

The Perfect Lenten Companion

The Virgin Mary
offers us the perfect model of discipleship,
leading us ever closer to Jesus

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Part II

The Blessed Mother, Model Disciple

These words of Pope Francis help us to appreciate one reason why Mary is the perfect companion for Lent: She is the model of the perfect disciple because she entrusted herself completely to God. At the Annunciation, Mary tells the angel: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). In 1974, Pope Paul VI taught that Mary is "worthy of imitation because she was the first and the most perfect of Christ's disciples" (*Marialis Cultus*, No. 35).

In his Angelus address for the second Sunday of Lent, March 12, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI highlighted Mary as the model of believers who listen attentively to God:

"The Virgin Mary herself, among all human creatures the closest to God, still had to walk day after day in a pilgrimage of faith (cf. *Lumen Fentium*, No. 58), constantly guarding and meditating on in her heart the Word that God addressed to her through holy Scripture and through the events of the life of her Son, in whom she recognized and welcomed the Lord's mysterious voice. And so, this gift and duty for each one of us during the season of Lent: to listen to Christ, like Mary. To listen to him in his Word, contained in Sacred Scripture. To listen to him in the events of our lives, seeking to decipher in them the messages of Providence."

In "Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary" (Liturgical Press), one of the Mass formularies for Lent is in honor of "Holy Mary, Disciple of the Lord." The entrance antiphon for this Mass reads:

*How favored are you, Mary!
You received the angel's message
And became the Mother of God's Word.
How favored are you, for you kept in your heart
Those words from heaven and became the disciple of God's Word.*

...to be continued in the next bulletin

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.

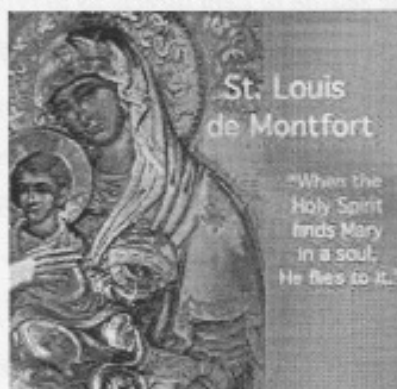
Pray the Rosary

- 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.



Meditate before an Icon

More common in Eastern Christianity, icons are meant to guide us to deeper prayer and reflection. Mary with the child Jesus is frequently depicted.

Participate in First Saturdays

It would also be helpful to begin the five first Saturdays requested by Our Lady of Fatima in 1925. She revealed to Sister Lucia that she would:

"assist at the hour of death, with the graces necessary for their salvation, all those who, on the first Saturday of five consecutive months, shall confess, receive Holy Communion, recite five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for 15 minutes while meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary, with the intention of making reparation to me."



Consider Consecration

Some might decide that this Lent will be when they begin their preparation for making the total consecration to Mary according to the method of St. Louis de Montfort. There are a number of groups that help people prepare for this consecration, which usually involves a 33-day period of preparation.