

Mary Most Admirable

The Virtues of Mary



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We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!

If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.

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[LUKE 1:46-47](#)

I know what you're thinking. *"There is no way I can practice this virtue. I'm not pure of heart like Mary is. My heart has been stained by sin and shame for so long. How the heck can I be pure and how the heck can I maintain having a pure heart?"*

Well for starters, having a pure heart is not as impossible as you might think. Being pure of heart simply means that your greatest desire is to please God and to do His will above everything else. Put in even simpler terms, to have a pure heart is to put God first.

It sounds simple, but it's not easy. During one Advent season, I heard a priest ask: *"If Jesus showed up in your life, would there be any room for Him?"* He was asking this question in the context of Advent, of preparing Jesus and setting a place for Him, but I think this question can apply to all the other seasons of our lives. Is Jesus with us when we commute to work or when we take care of those we love? Is He with us when we worry about things like our finances and what other people think of us?

As a Cradle Catholic, one thing I learned early on in my life was that Mary was conceived without sin. She was literally born with a pure heart. There are two

instances in Mary's life where I think the purity of her heart can be best seen: when she visits Elizabeth and during the Wedding at Cana.

Mary set out to visit her cousin Elizabeth after the angel departed. She chose to act with immediacy as soon as she heard what God has asked of her. When Elizabeth greets Mary, she says:

"Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Then Mary says: *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior."*

I think Mary's proclamation says it all. Her heart is pure because she proclaims the greatness of the Lord and not herself, and she rejoices in what God has asked of her.

Mary's purity can also be seen in her final recorded action in the Gospels, at the Wedding at Cana. She saw the plight of the newlyweds and interceded for them. Then Jesus tells her "How does your concern affect me?" But she doesn't give up. She goes to the waitstaff and says *"Do whatever He tells you."* She knew that God's will had to be carried out and she took action in making sure it got done.

In both of those instances, Mary knew what was most important. Her greatest desire throughout her life was declaring God's greatness and following His will. Her last words in the Gospels, *"Do whatever He tells you,"* applies to all of us.

We may not even realize it, but we can make an idol out of anything: politics, money, and even making sure we watch all the shows that everyone is talking about. Putting God first won't make things easier, but it can at least help us remember what's most important. All of the things we worry about fall very short when we remember that God will help us through all of it, and by making sure that everything we do is in line with God's will. *-MONIQUE*

Reflect: Read over the Gospel passage of the Visitation. Have you ever acted on God's will immediately or do you have a tendency to put off important things?



[LUKE 2:19](#) [LUKE 2:51](#)

Are you organized and prepared for what's to come? Although it's not in everyone's DNA, the Bible actually calls us to be giving careful thought to our future. Mary serves as our best example of prudence: an act or show of care and thought for the future. Of course, in the literal sense, we can always improve on spending and saving money wisely, keeping a clean and healthy home, and keeping our body's fit for the years to come. It's easy to assume that the Church does not have much to say regarding how we plan our time beyond generally striving to live for Christ and loving our neighbor like each day is our last. But take a peek in the Catechism, and living a Catholic life is so much more. Let's begin with our mentor, Mary, by reminding ourselves how she lived prudently as the Mother of Christ.

