



## “The Tender Way of Mary” A Witness to the Dignity of Life

From the time Mary was conceived in her mother’s womb, she was blessed and holy. Mary was brought to the temple at the tender age of three to be taught the ways of faith, God and devotion. In these reflections of Mary on experiences from her life and those of her son, Jesus, may we learn from her tender way, and her blessed insight. In this video we offer right to life issues that coincide with parts of the gospel being prayed, a reflection of the tender way of Mary as we think she may have reacted in each situation, and a connection of her tender way to the life issues of today. Please journey with us as we learn from the warm heart of Our Blessed Mother.

**Prayer:** In the Name of the Father,.....

Heavenly Father, today we come to prayerfully remember the gift you gave us in Blessed Virgin Mary. She is Our Blessed Mother, a model of the holiness of life in all circumstances. As we reflect on her life experiences, we can be confident that our prayers for life are being heard, are being answered and being acted upon at this very moment in time. Dearest Jesus, you were raised by Mary, your mother here on earth, and your love for her is undeniable, and your love for us radiates from both your Sacred Heart and your Mother’s Immaculate Heart. Holy Spirit, incline our ears to these prayers, so that our hearts become wrapped in their hearts and transformed with compassion and desire for what is all holy, good and pleasing in God’s sight. We pray this in the belief of the Most Holy Trinity and through the grace of our Blessed Mother. Amen



# Trust in God

Trust in God, a reading from the Gospel of Luke  
(**Luke 1: 28, 30-31, 35, 38**)

And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is* with you." And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come

upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason also the holy Child will be called the Son of God. And Mary said, "Behold, the Lord's handmaid; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

I remember when I was growing up, I would hear the story of Samuel, and how he heard a voice calling to him in the night, and how, when he realized it was God he felt free to say, Here I am, Lord. I always wondered if I would have that kind of devotion and complete trust in God if I was ever to hear God call me. When you love with your soul, and you love completely without hesitation, the answer isn't just Yes, it is YES...I am ready and have been waiting! I am humbled to be visited by your messenger, my God. Is there a question to what this yes means for my life and the life of those in our world? Of course. I am unsure of many things, and know that this is more far reaching than I can imagine, but God is calling me, Mary, a poor young woman from Nazareth, and I trust in God's providence. I will follow my Lord to the ends of the earth knowing he always leads me.

## Reflection

In the challenges we face in our world today, we need God more than ever and it is comforting to know that He is as present to us as He was to Mary so long ago. Could it be that the noise, the chaos or the busyness in our lives are drowning out the voice of God? Do we have the courage to follow Mary's example to wait and listen for God to speak? Our Blessed Mother is also present to us in each moment. She truly does understand the pain, confusion and fear that we are feeling. Let us reach for Mary's hand and ask her to walk with us, giving us courage to confidently say 'yes' to God's call to honor and respect the dignity of all.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of complete trust in God.

**Our Lady of Life....pray for us!**

# Poverty and Love of Neighbor

Poverty and Love of Neighbor, a reading from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:39-42,44)

Now at this time Mary set out and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

The Gospel of the Lord



## Mary

I love my dear cousin Elizabeth, and can only imagine how she must be feeling during her time of fulfillment. She has waited a lifetime for this and I know I must help her. I was looking forward to sharing our stories and being a help to her as she has been to my family. We are from families that do not have lots of money to pay for things we need, so helping her make items needed for her baby will be my gift to her. We need to care for each other, to be ready to serve others! Yet her greeting took me by surprise! I came to give *her* peace of mind and get prepared but she called me and my baby Blessed! God, your love is so evident all around me!

## Reflection

Mary was so young, but she was also very wise. Her wisdom came through her relationship with the Lord through a life of prayer. She knew the value of helping the poor and the vulnerable. We have many people in need in our world today. Some are in need of basic necessities such as food and shelter, while others may be poor spiritually or emotionally and in need of companionship. Some may be experiencing an unexpected pregnancy and wondering if they have what they need to choose life for their baby. God does not intend for us to go through life alone. We have been made for each other. He created us to love and care for one another. One of the greatest gifts we can give to another is the gift of ourselves. When we reach out to someone in need, we may be surprised by the blessings we receive from God in return, just as Mary was!

