desires all men to be saved. While God can save anyone He wishes, the normative means of being saved is through His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.
- For those of us who are members of this Church, not only do we enjoy the fullness of truth that only the Church possesses and promulgates; not only do we enjoy the incredible graces of the Sacraments; we also have knowledge of and access to the Mother of God.
- My friends, life is short and salvation is precarious. No one can ever be assured of being saved until one stands before God's judgment throne. Yet, if we take the Mother of God to be our own mother, we can have confidence that Judgment Day will be a good day.
- Like humble children may we each entrust ourselves to her with grateful devotion, and trust that Our Lady will procure every grace we need to repent of our sins and say yes to our Lord's mercy.
- Our Lady, Mother of the Church, Mediatrix of All Graces, and Refuge of Sinners, pray for us!