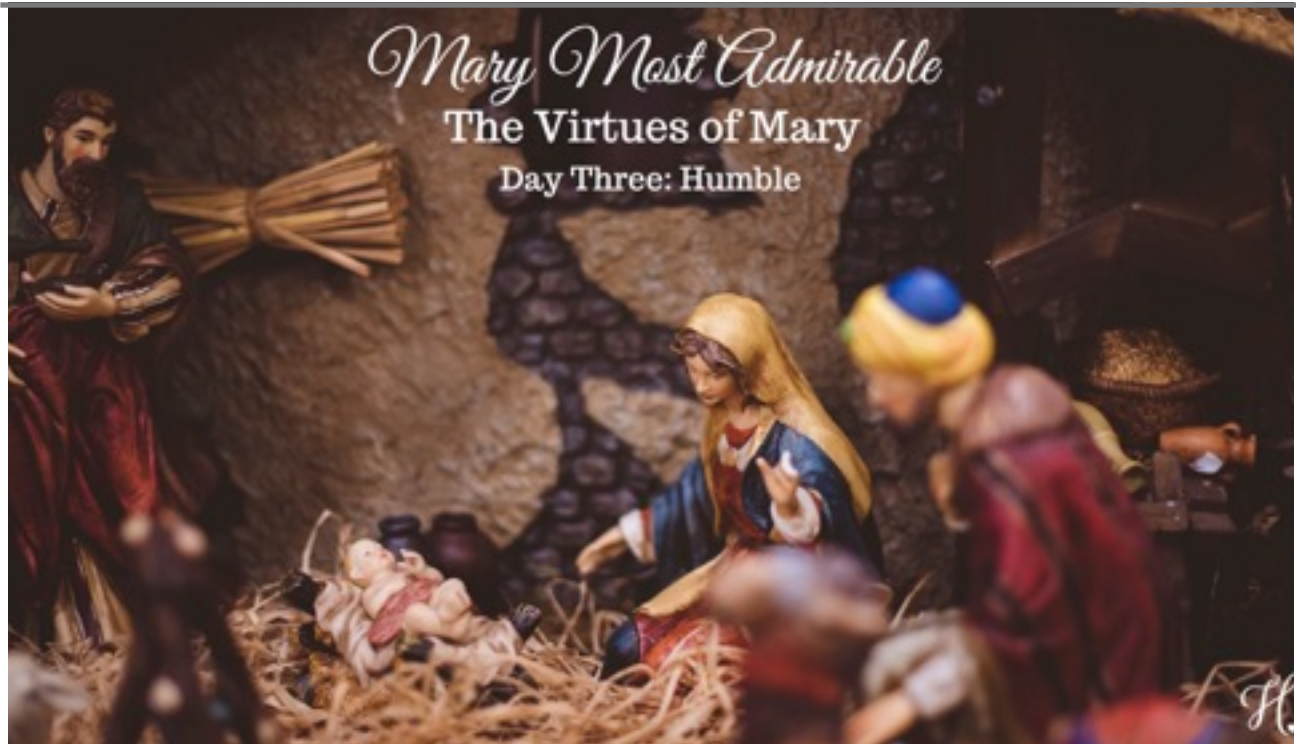
When the Shepherds came to visit baby Jesus, they were really excited to tell Mary and Joseph about the Heavenly Host they had witnessed on the way. Angels were not new to either Mary or Joseph, yet Luke takes care to write that, "*Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them.*" (2:19) When her son was just itty bitty, our Holy Mother took a step back from the hustle and bustle to

meditate and likely pray for the future of her family. Fast forward a few years and poor Mary thinks she lost her son! Once she and Joseph find Him in the temple she tells Jesus how worried they were about Him, so He went back to Nazareth and continued to be obedient to his parents. The verse following that story is probably an act every mother can relate to, *"His mother treasured all these things in her heart"* (2:51). Having a perfect Son, Mary must have had so, so much to treasure!

In the busyness of life, it is not easy to sit and find things to treasure especially if your kids are hysterical going back to school, your spouse's work hours increased, and you just cannot find a moment. But in the moment where you *"can't even"*, I challenge you flip it around, and make it *that* moment. The moment where you— as a wife, mother, friend, or daughter of God— pull something out of your holiness reserves, and treasure it in your heart. With pregnancy hormones and an active 9 month old, I have gotten in the habit of keeping an Our Lady Undoer of Knots bracelet in my pocket or diaper bag so that I have something tangible to grasp in my hands when I feel like I'm struggling to keep afloat.

While we look to Mary to be reminded of putting our hearts in the right place, the wisdom of the Church reminds us that in each thing we do, there is a right and prudent way to go about it:

"Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going." "Keep sane and sober for your prayers." Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle.⁶⁷ It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called auriga virtutum (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid." Catechism 1806



[LUKE 1: 48](#)

My mind often works in garden imagery and in loose paraphrases of saints like Josemaria Escriva, so please bear with me.

We are flower pots. Flower pots are simple and often unadorned. On their own, they are nothing special. But they are not meant to exist on their own. They exist to hold life, beauty, and goodness. It is the flower's beauty that adorns the pot, but the flower pot can't bring forth this life on its own; it needs the Gardener to plant these things first.

Our goodness and our beauty are not our own. We did not plant these things, nor did we do much to cultivate them, except by being open to receive cool water and a good pruning once in awhile. Our virtues and good works are always pointing back to the one who did the planting. My soul doth magnify the Lord.