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of helping the poor and vulnerable.

**Mary, Blessed Virgin...pray for us!**



# The Sanctity of Life

The Sanctity of Life, a reading from the Gospel of Luke (**Luke 2:6-11,15,16,19**)

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock at night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood near them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them;

and they were terribly frightened. And so the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. When the angels had departed from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem, then, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

No room at the inn! I didn’t want to hear that, especially feeling the way I was feeling. We had to follow the decree to be enrolled, even if it was a difficult journey. Joseph was so concerned for me and then to give birth and see my son born in a manger was not the easiest of circumstances. But as soon as I held him in my arms, and heard his cry and felt the warmth of his skin I knew all would be well. Life is a gift no matter what the outside circumstances may be. The awe and wonder of the shepherds reflected the awe and wonder in my heart at the sacredness of my son and his life.

## Reflection

The very heart of God is revealed in the precious gift of life. “You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be,” Psalm 139 tells us.

The foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching is that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Every human life has been created in the image and likeness of God. Mary’s hopes and dreams for her son were the same as any parent expecting a child. She prayed for her child, Jesus, to be safe, healthy, loved and treated with kindness and compassion all of his life. It doesn’t matter where we are born, what we look like, how we were raised or what we have done. All human life is sacred from the moment of conception until natural death, and must be treated as such.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of protecting the Sanctity of Life.

**Blessed Mother...pray for us!**



# Elderly and End of Life

Elderly/End of Life, a reading from the Gospel of Luke  
(**Luke 2: 22, 25-26,28-30,32**)

And when the days for their purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Then he took Him in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Now, Lord, you are letting your bond-servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes

have seen Your salvation, a light for revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."  
The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

Presenting our little boy in the temple was a completion of the law. But when I entered I knew it was much more than that. We saw an older man who came in and he was very prayerful and close to God. He took Jesus into his arms and held him and looked lovingly and knowingly into his eyes...as if he knew a secret. His gaze reminded me of the love a grandparent has for a newborn grandchild. Like the completion of the circle of life. He was waiting for this moment. Because of our baby Jesus, this man, Simeon, knew he could pass from this life in his old age with peace in his heart...

## Reflection

Aging and facing the end of our lives are just as sacred as the moment we are born. The dying and the elderly have much wisdom to share and are deserving of our utmost respect. By their lives, they give "witness that every moment of our existence is a gift of God, and that every season of human life has special treasures to put at the disposal of all," as St. John Paul II tells us.

Mary knew this, and therefore felt very comfortable in allowing Simeon to hold her infant son, Jesus. Like Simeon, many people live their entire lives by faith in the expectation of seeing Jesus. Did Simeon expect to see his savior in the face of a child? How many elderly and dying people are waiting right now to see the face of Jesus? Will we be the face of Jesus for them?

When we learn to trust in God like Mary, we are confident in sharing God's love with whomever is in need. Today and everyday allow others to see Jesus in an unexpected way through you. Jesus has a face in this world. May each of us be that face.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of respecting and honoring the elderly.

**Mother of Wisdom...pray for us!**

# Immigration

Immigration, a reading from the Gospel of Matthew  
**(Matthew 2:13-14)**

Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to kill Him." So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt.

The Gospel of the Lord



## Mary

Of course we need to leave! Let us pack up and get moving! I will do as God directs! Moving to a country I do not know, have no idea what to expect or where we will live, eat, and how long we will remain there is all a mystery to me. But we cannot stay because of the violence that threatens and surrounds us! We must hurry. Joseph is under so much pressure to provide for us and keep us safe, and Jesus is crying as he didn't want to be woken up in the middle of the night for a long journey to who knows where?

## Reflection

Millions of people all over the world are forced to leave their homes due to economic conditions, threats of war and violence, and for the hope and opportunity of a better life for their children. They don't know what to expect as they travel, but they live in faith and hope that God will provide. Many times, immigrants reach their destination to find closed doors, barriers, cruelty, lack of compassion and more. They are told to go back. They are not welcome.

