

## *The Perfect Lenten Companion*

### *The Virgin Mary*

*offers us the perfect model of discipleship, leading us ever closer to Jesus*

*By Dr. Robert Fastigi*

#### *Protector and Guide*

As our spiritual Mother, Mary not only leads us to Christ, but she also protects and guides us from sin. Vatican II teaches:

‘The maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into the happiness of their true home’ (*Lumen Fentium*, No. 62).

Lent is a perfect time to renew our devotion to Mary as our spiritual mother who cares for us in the midst of challenges and difficulties. One of the oldest known prayers to Mary is known as the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* (“Under Thy Protection”), which goes back to the third or fourth century. One translation of it reads:

*We fly to Thy protection, O Holy Mother of God;  
Do not despise our petitions in our necessities,  
but deliver us always from all dangers,  
O Glorious and Blessed Virgin. Amen.*

Because Lent is a time to turn away from sin, it is also an ideal time to recognize the gift that Our Lord himself gave us, giving us his own mother as our mother while he was dying on the cross (Jn 19:25-27). Pope St. John Paul II recognized that Jesus gave Mary as mother not only to the beloved disciple but to all of the faithful. Mary’s spiritual motherhood is the basis for the “Marian dimension” of the life of each of the disciples of Christ.

John Paul II wrote in 1987:

“The Marian dimension of the life of a disciple of Christ is expressed in a special way precisely through this filial entrusting to the Mother of Christ, which began with the testament of the Redeemer of Golgotha. Entrusting himself to Mary in a filial manner, the Christian, like the Apostle John, ‘welcomes’ the Mother of Christ ‘into his own home’ and brings her into everything that makes up his inner life, that is to say into his human and Christian ‘I’: he took her to his own home.’ Thus, the Christian seeks to be taken into that ‘maternal charity’ with which the redeemer’s Mother ‘cares for the brethren of her Son,’ in whose birth and development she cooperates” (*Redemptoris Mater*, No. 45).

*...to be continued*

## ADDITIONAL MARIAN ACTIVITIES FOR LENT

Devotion to Mary is a privileged way for deepening our Lenten experience. Asking Our lady to accompany us as we journey through the 40 days of Lent is excellent. Any Marian devotion one pursues during Lent will bring forth many graces and consolations. Because Mary is "Our Lady of Grace" she will help us in our Lenten journey. If the goal of Lent is to draw closer to Jesus, then devotion to Mary will be a most assured path.

*The  
ROSARY  
is the weapon for  
these times.  
St. Pio of Pietrelcin*

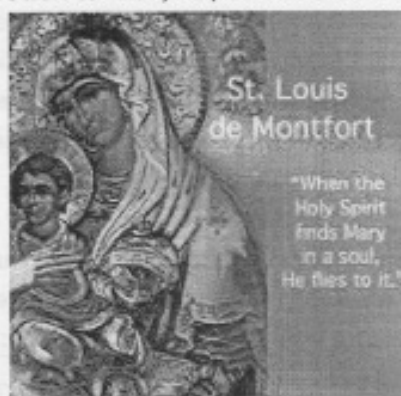
### Pray the Rosary

- During this centenary year of the apparitions of Fatima, a resolve to pray the Rosary daily would prove especially fruitful. For those who have trouble finding time to pray five mysteries daily, even one decade every day will be a source of grace.



### Read a book about Mary

Reading a book about Mary during Lent would be a great idea, especially a classic like "True Devotion to Mary" by St. Louis de Montfort.



### Learn about Fatima

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of Fatima. Watch a movie or read a book about this miracle. The message of prayer and sacrifice resonates with Lent.

### Pray the Stations of the Cross

Families might also plan to participate in the Stations of the Cross on the Fridays during Lent. The 14 stations have a definite Marian quality, especially station 4, which recalls Jesus meeting his Mother along the way of the Cross.



### Pray other Marian Prayers

In addition to the Rosary, there are other Marian prayers that could be recited together, such as the Litany of Loreto, Prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Help and the various Marian novena prayers.