Humility is a tricky virtue. We see it as the other end of the spectrum from pride, or having a deep satisfaction with one's own achievements. For these reasons we often think that humility means downplaying the aspects of ourselves that should be affirmed, brushing off genuine compliments given to us. We worry that we are being too proud by accepting someone else's recognition of our goodness. But is that

really giving due justice to the Gardener's work, work that He sacrificed so much to make happen?

True humility, on the other hand, allows the Gardener to be acknowledged and praised. Humility is recognizing the gifts we have been given, while also recognizing that those gifts come not from us but freely from the Lord. Our gifts, our talents, our virtues, our beauty, our goodness all point back to the generosity, love, beauty, and goodness of our Heavenly Father.

Mary is the most perfect human example of true humility. When the angel greeted Mary with *"Hail, Full of Grace,"* she didn't respond by saying: *"Oh, no you're too kind."* And when she was asked to be the mother of God, she didn't say: *"No, you're crazy. Go find someone better."* She responded so humbly with her Magnificat, *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord...for He has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed."* Mary recognized that, without God's grace she would not have been worthy for the task of being the Mother of God, but she also recognized that the Lord had given her the grace. She knew she would be remembered for the rest of time but she knew that it was because the Lord chose to work through her. Her whole life was a testament to God's love and mercy.

Similarly, our whole life is a testament to the Divine Gardener who delights in us every moment of our existence, and who adorns us in His beauty, His goodness, His grace. Let us pray that we can learn from our Lady's example of humility and allow ourselves to be delighted in. *-CARISSA*

Reflect: What gifts have you been given? Are you using those gifts to bring yourself glory, or to point others to the Lord?

Act: Ask your spouse, significant other, or a close family member or friend to tell you everything he or she loves about you. Allow your goodness to be affirmed and accept it graciously.



[LUKE 1: 45](#)

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled"

I was married in May and since then, it seems, my life has been one giant leap of faith. My husband is a Catholic missionary so instead of a honeymoon we flew from our wedding straight to summer training. We didn't know where we were going to be sent until two weeks in, so I could forget about finding a house or applying for any jobs to help tackle that angry giant of student loans that was trying to squish us. Oh, also, my husband had to fundraise 100% of his salary. So to put it mildly, I was freaking out.

I like to be in control. I rely far too often on my human weakness instead of on the Lord, only trusting God as far as I can cooperate with Him. I hear His call but I want to do things my way, in my time. When He asks for my life, completely and totally, I struggle really hard to maintain the facade of being in control. When God asks me to do something, I harass Him with a million questions, and try to figure everything out before moving again. And for a long time I thought that having questions meant that

I lacked Faith. But I've learned from Our Lady at the Annunciation that it's not that faith doesn't ask questions, it means that it asks a specific kind of question.

When the angel Gabriel appeared to her, Mary didn't ask: "*Why are you asking this of me?*" When hearing of this incredible and seemingly impossible call, Mary simply asked: How? "How can this be since I have no relations with a man?" Faith doesn't ask the question why; it asks the question how. Our faith is seen when we ask the Lord how—How do You want me to live out my call? Mary trusted that the Lord had a plan in asking her to be the Mother of God, and Mary trusted that that plan would be fulfilled, so the only thing she needed to know was how He wanted her to do it.

Like I said before, I generally only trust God when I get to decide how I do it. So surrendering even my how is a painful task. When being called to marriage, my husband and I thought we knew how our life together would look. We were going to move into a home, have a nice garden, and have them quickly filled with our children, who we would raise to love the Lord and good music. But God's how for us, so far, has looked much different.

He asks a lot of us; at times, He demands everything that is within us. But ultimately when we freely give it to Him, we allow the Lord to do things that seemed impossible for us, to work in ways which we could never have imagined. When we ask Him how He wants us to live our lives, and when we have faith that He has a plan for us, and that plan is to make us saints, we allow Him to make us these saints.

Believe, my dear sisters, that what is spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.

—CARISSA

Reflect: How is God asking you to live out His call for your life? What, if anything, is holding you back?

Act: Take 10-15 minutes of silent prayer today. Ask the Lord how He wants you to live out your call.