No doubt that Mary and Joseph had these fears, too, as they traveled to Egypt. But they continued on their journey as God had told them to do.

God is speaking to us today and reminding us of the dignity of all human persons. How will we respond to Christ's call for us to "welcome the stranger among us" For in this encounter with the immigrant, the migrant, and the refugee in our midst, we encounter Christ.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way to welcome immigrants.

**Our Lady of Guadalupe.....pray for us!**



# Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking, a reading from the Gospel of Luke  
(**Luke 2:41-46, 48**)

His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up there according to the custom of the feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days required, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but His parents were unaware of it. Instead, they thought that He was somewhere in

the caravan, and they went a day's journey; and then they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him. Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. When Joseph and Mary saw Him, they were bewildered; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You!"

The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

I couldn't find my son. Joseph couldn't find him. We thought he was with our relatives and friends in the traveling group but no, nowhere to be found. My heart was racing. I kept going back through the group searching and asking. It was as if he had disappeared! Did someone take him? Authorities have always been looking for him! Did he get lost? What if someone has him and wants to hurt him or force him into labor? Will I see him ever again? How do we retrace all of our steps to find him? What is he eating, where is he sleeping? Who is taking care of this young boy! He is my purpose! How could this happen? The fear and concern are welling up inside and I know I must give it to God and trust...but my child is GONE! .....When we finally found him after a very long three days, I couldn't stop hugging him...

## Reflection

Every parent knows and has experienced that instantaneous feeling of terror when their child has wandered from their sight. For most parents the terror is fleeting. It disappears the moment they see their child again. This was the experience of Mary and Joseph when they discovered that Jesus wasn't with them and they had no idea where he was or what had happened to Him.

However, for some parents the terror continues for a very long time, sometimes forever. Every year, millions of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers in their own countries and abroad. Human trafficking appears in "many guises", often taking the form of commercial sexual exploitation, the prostitution of minors, debt bondage, and involuntary servitude.

In particular, the sexual exploitation of women and children is a particularly repugnant aspect of this trade, and must be recognized as an intrinsic violation of human dignity and human rights. It robs people of their identity, treats people, not as a human person with rights on an equal basis with others, but as an object to be exploited.

"We must work together— Church, state, and community—to eliminate the root causes and markets that permit traffickers to flourish; to make whole the survivors of this crime; and to ensure that, one day soon, trafficking of human persons vanishes from the face of the earth."

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of protecting those at risk for human trafficking.

**Mary, Helper of all in danger...pray for us!**

# Racism



Racism, a reading from the Gospel of John (**John 1:43-46**)

The next day He decided to go to Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses wrote in the Law, and the prophets also wrote: Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth!" Nathanael said

to him, "Can anything good be from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

Yes, Nazareth. Can anything good be from Nazareth? When I heard that Nathanael had said this, I thought how sad that anyone would believe that Nazareth is a poor little out of the way village and nothing happens there, nothing good comes out of the families from there, and that we basically just exist. Sometimes people judge others not by who they are in God, but instead by what and who they know or where they grew up, how much money they have, how they speak and act or what is their race, culture or religion? So many people with so many prejudices. People identifying with regions and areas rather than looking at the heart of each person they meet, looking into their soul and their spirit. My son looks into the hearts of everyone he meets. It was obvious that Jesus saw something holy in Nathanael, for even after that comment he accepted him and loved him as if he was the only person in the world. That is how Jesus taught us all how to love.... like him.

## Reflection

Racism. This one small word carries so much meaning, history and pain. Human beings have been judging one another almost since the moment that God created us in His image. Racism affects people from every culture. Racism arises when—either consciously or unconsciously—a person holds that his or her own race or ethnicity is superior, and therefore judges persons of other races or ethnicities as inferior and unworthy of equal regard. Racism profoundly affects our culture, and it has no place in the Christian heart. This evil causes great harm to its victims, and it corrupts the souls of those who harbor racist or prejudicial thoughts.

