

Audio Meditation of the Prelate: “Mary’s Friendship”

During May, we turn our eyes towards our Mother Mary, and we make a special effort to remember her and deal with her more frequently. Indeed, we have the opportunity to learn, always anew, from the example of her life. Also now, during this special time of “social distancing” that we are going through, Our Lady helps us to be better friends and stirs up our generosity to be present and close to others, so that no one feels alone. Mary’s life teaches us that, in our life too, friendship with God gives a new and supernatural strength to human friendship.

We learn this truth every time we pray the Holy Rosary. Pope Francis has asked “that we rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home during the month of May.” In the current health crisis, praying the Rosary as a family will help us, the Holy Father says, to “contemplate together the face of Christ with the heart of Mary, our Mother.” And this will “unite us even more as a spiritual family and help us overcome this time of trial.”

Praying the Rosary together helps to unite us more as a family. Through the Communion of Saints, we are united spiritually with the whole Church, as one great family that has recourse to the same Mother. In a way, we are united with all humanity. We can even invite a friend to pray with us, if he or she wants to, perhaps through digital means. In some cases, it may be an opportunity to help someone discover the Rosary for the first time.

Saint John Paul II said that the Rosary is “like a compendium of the Gospel,” a prayer that is both Marian and Christological. In each mystery we contemplate a moment in the history of salvation. This contemplation can give rise to a renewed determination to detect the needs of others and anticipate ways to serve them, as friends do.

After Our Lady’s *fiat!* (“let it be done to me according to your Word”), she sets off in haste to help her cousin Elizabeth. The Angel had not told her to do this; he had made known to Mary her cousin’s pregnancy as a sign of God’s omnipotence. But Mary realizes that Elizabeth will need help. And Mary, being already the Mother of God, shows us what true love and friendship mean by taking the initiative in her self-giving, in her selfless service.

Years go by, and we see Our Lady accompanying Jesus at a wedding in Cana. There Mary also realizes the need of the bride and groom before anyone else, and she takes the initiative. The love of friendship sharpens our sight, and we discover things that perhaps go unnoticed to others.

Later, we contemplate Mary next to the Cross of her Son. Saint Josemaria encourages each of us: “Marvel at Mary’s courage. She stands at the foot of the Cross, with the greatest of human sorrows—there is no sorrow like her sorrow. And she is filled with fortitude. Ask her for that same strength, so that you too can remain beside the Cross.”¹ Let us ask Our Lady to help us imitate her in her capacity to be strong in the face of suffering, especially at this time, so that with our sincere friendship we can be of help and comfort to others.

After the Resurrection of Jesus, Mary gathers together the Apostles, who had dispersed after Our Lord’s Passion, and she accompanies them and comforts them.

Saint Luke says that “Mary kept all these things” (the things referring to Jesus), pondering them in her heart.” Mary prays. Her conversation with God is contemplation and a loving dialogue. It is friendship with God. And in that relationship with God, Mary does not hesitate to say what she thinks, as we see at various moments throughout the Gospel. We see this, for example, when Mary responds to the Angel: “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” (*Lk* 1:34). Later, when Our Lady finds the Child Jesus in the Temple, she asks Him: “Why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety” (*Lk* 2:48). In the wedding at Cana, she shares with Jesus, with all simplicity, what she sees: “They have no wine” (*Jn* 2:3). At other times, she does not seem to need many words to communicate with God. Mary knows how to wait for God’s good time, and meanwhile “ponders” on things “in her heart.” In the end, prayer is just that: a deep relationship of friendship and trust with God, which He wants to have with each one of us.

Let us go to Jesus through Mary. Saint Josemaria often set forth this itinerary for the Christian life: “If you seek Mary, you will find Jesus.”² In many countries with a Christian tradition, we “seek Mary” by visiting shrines dedicated to her. This year, it may not be possible

¹ Saint Josemaria, *The Way*, 508.

² Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, 144.

to go physically to the nearby shrines. But digital means will help us to do these May pilgrimages in a different way, including from our own home.

When we pray the Rosary, we go towards Jesus with Mary, because every time we go to Our Lady, she leads us to her Son. We turn to the one who is all-powerful in her petition, so that we may be faithful to God's plans for each one of us, including now in these times of great uncertainty. Our Lady went through very difficult and painful moments. She will console and strengthen us, so that—always trusting in God's plans—we can be a support for our friends and loved ones, and can truly love others.