[LUKE 1:46-47](#)

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior."

Recently our parish's Heart of Mary fellowship group participated in a Marian Consecration based on Fr. Michael Gaitley's 33 Days to Morning Glory. Without going into too much detail about the beauty and grandeur of completing a consecration, I wish to share The Missionaries of Charity's Consecration Covenant with Mary as described by Fr. Gaitley.

MARY'S DUTIES

1. To give of her spirit and heart.
2. To process, protect, and transform me.
3. To inspire, guide, and enlighten me.

MY DUTIES

1. Total gift of all I have and am.
2. Total dependence on her.
3. Responsiveness to her spirit.

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4. To share her experience of prayer and praise. 4. Faithfulness to prayer.
5. Responsibility for my sanctification. 5. Trust in her intercession.
6. Responsible for all that befalls me. 6. Accept all as coming from her.
7. To share with me her virtues. 7. Imitate her spirit.
8. To provide for my spiritual and material needs. 8. Constant recourse to her.
9. Union with her heart. 9. Remembrance of her presence.
10. To purify me and my actions. 10. Purity of intention; self-denial.
11. Right to dispose of me, of my prayers and intercessions and graces.
11. Right to avail myself of her and her energies for the sake of the kingdom.
12. Total freedom in and around me, as she pleases in all things.
12. Right to enter into her heart, to share her interior life.

When Mary openly accepted God's will in bringing our Lord, Jesus Christ, into this world, she accepted this list of responsibilities openly, with total devoutness. Regardless if we realize it or acknowledge her presence, Mary is forever God's handmaid and our connection to heaven. -MICHELLE

Reflection: What is your relationship like with our mother? Do you pray to Mary for her intercession in your life? Do you trust her intercession in your life fully, as she did with God's will?

Act: We are asked to imitate Mary's spirit and have total dependence on her wishes and needs. After partaking in both Fr. Gaitley's consecration and St. Louis de Montfort's version, I am beginning to understand more of what is asked from us regarding the intercession of Mary to Jesus. In my personal experience, giving everything to Jesus through Mary will be a life-long journey and constant trial to



[LUKE 2:28-35](#)

I will defer the theological writing regarding the scapular to Ceroke's-The Scapular Devotion; when you find time, I highly suggest reading it. As a wearer, I will share my understanding of the scapular devotion, as well as challenge each of you to receive the blessing by month's end.

My understanding is simple and hasn't changed much since youth: If you die while wearing the scapular, you will be saved. The scapular requires our devotion through our mother, Mary, to Jesus, as it is a symbol, therefore not "really" our salvation, but the devotion is. Ceroke states

"The Scapular devotion does not provide an escape from the ordinary duties of Christianity, but is rather an incentive to undertake them with fervor and exactitude in the knowledge that one thus prepares himself to arrive at the final goal of the Christian life, union with God in eternity."

Praise God for this simple daily reminder. As a side note, removing your scapular before showering and replacing after is an easy way to remember to always have it on, as well as preserve it for the long run.

Today we are going to approach the reflection section in reverse. -MICHELLE

Act: Find a scapular. It may be around your home or you may have to visit a local Catholic gift store and purchase one, but make it happen. Print out the attached Blessing and Enrollment and approach your parish's priest to bless you. It takes only a moment, and coming prepared will show your devotion.

Reflection: After receiving the blessing, take some time out of your prayer session to read Luke 2:28-35 and Ceroke's-The Scapular Devotion. Reflect on what you can do to ensure your daily devotion to Jesus through Mary "*so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*" Luke 2:35



[LUKE 1:38](#) [LUKE 2:21](#)

The idea that blind obedience could be liberating seems like a total paradox. Whenever we make decisions, we often weigh the costs. The pros, the cons, the potential financial consequences, etc. And yet, the virtue of blind obedience asks us to follow God's will without counting the cost.

Mary's example of blind obedience is seen in the Annunciation. What's interesting though, is that she still asked questions about bearing the Son of God. When Zechariah asked Gabriel how he and Elizabeth could conceive, the angel made him unable to talk until John's birth. In contrast, Mary was not punished for her inquiry. She was allowed to ask questions, yet she didn't "count the cost" the way we would. Why is that?