Racist acts are sinful because they violate justice. They reveal a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of the persons offended, to recognize them as the neighbors Christ calls us to love (Mt 22:39). Racism comes in many forms

– violence against others or discrimination; it can be institutional leading to social structures of injustice. But it also comes in the form of the sin of omission, when individuals, communities, and even churches remain silent and fail to act against racial injustice when it is encountered.

Protecting the dignity of life is intentionally looking for the good in the other person as Jesus did, seeing all people created in the image and likeness of God. Mary experienced the injustice against her son. But she also recognized the immense love that her Son has for all. May we pray that she would as our Blessed Mother recognize that same love for others in each of us.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way to end the sin of Racism.

**Mother of Divine Grace...pray for us!**



# Mental Health

Mental Health, a reading from the Gospel of John (**John 2:1-5**)

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "What business do you have with Me, woman? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He tells you, do it." The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

At the wedding I know the bride and groom and their parents were so upset that their hospitality was going to run out

and what would they do? How would they even be able to look at their family and friends if the celebration had to end because of someone's poor estimation? I knew Jesus could help. On behalf of the family I went to him and whispered in his ear what was needed. He listened with his heart, he understood the circumstances and blessed them all....

## Reflection

The intercession of Mary is one of the most beautiful gifts God has given us. She is our Mother. We all need someone that can speak for us when we are in the midst of a struggle, physically, spiritually and mentally. There are many people in our lives that are affected by mental illness and need someone to intercede on their behalf. Most people, not knowing how to help or perhaps out of fear, will look the other way. The mentally ill may be falsely judged as weak, lazy or responsible for causing their illness.

Each one of us, as messengers of God's love, has the capacity to create positive encounters that can help reaffirm another's dignity and lighten his or her burden, especially in how we speak and act. As we live out our call to respect the sacredness and dignity of every human life, let us keep in our awareness and prayer all who struggle with mental health concerns.

May we follow Mary's example of asking Jesus to bless those in need and to fill our hearts with love and compassion for all. Creating a culture of respect and attentiveness is incredibly life-affirming. In some cases, we may even be helping to save a life.

Holy Mary, Mother of God teach us your tender way to intercede for the mentally ill.

**Mary, Consoler of the Afflicted...pray for us!**





# Disability

Disability, a reading from the Gospel of Matthew  
(**Matthew 12:9-12**)

Departing from there, He went into their synagogue. And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might bring charges against Him. But He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable then is a person than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

My son, teaching at every moment. He loved to turn the tables on those who tried to trip him up. Healing

on the Sabbath? Praying for someone with a disability? Of course they could relate to saving an animal from a pit, but saving a person? Jesus recognized the dignity of every person, with or without a disability or challenge and by his example shows us to do the same.

His love is more than far reaching. It is universal and complete. He taught us by his doing and his being for others.

## Reflection

Imagine that you are the person standing before Jesus, asking to be healed and you are sent away. Imagine for a moment how that may feel. Our faith gives us the trust in knowing that Jesus would never send us away. But unfortunately we are living in a society that often fails to respect the dignity of others, whether they are disabled or not. A broken society is created by broken people and we are all broken in some way. Not all disabilities are visible. Jesus knows this and loves us anyway. Concern for people with disabilities was one of the prominent notes of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus revealed by His actions that service to and with people in need is a privilege and an opportunity as well as a duty.

He is looking for hearts that are kind, compassionate and have the ability to love and respect others as He does. If we will allow this, our brokenness and disability can teach us empathy, which creates an amazing gift in us to recognize the dignity of the human person. When we extend our healing hands to others, we are healed ourselves.

Our defense of life and rejection of the culture of death also requires that we acknowledge the dignity and positive contributions of our brothers and sisters with disabilities.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of seeing the hearts of those with a disability.

**Mary, Mother of the Church...pray for us!**

# The Dignity of Life

The Dignity of Life, a reading from the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 5:3-12)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The Gospel of the Lord



## Mary

My son speaks his heart. He uses the word “Blessed” in all these life circumstances because he recognizes the holiness in each one. Blessed are those, blessed are they, blessed... blessed .... blessed. No matter what we go through, my son always encourages people to turn it into prayer. Do we hear what he is saying?

