

May 8

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, MOTHER AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

By her maternal charity, Mary cares for the brothers and sisters of her Son who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led to their happy homeland. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Help and Mediatrix. These, however, are to be so understood that they neither take away from, nor add anything to, the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator (Lumen gentium, n. 62).

From the common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, except the following.

Invitatory

Ant. Come, let us worship Christ our Mediator, who united the Blessed Virgin to himself in the work of redemption, alleluia.

Invitatory psalm, as in the Ordinary.

Office of Readings

HYMN

An appropriate hymn may be sung.

SECOND READING

Choose one of the following readings.

From a sermon by Saint Bernard, abbot.

[Sermo de Aqueductu: Opera omnia, Edit. Cisterc. 5 (1968) pp. 278-280]

Let us seek grace through Mary

Look about and try to recognize God's plan, which is the work of wisdom and loving faithfulness. He first soaked the Lamb's fleece, and watered the entire earth with heaven's dew. He chose to redeem the whole human race, but first of all found the measure in Mary. Why did he do this? Perhaps it was so that Eve might obtain pardon through her daughter and that henceforward man's quarrel against woman might be softened. No longer should Adam say: *The woman whom you gave me led me to eat of the forbidden tree*, but instead, "The woman whom you gave me nourished me with blessed fruit." This is certainly a good thing but there is more to God's plan, as I see it. What has been said is true, but there is a greater truth hidden within it—one that is more satisfying. We have at hand a mild milk, but with a little work, can extract a rich butter.

Let us, therefore, think more deeply about this one whom the Lord wishes us to honour with every manner of devotion. In Mary he placed the fullness of all good things, so that from now on we may know that whatever hope, or grace, or aspect of salvation there is, flows from her who was assumed into heaven and crowned with goodness. Mary is that garden upon which the heavenly south wind did not just occasionally touch but upon which it settled and which it constantly caressed. In consequence, the perfumes of this garden drift in all directions: its perfumes which are spirit-filled graces. Take away this shining entity which lights up the world ' and where will be the daytime? Take away Mary, this star of the sea which is so great and so far-reaching, and what is there left but a total darkness, the shadow of death and deep darkness?

Let us, therefore, honour Mary with prayers that spring from our deepest love. Such indeed is the Lord's will who wished us to have all things through Mary. It is his will, I said, but it is for our good. In everything and for everything she provides for our needs. She comforts us in our distress,

she encourages our faith, strengthens our hope, dispels our indifference, and gives us courage in our weakness. You were afraid to approach the Father, terrified at the mere sound of him and you sought refuge among the leaves.

The Father has given you Jesus as mediator. And is there anything which such a Son cannot obtain from such a Father? He will be heard for the sake of his loving devotion. *The Father loves the Son.* And are you going to be afraid in his presence, too? He is your brother and your own kin, tempted in all things but without sin, *that he might become merciful.* And it is Mary who gave you this brother. But perhaps you are still overawed by his divine majesty, for even though he became like us, he always remained God. Do you wish to have an advocate with him, too? Turn, then, to Mary. Human nature was pure in Mary -pure in that she was free of all stain, but also in that her nature was unique. And I would say without hesitation that she will be heard because of her loving devotion. The Son will most surely pay heed to his Mother, and the Father will certainly give heed to his Son. My beloved children, this is the ladder for sinners, in which my greatest confidence lies; this is the whole reason for my hope. Is it possible that the Son would refuse, or that he would himself be refused? Could it be possible for him neither to hear nor to be heard? It is obvious that neither situation is possible. *You gave found grace with God,* said the angel. And happily so; she will indeed always find grace and it is grace alone which we need. According to Solomon, the wise virgin does not seek wisdom or riches, honour or power. That which she seeks is grace, and it is by grace alone that we are saved.

What else is there that we could desire? Let us seek grace and let us seek it through Mary because that which she seeks, she finds and cannot be frustrated. Let us seek grace, but grace before God because grace before others is a deceptive thing. Let us leave other people to seek favour; it is for us to set ourselves the task of finding grace. Is it not due to grace that we are here? Of course it is due to *the kindness of the Lord that we are not destroyed.* Search deeply in your consciences and see that *however great the number of sins committed ' grace was even greater.* Mary did not vainly chase after fame, she diligently sought after grace.