Putting aside the fact that Mary was born without original sin, 1 Samuel 16:7 comes to mind: *"But the Lord said to Samuel: Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The Lord looks into the heart."*

Perhaps the Lord looked into Mary's heart and recognized that she was in need of understanding before she could accept the task that He has asked of her. In his

Catholicism series, Bishop Robert Barron describes the Annunciation as Mary being "*courted by the heavenly messenger.*" Mary's act of obedience is contrasted with Eve's first sin, the first act of disobedience.

The original sin often brings up a question: Why did God make the fruit forbidden in the first place? Adam and Eve had access to everything in the Garden of Eden, which meant that they could've eaten anything they wanted. According to Bishop Barron, "*God forbade the eating of that particular tree...because He wants us to fall in love with Him.*"

Falling in love requires surrendering your pride, your ego, your desires for the happiness of your beloved. By no means does it mean that either God or your significant other will dominate you. When we fall in love with God or with any one person, we do so with our freedom, integrity, and intellect intact. We also do so with a leap of faith, an act of letting go and letting ourselves fall.

Mary was entering into being the Mother of God with her eyes open. She still had a lot of things to consider, of course, but she stopped counting the cost once she knew how she would conceive the Christ child and learned that her cousin had a similar miraculous experience. This is why she says "*I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done unto me according to thy word.*" Any lingering questions she had were put aside in this act of surrender.

A song that I think captures the idea of blind obedience is this song from Hillary Scott called "*Thy Will*". The song describes staying faithful in spite of the struggles in life. Falling in love in general is scary enough, but falling in love with God can be outright terrifying because we are surrendering ourselves to someone we can't even see and putting aside our own egos, our desires, our doubts so that He can work His will through us. It's a leap of faith, for certain, but God gives us the wings to fly.

Fall in love with God today, my dear sisters in Christ. Take that leap of faith and don't look down. He is with you.-MONIQUE

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Reflect: Are you the kind of person who makes pro/con lists before making a decision or are you more impulsive?

What do you think is the difference between surrendering to God and doing something crazy because "You only live once (YOLO)"?

Act: If you have any lingering doubts or questions about a situation, surrender it all to God. My favorite prayer of surrender is one by Brother Charles de Foucauld:

"Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will. Whatever you may do, I thank you: I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only your will be done in me; and in all your creatures -I wish no more than this, O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul: I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father."



[LUKE 2:1-12, MATTHEW 19:21](#)

Our Blessed Mother is tough to honor in a few paragraphs. In fact, she is tough to honor our entire lives because of the great gift she has given us; her Son! How can we ever come close to honoring that gift?! Nonetheless, we must do our best to honor her in all things.

Among her many virtues, one of them was that she was poor. Thinking back to the way of life in those days, life was not as “easy” in terms of convenience as it is today. There were no cars, no grocery stores on the corner, and there was certainly no technology. Many people were not well off and struggled to have daily necessities met, like many people in our society still today. However, while Mary may have been poor financially, she was certainly not lacking in faith, and that made her very rich in the most important way.

I have never really been enthralled by the “excess” of life. Of course people need food, medical care, shelter, and some clothes to live, but the gargantuan amounts of stuff people acquire stopped appealing to me long ago when I became a minimalist. Basically, I don’t like to live with a lot of stuff and, by choice, most of my items fit in

two small boxes. The deep desire of that lifestyle has been rooted in me through Christ. As Jesus said in Matthew 19:21 *"If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."*

There are many references in the bible to having less and focusing on God. One of the pioneers in that was Our Blessed Mother herself. While she may not have wanted to have Jesus in a manger, it was God's will and she was obedient (Luke 2:7 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). So I asked myself this question: if the Queen of Heaven and Earth can be content with not having much in life and Jesus tells us to focus on Him, whom I am to own so many things? It didn't feel right, so out it all went to others who needed it more! Our Savior, the King of Kings, was born in a manger because no one was willing to give up their bed for a night. Yet, we as a society have an abundance of "stuff". Something is not right with that picture, we are not using our resources how God intended. There is something humbling and peaceful about having just enough to meet your needs. Mother Mary didn't have excess, yet she is the most blessed woman by God.