## Reflection

In this beautiful scripture, Jesus teaches us about the dignity of life.... of ALL life. Blessed are all who suffer, who are poor, who are persecuted.

In a throw-away culture, a culture which is increasingly devaluing life, we must continue to stand strong in defense of all life. Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has often shared a deep tenderness towards humanity, especially the elderly, the imprisoned, those with disfiguring disabilities, the unborn and many others through his actions, his humility, his warmth and compassion. His examples of reaching out challenges all of us to see the human dignity of each and every person, no matter who they are, where they come from, what they have. In his words, *“Even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God’s creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.”*

As St. John Paul II wrote in *Evangelium Vitae*, The Gospel of Life: “To celebrate the Gospel of life means to celebrate the God of life, the God who gives life... In every child which is born and in every person who lives or dies we see the image of God’s glory. We celebrate this glory in every human being, a sign of the living God, an icon of Jesus Christ” (The Gospel of Life 84).

Mary was blessed to be present to hear Jesus proclaim and live these truths. She, too, lived her life on earth as a witness to the dignity of life. Today we also have the opportunity to witness Jesus’ words. Read the scripture slowly, let it settle into your heart and become the foundation of your life. Like Mary, you too can be a witness to the dignity of life. Proclaim the Good News!

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of preserving the dignity of life.

**Our Lady, Queen of All Saints...pray for us!**

# Violence



## Mary

This night was like no other. A holy and sacred feast of Passover turning into a passing over of a different kind. The first visible sign to the community of Jerusalem was this angry crowd who came accusing and not listening, who came with a predetermined action of violence, ready with weapons and hostility. All aimed against one man, my son, Jesus; however not for just him, but also for what he represented to them, and the fear that it stirred in their hearts. Violence begets violence and even one of Jesus' followers reacted in such a way, out of fear and defense, until Jesus explained... "those who take the sword will perish by the sword." He showed an unfaltering sense of peace even while looking into the face of such growing anger.

## Reflection

Just as Mary witnessed the violence against her son, we have also witnessed violence and unrest in our history down to our present times. Our families are torn by violence. Our communities are destroyed by violence. Our faith is tested by violence. We have an obligation to respond. Violence -- in our homes, our schools and streets, our nation and world -- is destroying the lives, dignity and hopes of millions of our sisters and brothers. Our society seems to be growing numb to human loss and suffering.

Judas, well aware of Jesus' commandment to love one another, could not overcome the influence of a few people enslaved by fear. His own brokenness caused him to betray Jesus.

"We can turn away from violence; we can build communities of greater peace. It begins with a clear conviction: respect for life. Respect for life is not just a slogan or a program; it is a fundamental moral principle flowing from our teaching on the dignity of the human person. It is an approach to life that values people over things. Respect for life must guide the choices we make as individuals and as a society: what we do and won't do, what we value and consume, whom we admire and whose example we follow, what we support and what we oppose. Respect for human life is the starting point for confronting this culture of violence. [Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action, A Pastoral Message of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1994]

We must "proclaim, with all the conviction of my faith in Christ and with an awareness of my mission, that violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy... Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity." [Pope John Paul II]

"Society cannot tolerate an ethic which uses violence to make a point, settle grievances or get what we want. But the path to a more peaceful future is found in a rediscovery of personal responsibility, respect for human life and human dignity, and a recommitment to social justice. The best antidote to violence is hope.

In recognizing and accepting that we are all different and unique, yet all created in the image of God, we need not fear our differences. Help us, Jesus to replace our fear and anger with love and respect for all.

Let us all answer the call to be "communicators of hope and peace." May we hear and act with new urgency on the words of Jesus: "Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called children of God."

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of finding peace in the midst of violence.