RESPONSORY

V. There is none like you among the daughters of Israel, O Virgin Mary. You are the handmaid of the Lord, the Mother of the Mediator, and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

R. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, alleluia.

V. Hail, treasure of goodness, fount of mercy and refuge of sinners. R. Blessed are you ...

Alternative.

From a prayer to the Mother of God by a Syrian author of the 6th or 7th century
(J.S. Assemani, S.P.N. Ephraim Syri Opera Omnia, Romae 1743, vol. III, pp. 528-532)

Mediatrice of the whole world

My lady, most holy Mother of God, full of grace, virgin in soul, body, and mind; throne of the King who sits above the cherubim; gate of heaven through which we hasten from earth to heaven; fountain of life, inexhaustible sea of divine secrets and bounteous distributor of gifts. After the Trinity, mistress of us all; after the Paraclete, another comforter; and after the Mediator, Mediatrice of the whole world. True vine which brings forth the fruit of life; fertile olive tree that gives joy to the faithful; heavenly cloud showering the earth with dew; ark of holiness, by which we are saved from the flood of iniquity; unburnt bush, which Moses, beholder of the Godhead, saw; golden censer in which the Word made flesh, once enkindled, filled the world with the sweetness of his incense, and in which our sins of disobedience were burnt up. Sacred tabernacle, which devout Bezalel made; royal carriage, vessel filled with manna, enclosed garden, scaled fountain, whose most pure streams water the whole world. Rod of Aaron, blossoming by power from on high; fleece of Gideon, wet with dew; book written in the hand of God, cancelling what had been written by the

hand of Adam; mountain of God, mountain of holiness, in which God was pleased to dwell; holy root of Jesse; city of God, such that *glorious things are said of you*, as David declares.

See the confidence and longing God has given me for one who has both compassion and power. Since you are the Mother of him who alone is good and merciful, accept me in my wretchedness, and deign through your intercession and protection, that I may take my place at the right hand of your only Son, and find rest among his saints and elect.

I hope in you, therefore I shall obtain what I ask! I glory in you; and because my boast is of you, do not turn your face away from me, your unworthy servant, on account of my many mistakes and wrongdoings. Since it is within your power to will and to accomplish as the woman who, in a manner beyond all telling, gave birth to one of the persons of the Trinity, you are able to persuade and placate. Then there are those hands of yours with which you carried him with unutterable love; those breasts by which you nourished him with milk. Remember the swaddling clothes and all else that went to rearing him from infancy. Mingle what was meritorious in your own life with that which was likewise in his: the cross, the blood, the wounds, whereby we were saved; and please, do not refuse to protect me, but come to my aid, defend me, and be always near me.

Do not look on me with disdain because of my unworthiness, nor allow the deformity of my actions to interrupt the flow of your boundless mercy, O Mother of God, a name clearer to me than any other, for in it lies the sure promise of your help. Indeed you have wiped away every tear from the face of the earth, filled us creatures with all manner of favour, brought joy to the company of heaven, and salvation to those on earth.

RESPONSORY

V. Praised be the Father who sent his Son to save us.

R. Blessed be the Holy Spirit who revealed to us the mystery of love, alleluia.

V. Blessed are you, O Mary, daughter of Adam and Mother of Christ: to you was born the Mediator between God and humankind.

R. Blessed be ...

Prayer, as in Morning Prayer.

Morning Prayer

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH

Ant. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant rejoiced in her womb, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit, alleluia.

PRAYER

Lord, our God, in the great mystery of your provident care, you gave us Jesus, the source of life and grace, through Mary, his Mother. You willed that she would share in his work of redemption at the cross. We ask her motherly intercession to obtain for us your gifts of life and to lead us to the fullness of redemption. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives. and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Evening Prayer

CANTICLE OF MARY

Ant. Remember us, O Lord, and be with us in times of trouble. You, O Virgin, call on the Lord and speak to the King on our behalf, that we may be free from death, alleluia.