Mother Mary was poor financially, yet rich spiritually. Her focus was on doing God's will, and not being distracted by earthly riches, which will all pass away. I believe that God gives us such earthly abundance at times to challenge us to show Him what is most important to us during whatever phase of life we are in. It's as if He says; *"choose me or choose the new outfit"*. Sisters, don't let your life get too distracted by earthly goods. This life is a pilgrimage and Mother Mary is here to help you along the way. Look to her for the perfect example of faith, and not having an abundance of earthly riches, yet being more blessed than we can ever imagine. -ALLY

Reflect: In what ways every day can you choose to follow the virtue of Mother Mary by being poor materially but rich spiritually? Every small step leads to the ultimate prize of Heaven :)

Act: I challenge you, not only this holiday season, but all year round, to declutter your life to make room for what is most important: Christ! Fill up bags and donate to those in need. Someone can ALWAYS use what you don't need. I challenge you to



[MATTHEW 1:18-23; LUKE 1:26-38; ISAIAH 64:3](#)

I often joke with my friends that my patience is the size of a mustard seed, and yet my life seems to consist of nothing but waiting. I always feel like I'm just waiting for my life to get started. I want to be "out there," doing things, really making a difference, working with missionaries or teaching inner city kids.

What I learned from Mary, though, is that even when you feel like your life is finally "starting," you still have to deal with change. Dealing with change requires as much, if not more, patience, than when you have to wait for something you want. Changes in life are not usually something we can control.

Mary had to go through a lot in a matter of months: dealing with being pregnant, traveling to Bethlehem with Joseph, giving birth to Jesus in a cave filled with animals, and then running off to Egypt in the dead of night just to make sure her child was safe from Herod. It took heroic patience for her deal with all of that. In spite of all that uncertainty, she endured. Mary was willing to wait those nine months until it was time for Jesus to arrive. She was willing to wait as she journeyed from Bethlehem to Egypt, and then stayed in Egypt until it was safe to return. Later on,

she dealt with the loss of her husband, and probably lost her parents, as well as Zechariah and Elizabeth, as she raised Jesus.

You wouldn't think that heroic patience would apply when dealing with losing loved ones. At the time that I am writing this, I have only dealt with a handful of losses. However, all of them made some impact on me. I had to deal with a classmate who committed suicide while I was in college. I still mourn for my dear priest friend, who passed away the year I graduated. I lost my grandmother and my great-aunt in the same year. Death always feels sudden to me and even though I didn't really lose that many people, I still feel like I had to practice heroic patience as part of coping with my loss.

There's this wonderful song from my favorite musical Hamilton called "*Wait for It*." In this song, the character of Aaron Burr goes into a soliloquy about being willing to wait for the right moment. Burr endured the loss of many of his family members and wants to have his own family. In his mind, there's a reason he's still alive even when everyone he's loved has passed on and he's willing to wait to see why.

I think Mary's most heroically patient moment was when she had to wait for Jesus' Resurrection. It's one thing when you have to deal with the loss of a spouse, but losing a child is nothing short of unimaginable. Mary's patience is especially heroic when you consider that she had to watch her child suffer and endure physical and psychological pain, both from the cross and from the people jeering and mocking him, crying out for His death.

There's a part in "*Wait for It*" that goes:

Death doesn't discriminate
Between the sinners and the saints
It takes and it takes and it takes

And we keep living anyway
We rise and we fall
And we break
And we make our mistakes

And if there's a reason I'm still alive
When everyone who loves me has died
I'm willing to wait for it