**Mary, Queen of Peace...pray for us!**

# Death Penalty



Death Penalty, a reading from the Gospel of Mark  
**(Mark 14: 60-64)**

And then the high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not offer any answer for what these men are testifying against You?" But He kept silent and did not offer any answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and said to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him as deserving of death. The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

Deserving to die? My son? For what reason? For telling them the

truth they could not bear and could not understand. I could sense the fear...it was palpable and it was like you could almost smell it. It rushed through the crowds and those in authority and made everyone react from their gut and not their hearts. Ending a life is never what my son lived, taught, or promoted. Ending a life is taking their dignity and their humanity from them. It is taking control over a life, it is condemning another person to an ultimate act of violence...the exact opposite of what my son lived. He came to give life.

## Reflection

What does it mean to be a people of life – to be pro-life? We believe in a consistent ethic of life – that life is sacred from conception to natural death. In being pro-life, we believe that there is an inherent dignity of each person given by God that cannot be taken away regardless of the actions of that person. The death penalty or capital punishment violates this consistent ethic and does not conform to our pro-life teaching.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "[T]he death penalty is inadmissible because [it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person." [# 2267]

It has been proven time and again that many prisoners on death row are innocent of the crime of which they have been accused. In this situation, the use of the death penalty is taking an innocent life. The State has a right to hold people accountable who commit crimes. According to Catholic teaching, those guilty of the criminal must be treated respecting their inherent dignity.

Jesus was innocent, too and his accusers rushed to deny His dignity by condemning Him to death. But his response was forgiveness.

Use of the death penalty is inconsistent with Jesus' own example of forgiveness that offered hope and the possibility of conversion. Putting human beings to death is a rejection of hope toward the condemned persons and it may deny them the opportunity to move from sin to repentance. The Gospel proclaims that even the most hardened sinner is a person to be redeemed rather than destroyed.

The death penalty is inconsistent with the biblical vision of human beings as worthy of love regardless of their merit. And is inconsistent with our belief that as Christians our response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in our love and service to our neighbors.

Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and brother/sister of Christ, therefore within every person is God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of condemning the death penalty.

**Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners...pray for us!**



# Suffering

Suffering, a reading from the Gospel of Mark (**Mark 15:21**)

And they compelled a passer-by coming from the country, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), to carry His cross. The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

Standing in the crowd of onlookers I saw my son so weak and torn apart. He had been beaten, spat upon,

tortured and it seemed as though I could see the life draining from him with every step. He kept going, he did not give up no matter how much he was suffering. Finally, when he fell, the soldiers grabbed an onlooker...someone from out of town...to help him carry the cross. The time of day was getting shorter and this needed to be completed. Everyone could see Jesus was suffering but all were too afraid to reach out, or too angry to notice or care. Looking back at how my son lived his life...he cared for the sick and all who were suffering with any kind of concern, physical, mental or spiritual. He did everything he could to be with them in their moments of need, but no one is willing to show him the same respect and love.... but Simon. Simon helped carry the cross and walked beside him, not taking the cross away, but journeying by my son's side.

## Reflection

Suffering is a universal condition that all human persons face at some time in their life. It cannot be avoided. So many people fear suffering, especially when it affects them or someone they love. It often makes us feel helpless and many people will deny its existence or try to medicate it. This impacts the sacredness and dignity of the person. It can lead to loneliness, isolation, feeling abandoned and forgotten.

At times it seems easier to walk away from our own suffering than to embrace it; or to walk away from the suffering of others rather than being a part of their journey. For people of faith, all suffering is a place of union with Jesus Christ on the cross. In the Cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but also human suffering itself has been redeemed. And therefore should not be feared or rejected, but be seen as a place of union.

Mary was unable to relieve her son's suffering, yet she stayed nearby, watching and praying. She too was in union with her Son at that moment. She also witnessed Simon lovingly lift the cross from Jesus' shoulders and accompany Him in His suffering. Suffering, which is present under so many different forms in our human world, is also present in order to unleash love in the human person, in this case, Simon's love. This act of love upheld the dignity of Jesus in his most vulnerable state.

The elderly, the suffering and the dying in our community are deserving of the utmost respect, love and compassion until the moment that Jesus walks them to their eternal home. Jesus himself is present in this suffering person, but he is also present in those who are willing to be the "Simons" in our world who are also sharers "in Christ's sufferings."

May we be a Simon in our world who compassionately walk with the suffering every day.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way to comfort the suffering.

