

Seminarians of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg Newsletter

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Reflection from Oliver Omega



Oliver Omega
Theology 2
Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology

The month of May occasions us to think and reflect of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We Catholics are always challenged by our Christian brothers and sisters because of our veneration to the Holy Mother of God. But that is precisely why we venerate her. She holds a special place in our hearts, much like how our mothers hold a special place in our hearts. We have a temporal mother, the one who gave birth to us but we also have a spiritual mother in Mary. Our temporal mother nurtured and helped us from our infancy to adulthood. The Blessed Virgin Mary helps us grow in spiritual life and sainthood.

The motherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary stems from the biological reality that she gave birth to Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Second Person of the Trinity. This is why we rightly call her the Mother of God. But with this is also a theological reality, where it has a deeper meaning that helps grow more in the ways of God. Because she was free from sin, her yes to God was a deep and profound yes since she had no concupiscence, no egoism, and no disunity between her body and soul. According to Cardinal Ratzinger who later became Pope Benedict XVI, in her yes, she became the fertile soil that was taken up by the seed of life¹. So just like the Blessed Virgin Mary who bore the Fruit in

her womb because of her yes, we too are called to say yes to God so that He too may bear fruit in us as well.

While we on the other hand have inherited original sin, the Blessed Mother's yes becomes our model of our self-giving to God. We can live it out by choosing the ways of God always in everyday life. Each commandment we follow is a yes to God. Each act of charity is a yes to God. Each act done out of love for God is a yes to God. This month of May in all our spiritual struggles, let us all look to our Blessed Mother that we may be guided and inspired always to live our day to day lives, in little ways a yes to God.

Source: Ratzinger & Von Balthasar. 1980. *Mary. The Church at the Source*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press. Pg. 15

Reflection from Christopher Pugh



Christopher Pugh
Theology 2
St. Joseph Seminary

This is a very special year and month. Pope Francis has dedicated this year to St. Joseph and has given us many opportunities to come to know better the earthly foster father of Jesus. It is also May, which is a month traditionally dedicated to Mary, our Blessed Mother. What a great combination! Sitting in the seminary chapel at St. Joseph Seminary I am fortunate to have statues of these two heroic figures gazing down on me, or as I believe, watching over me.

Discernment to the priesthood is a difficult task at the best of times as I try to navigate God's will for me. It is something that I cannot do on my own and I often seek the help of the formation team, my spiritual director, my vocations director, my bishop, friends, family and strangers to help guide me along this path. This month, however, I am reminded of the importance of seeking the help of two people who found the will of God for them and followed it unreservedly.

Luke describes Mary's *fiat*, her yes to God, at the annunciation. "Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:38, NRSV) Mary gave such a perfect yes to God, and through her yes, brought the Redeemer into the world! Through my small, imperfect 'yes' that I try to give to God, I too can help in His mission on earth, by being a priest in His Church, if it is His will to have me.

Joseph also fulfilled his role in salvation history by giving his 'yes' to God. Four times in the Gospel of Matthew we read that after an angel visits him in a dream, he immediately gets up and fulfills the Fa-

ther's will given to him through the angel. (Matthew 1:24, 2:14, 2:21, 2:22) Joseph never speaks in the gospel, but his actions prove his willingness to follow God.

Meditating on the actions and words of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph give me great hope in my discernment. In these events, we see humanity answering God's call to them. We see people fulfilling the will of the Father regardless of the consequences. I see role models for saying 'yes' to God.

As I sit in the chapel with these two loving parents watching over me, I ask for their intercession that I too may answer 'yes' to God's will in my life. I pray that I may always seek His will and fulfill it to the best of my ability. This is not an easy thing to do but knowing that I have these two wonderful people praying for me, and caring for me, brings me great hope that I can fulfill the tasks given to me. If you are having difficulty responding to God, I encourage you to spend some time with the Scripture passages that I have mentioned in this article. May the Word of God bring you clarity in your quest to fulfill His will as well.

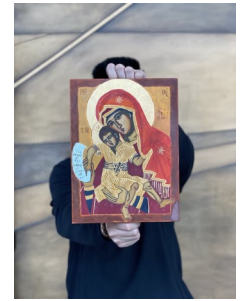
Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus, pray for us.

Reflection from Vince Diestro



Vince Diestro
Propaedeutic Year
St. Joseph Seminary



As I reflect on my now concluded first year at the seminary, one of the things I was able to take away was definitely an increased devotion to our Blessed Mother Mary and St. Joseph her spouse. Before I arrived at the seminary, I must admit I wasn't really "devoted" to Mary and St. Joseph. What I mean by that is that I never consistently prayed to Mary and Joseph outside of the Church's devotions and prayers to them. One of my hopes heading into my first year of formation was to have an increased awareness and devotion to Mary in particular. To grow more closer to her through prayer as my spiritual mother and to learn more about her.

Providentially, towards the end of the fall semester our spirituality class ended up reading spiritual classics on Mary leading up to our 33-day consecration at the end of the semester. Throughout the 33 days of preparation for the consecration, we were accompanied by a book that had reflections on Mary each day leading up to the consecration. The title of the book we used was: *Preparation for Total Consecration to Jesus Christ Through Mary: According to St. Louis de Montfort* by Fr. Hugh Gillespie. In reading the reflections, I was able to contemplate on the life of Mary and her intercessory role in the Church. I was deeply struck by her great role in leading us to her son Jesus Christ through her powerful intercession. Our consecration day fell on the Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 2020. During the week of the consecration I was also blessed to have participated in an Icon retreat along with my brother seminarians in the propaedeutic year in which we wrote our own Icons together. The Icon we wrote was called "It is Truly Meet" which depicted Mary carrying Jesus and their love for one another. Since then, I have grown to appreciate our Blessed Mother a lot more in her role in salvation history and her powerful intercession to our Lord.

I'm sure many of us can recall the day when Holy Father Pope Francis declared the year 2021 to be the year of St. Joseph on December 8, 2020. Shortly after returning from the Christmas break, the seminary opened the new semester with a 4-day silent retreat and the theme of that retreat

centered around St. Joseph. All seminarians were given the apostolic letter: *Patris corde* ("With a Father's Heart") Pope Francis wrote regarding his declaration of St. Joseph's year to reflect on for the retreat. I remember reading that document for the first time and being deeply moved with the importance of having a devotion to St. Joseph and learning about his pivotal role throughout salvation history. I would also like to mention that I recently participated in the 33-day consecration to St. Joseph by Fr. Donald Calloway, which the consecration day (Day 33) fell on the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1st. Similar to the Marian consecration, I was able to reflect and read upon our spiritual Father daily through the lens of our Church and numerous Saints in history leading up to the consecration. I remember being completely moved reading countless stories and miracles of St. Joseph. If you are looking to increase your devotion to St. Joseph and want to learn more about him, I highly recommend checking out Fr. Donald Calloway's book on the consecration to St. Joseph! My devotion to St. Joseph has immensely grown since and I certainly look forward to growing closer to Christ through his intercession.

As we find ourselves in the month of May, we are invited to venerate this month to our Blessed Mother and so let us take this opportunity to grow closer to our Mother Mary throughout this month! For our Spiritual Father St. Joseph, let us continue to grow more aware of his significant role in our Church and to continue to ask for his intercession and I also encourage you to learn as much as you can on our Spiritual Father. I believe that through Mary's and St. Joseph's intercession, we will be aided with the strength and the graces needed to relentlessly pursue an ever-growing relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ!

Mary Mother of God...pray for us.

St. Joseph Patron of the Universal Church...pray for us.

Prepared by the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Winnipeg

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