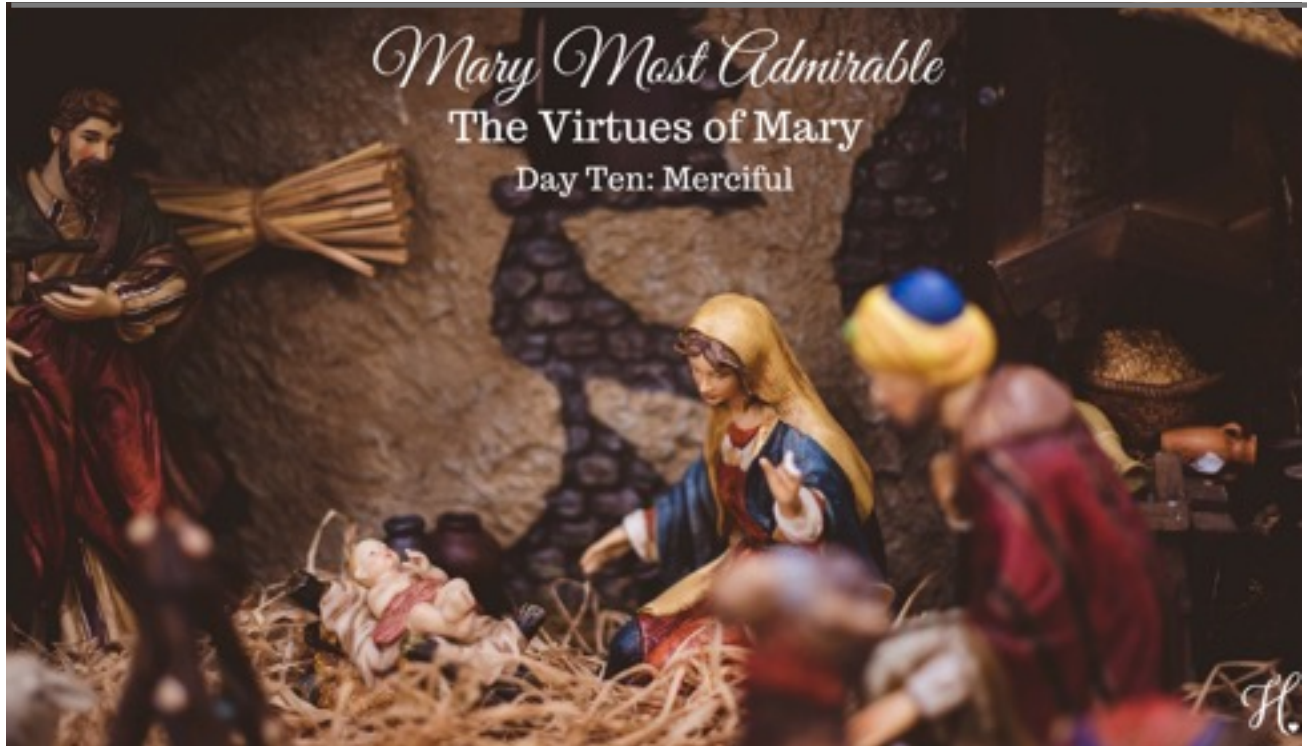
There are times in life where we feel like everyone else is in the fast lane, or times in our life when we feel like we are falling apart because of some kind of loss. It takes heroic patience to endure both the changes in our lives and the times in our lives when we feel like we are at a standstill. Whether it's a sense of closure or God's providence in a seemingly hopeless situation, we need to be willing to wait for it.

Isaiah 64:3 says *"No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen any God but You working such deeds for those who wait for him."*

Be willing to wait for Him, sisters in Christ. He's worth waiting for. —MONIQUE

Reflect: What are you currently waiting for? Are you currently dealing with a loss or seeking God's providence for something or both?
How do you think patience plays a role when dealing with loss and with other kinds of change?

Act: Offer prayers for those who are waiting for something urgently. Pray when you get stuck in traffic or waiting in a long line. It's a small way of practicing heroic patience.



[HEBREWS 4:16](#)

"So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help."

Mercy can be defined as the disposition to be kind and forgiving, but unlike compassion, mercy puts the feeling of sympathy into practice with a readiness to assist and help. This is the first study that I have honestly felt stumped at writing! It seems so simple, but I really found having to write about Mary's virtue of mercy to be so hard to put into words. Yes, of course, I know that Mary is merciful, but in what context and how is she merciful? It was not until I started to reflect and dive into Mary's motherhood did I really start to understand her ability to be merciful. Mary's greatest accomplishment is her motherhood and it makes sense that her ability to be merciful would be tied to her role as the mother of our Lord.

There have been countless times in my life where I have found refuge in prayer because of my worries, sadness, and sufferings. I have found myself throwing everything down at the feet of our Lord and I have a feeling that many of you who

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are reading this do the same thing, but there is someone else who is ready and waiting to comfort us in our afflictions. Mary is always there waiting for us and wanting to help us in the sufferings and routine of everyday life. The greatest thing about having a relationship with Mary is her ability to be a mediator of love between us and Christ. This means that while we are fleeing to Mary for comfort and love, she is also bringing us closer to her Son, so we will not only be getting the love from our heavenly Mother, but will also be growing in relationship and love with our Lord.