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help...pray for us!**



# Adoption

Adoption, a reading from the Gospel of John  
**(John 19:26-27)**

So when Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household. The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

With the last moments of his life, my son was thinking of me. His love and concern for me was spilling from his heart just like his blood was spilling from his body. In a time when he was in agony on that cross, knowing he had very little

time left, he spent those moments thinking of my welfare and my well-being for the future. He made sure I was going to be cared for and that I would not be alone. His life meant more to me than anything, yet in the moment he said to his friend who stood with me and myself: "Woman behold your son", and "Behold your mother," I felt this moment that was spoken quietly on a hill while he was dying, was meant for more than just the three of us...

## Reflection

In the Gospel of John, Jesus teaches us that, "Greater love has no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 1:13). Jesus offered the ultimate act of love by dying to save us. In the midst of His suffering Jesus taught us another lesson in love. He loved His mother, Mary so much that He wanted her to be safe and cared for by someone he trusted. He gave his mother a son; he gave John (and us) a mother.

Adoption is also a deep act of love. Those facing an unexpected pregnancy and considering the option of adoption are to be greatly respected and supported in this vital decision. The Church and its service providers are in a position to offer guidance to these women about adoption so that they can choose life by willingly placing their child into the arms of another. There is no greater love than this.

"Adoption is a gift to the child who receives a new family, to the new parents who receive a child to love and to raise, and to the biological parents who, in self-sacrificing love, have done all they can to provide their son or daughter with a good home and a bright future. Adoption also benefits society by contributing to a culture of life in which the inherent dignity of every child is recognized." [USCCB - Life-Giving Love in an Age of Technology, 2009]

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way to choose life by choosing adoption.

**Our Lady of Bethlehem...pray for us!**

# Grief

Grief, a reading from the Gospel of Luke (**Luke 23: 50-53, 55**)

And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God— this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. Now the women who

had come with Him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how His body was laid.  
The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

I had no idea how grief can change a person, and change in the circumstances. My beautiful son, Jesus, suffered the worst kind of death, and now the pain and the bleeding are over. Death has taken him from this earth. My sadness at this separation is so intense I find it hard to breathe and to think. I had no idea what to do next, and this man from out of town offered to bury him in a new tomb. What an act of kindness and respect for my son's life and now his lifeless body. Separation is more sorrow than I can bear and I don't want to leave his side. The last day has been a blur, and I can only imagine what the future will bring...there has to be more than this.

## Reflection

Mary's witness of grief is the same as we feel today at the death of someone we love. We have all known the relentless pain, sadness, exhaustion and numbness that she has described. When we are in the midst of this kind of pain, it is difficult to know where to turn and what to do next. The support of the church and community is vital during this time. What is important is to help the dying to understand and to feel they are not alone. It's a tremendous gift to befriend someone who is dying. Whenever you bring life and death together, it enhances life. So often have I heard people who were with someone dying say, "It was such a beautiful experience for all of us. What a grace!"

When a person is dying and admitted into hospice care, the priority of the team is to provide a peaceful, respectful and dignified end of life experience. Once the death has occurred their priority shifts immediately to the person's loved ones to provide them with the support needed to grieve and heal from their loss. The grieving family needs the support of a loving community around them. In our fractured world, this is not always the case.

We are all called to share mercy to others. Mercy is this care given with love and compassion, just as Joseph of Arimathea offered to Mary in her time of need. We can always lean on Mary in our grief as she knows just what is needed to comfort us. And she is our Mother of Mercy.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way to care for those who are grieving.

**Our Lady of Sorrows...pray for us!**





# The Sanctity of Life

The Sanctity of Life, a reading from the Gospel of Mark (**Mark 16: 9-11**)

Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it. The Gospel of the Lord

## Mary

Jesus is alive? My son who died on a cross just days ago is not alive? God, what is this plan? His holiness in life became overwhelming holiness in death and now life again? This is hard to believe but I have seen God's hand on my son his entire life, and this is no exception. His rising from the dead is a miracle to

us, but is who he is...the Son of God, whose death came to save many people. His death and his rising from the dead show us that life is valued and holy and comes from God!

