

The Perfect Lenten Companion

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



By Dr. Robert Fastiggi

The season of Lent directs us to recall our own baptism and prepare for the celebration of the paschal mystery of the passion, death and Resurrection of Christ. It is a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and it helps us grow closer to Christ. In celebrating Lent and in every season of the liturgical year, it is good to recall the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, that the "Church honors with special love the Blessed Mary, Mother of God, who is joined by an inseparable bond to the saving work of her Son. In her the Church holds up and admires the most excellent fruit of the redemption, and joyfully contemplates, as in a faultless image that which she herself desires and hopes wholly to be" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, No. 103).

Mary is the perfect companion for Lent, and Lent is a perfect time to deepen our love, knowledge and veneration of the Mother of God. This is especially true during this centenary year of the apparitions of Mary at Fatima, where Mary asked three shepherd children to offer prayers and sacrifices for the conversion of poor sinners. Lent is also a season of conversion, and here too we receive great help from Mary who, as the Mother of Mercy, points us to her divine Son, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to reconcile sinners to himself (cf. Lk 5:31-32). In his general audience on Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2014, Pope Francis highlighted the special protection and help of the Blessed Virgin for the journey of Lent:

"Let us give thanks to God for the mystery of his crucified love; authentic faith, conversion and openness of heart to the brethren: These are the essential elements for living the season of Lent. On this journey, we want to invoke with special trust the protection and help of the Virgin Mary: May she, who was the first to believe in Christ, accompany us in our days of intense prayer and penance, so that we might come to celebrate, purified and renewed in spirit, the great paschal mystery of her Son."

...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.

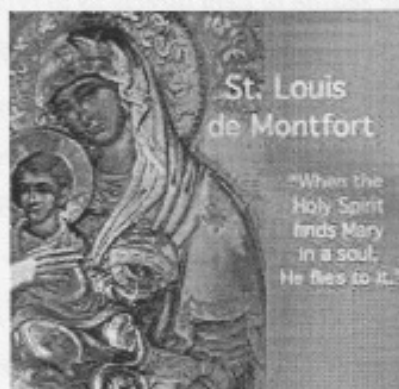
Pray the Rosary

- 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.