This relationship we can have with our Mother will also allow us to experience Mary's virtue of mercy. The love Mary has for her Son is the same love she has for us where Mary will love us unconditionally and fully because she is our Mother as well. This means that Mary is waiting for us to come to her with our suffering because she is ready to help us and assist us in whatever she needs. Just as a mother wants to comfort her children and help them in their suffering, Mary wants to help us, her children. I encourage you in this New Year to not only strive to be more like Mary in all of her virtues, but to flee to her in times of affliction. She is always waiting, always ready to help us whenever we go to her for consolation. -MARYKATHERINE

Reflect and Discuss: How can you be more like Mary in her merciful love? How is God asking you to be more merciful in this New Year?

Act: If you haven't already, I encourage you to make a consecration to Jesus through Mary. Devote yourself more closely to our Lady and in turn, you will grow in relationship with our Lord.



[LUKE 2:35](#)

When I first signed up to write this particular reflection, I thought it would come easily. I am sure like many of you, sorrow is something to which I could definitely relate right now. I've tried sitting down to write this so many times, but I found myself stuck. Then, in Mass one day (how well the Lord knows me), I realized the question, the source of my writer's block—Being sorrowful isn't a particularly positive quality of a person. We wouldn't usually consider it something that illustrates a high moral quality. So, why then is sorrowful considered a Marian virtue for this study?

Sorrowful certainly doesn't seem like a virtue when I experience it. When I experience sorrow, I can generally see myself go through the stages of grief at least once a day (sometimes more) and more than once I have found myself lingering on the anger stage. Anger toward the people who may have hurt me, or anger at the Lord for giving me a cross I never wanted to carry. I usually complain at how unfair life can be and fall into hopelessness. I feel abandoned by God.

Sorrow is a virtue of Mary, because she sorrowed well. I don't mean that she was good at being sad, that she went through those five stages of grief like nobody's

business. I mean that Mary never failed to make her sorrow and her suffering redemptive.

There is a common devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows, in which she is portrayed as having seven swords pierced through her heart. These seven swords represent seven moments in her life, beginning with Simeon's prophecy and ending with the Burial of Jesus, in which Mary experienced intense sorrow. In each of these moments, including the Passion and death of Jesus, Mary didn't suffer alone, she suffered on alongside and on behalf of her son.

When we allow our hearts to be pierced and united to the bleeding heart of Christ, we can also make our suffering redemptive. Christ raised up human suffering through His saving death, and so by uniting our human suffering to His cross, we are able to participate in His salvation of souls. This is what Mary did. We follow Mary, suffering at the foot of Jesus' cross, suffering with her Son.

Sisters, when you feel sorrow, follow our Lady and keep looking up at Christ, even if it means craning your neck a bit. Know that offering up your sorrow does not necessarily mean that your sorrow will be eased. When we are standing at the foot of the cross, we might not experience the consolation we desire, but that does not mean we aren't close to Christ. In fact, we are close enough to have His own precious blood fall on us. When we sorrow with Him and through Him, when we allow ourselves to participate in His suffering, we allow ourselves and others to participate in His resurrection. This is what makes sorrow a virtue. —CARISSA

Reflect: What is your normal reaction to sorrow? In what ways can you make your sorrow redemptive?

Act: Mediate on for 10-15 minutes today on one of the seven sorrows of Mary. Choose from: The Prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt. (Matthew 2:13, 14), the loss of the Child Jesus in the temple. (Luke 2: 43-45), the meeting of Jesus and Mary on the Way of the Cross, the Crucifixion, The taking down of the Body of Jesus from the Cross, and the burial of Jesus.



*"My lips will shout for joy as I sing your praise;
my soul, too, which you have redeemed."*

[PSALM 71:23](#)

For today's entertainment, find some time to download this playlist from Spotify. I recommend using it as background music for your prayer or meditation time, even for your cooking or cleaning investments. The more we incorporate wholesome entertainment to our daily schedules, the closer we get to living virtuous lives. —MICHELLE

<https://play.spotify.com/user/deschampspalla/playlist/1EGRLgHZ9pK5NSYBvjeB6K>

Mary Most Admirable

The Virtues of Mary

Mary Most Admirable

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