## Reflection

The Sanctity of Life is present from the beginning of our life to the end and beyond, from womb to tomb, from conception until natural death and in every moment in between. Twenty-five years ago St. John Paul II wrote that the Gospel of Life is at the heart of Jesus' saving message to the world. In taking on human flesh, dwelling among us, and sacrificing His very life for our redemption, Christ has revealed the profound dignity of every human person. This God-given dignity does not change with our stage of life, abilities, level of independence or any other circumstance. Our existence as humans is rooted in the fact that each of us is made in the image and likeness of God, created to share in the very life of God Himself.

We also share in the responsibility to ensure that the sanctity of human life is protected. Pope John Paul II elaborates on this responsibility in his 1988 apostolic exhortation, *The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Christifideles Laici)*: "*The inviolability of the person, which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the inviolability of human life. Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights -- for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture -- is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition of all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.*"

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way of witnessing to and fighting for the Sanctity of Life.

**Mary, Cause of our Salvation...pray for us!**



# Evangelization

Evangelization, Witness to Life, a reading from the Book of Acts (**Acts 1:13-14**)

When they had entered the city, they went up to the upstairs room where they were staying, that is, Peter, John, James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. All these were continually devoting themselves with one mind to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. The Word of the Lord

## Mary

Together we huddled in the room, the same room that Jesus and his friends had celebrated Passover. Now we are crippled with fear, not knowing what was to happen to us. Our grief had turned to joy and then to astonishment and confusion. We all trusted in the truth that my loving Son told us about not being left alone. But what did that mean? Of course we had each other, but sitting in this room, praying and supporting each other in the message...was this what Jesus' life teaching was to have us do? Then the day that the love of Jesus and God our Father, the Holy Spirit came and enlivened our faith and encouraged us to speak in Jesus' name! We became one with a purpose...His beloved and blessed, His words became our own. I watched his friends become courageous and grow in holiness. My beautiful Son lives on! His message did not get lost, it has only become stronger. May our words of life be tender and bold for the weak and the strong are made whole in Jesus!

## Reflection

From the beginning, as we read in the Book of Genesis, "God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." He has breathed his very life into us.

As Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you."

Then Jesus has taught us how to love one another as He loves us. In that Upper Room, Mary and the apostles, all huddled together, received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and were sent into the world to be the living presence of the Risen Lord, proclaiming this Gospel of Life, and Love and Mercy.

We too have received the same gifts of the Holy Spirit that encourage and strengthen us to witness our faith to those seeking the truth. We believe that all life is a gift from God, is sacred and inviolable. Actively living our faith in Jesus Christ enables others see the fruit and sign of His love.

A deep and intimate relationship with Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit allows us or helps us to see the dignity and face of Christ in every person, so that in turn, we seek ways to cherish and protect life.

Our Blessed Mother, because she was the first disciple, was the first witness to the dignity of the human person and she teaches us wisdom and how to love as she does. St. John Paul points in *Evangelium vitae*: "Mary's consent at the Annunciation and her motherhood stand at the very beginning of the mystery of life which Christ came to bestow on humanity. Through her acceptance and loving care for the life of the Incarnate Word, human life has been rescued from condemnation to final and eternal death." She is the "incomparable model of how life should be welcomed and cared for."

We ask the Holy Trinity and Our Lady to guide and encourage us to give witness to life and offer unconditional love to all. We stand together to protect and respect the dignity of life!

Holy Mary, Mother of God, teach us your tender way to be a witness to life.

**Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit...pray for us!**



***Hail Mary,  
full of grace,  
the Lord is  
with you;  
blessed are  
you among  
women,  
and blessed  
is the  
fruit of  
your womb,  
Jesus.***

***Holy Mary,  
Mother of God,  
pray for us  
sinners  
now and at the  
hour of our  
death.  
Amen.***

Written by  
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Images courtesy of Brooklyn Museum, purchased by public subscription,  
[www.brooklynmuseum.org](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org) French Artist: James Tissot 1836-1902  
From the Exhibition "The Life of Christ"