

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**October 1, 2017**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

The Catholic Church invites us to grow in our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, during the month of October. I recently discovered some beautiful quotes from St. John Vianney about the Blessed Virgin Mary and so I thought I would share a different one at the beginning of each Spiritual Ponderings. In addition, I would like to continue to look at the role the Blessed Virgin Mary plays in the life of the universal Church by continuing to explore Ann Ball's book: *The Other Faces of Mary: Stories, Devotions, and Pictures, of the Holy Virgin around the world*. Finally I thought I would conclude each Spiritual Ponderings with a different and unique prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**St. John Vianney:**

"Avarice is an inordinate love of riches and the good things of this life. Jesus Christ, to cure us of it, was born in extreme poverty, deprived of all comforts. He chose a Mother who was poor. He willed to pass as the Son of a humble workman."

**Our Lady of La Vang or Our Lady Tra Kieu**

Our Lady of La Vang comes to the Church from the country of Vietnam and probably as an effort of Our Lady to inspire and protect the people of Vietnam while they were under severe persecution. Ann Ball points out that one thing that separates the apparition of Our Lady of La Vang from other Marian apparitions is that Mary does not convey a message of repentance but only one of comfort. Ann Ball writes: "She appears as a powerful harbinger of mercy, a protective mother full of love for her suffering children."



When I think of Ann Ball's description of this image of Mary, it reminds me that sometimes the most important thing we can give others is our presence. The Blessed Virgin Mary could have given the people a lot of advice at how to better follow her Son but it seems that she has discerned that the people of Vietnam needed a loving mother filled with mercy more than a teacher. Sometime people come into our lives who simply need someone to listen to them and pay attention to them so that they can know that they are still important to someone.

Years after the apparition there was a small Catholic community of Tra Kieu found itself surrounded by a military group called the "Can Vuong." The Can Vuong planned to wipe out the small Catholic village. The Catholics gathered around Jean Bruyere. He and his Vietnamese congregation placed the image of Our Lady of La Vang on the altar at Church and began to pray for her for protection. The small little Catholic compound survived despite the fact that the Can Vuong had them outnumbered and had better weapons. The Can Vuong for example were unable to hit the Church with their cannons. (Later a Can Vuong soldier declared that he had seen an image of "a lady in white" above the Church protecting it). The Can Vuong also tried to use elephants in their attack against the village but the people were able to keep them with the use of torches. In honor of the victory the people build a new church and dedicated to Our Lady Help of Christians.

When you find yourself in trouble do not forget to trust in the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is a powerful protector and advocate.

**PRAYER TO MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS**

Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin, Help of the Christians, we place ourselves under your motherly protection. Throughout the Church's history you have helped Christians in times of trial, temptation and danger. Time and time again, you have proven to be the Refuge of sinners, the Hope of the hopeless, the Consoler of the afflicted, and the Comforter of the Dying. We promise to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, your Son, to proclaim His Good News of

God's love for all people, and to work for peace and justice in our world. With faith in your intercession, we pray for the Church, for our family and friends, for the poor and abandoned, and all the dying. Grant, O Mary, Help of Christians, the graces of which we stand in need. *(State your intention(s) here.)* May we serve Jesus with fidelity and love until death. Help us and our loved ones to attain the boundless joy of being forever with our Father in heaven. Amen. Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**October 8, 2017**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Let us continue to dive deeper into our faith by diving deeper into the Church's teaching on Mary.

St. John Vianney Quote

"I LOVE St. Joseph so much because he had the care of the Blessed Virgin."

**Ina Poon Bato**

There is a Philippine legend that accompanies this title of the Blessed Virgin Mary according to Ann Ball in her book: *The Other Faces of Mary: Stories, Devotions, and Pictures, of the Holy Virgin around the world*. One day an Aeta chieftain was returning home from an unsuccessful hunt when he heard a woman's voice calling to him. The voice, strangely was coming from a beautifully carved statue of a woman. The man picked up the statue and carried it home. When he arrived home with the statue and no food for his family, his angry wife took the statue and threw it into the fire. The fire flared up and the house burnt down. The statue remained unharmed. Many years later Catholic Missionaries were told about the statue and thinking it was a part of a pagan cult demanded to see it. Upon seeing it, they declared that the statue was not that of a pagan goddess but was instead the Blessed Virgin Mary. The missionaries took it to be a sign that Mary had paved the way for their arrival.



The story of Ina Poon Bato teaches us that Mary is aiding and assisting the Church in the Church's mission to bring Christ to the world. The legend, like most legends, taught a powerful lesson and that was not that the Blessed Virgin Mary was vengeful but rather following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary in following Christ was the right path to take.

**MARY, OUR MODEL IN PRAYER**

All praise and glory are Yours, almighty Father: You have given us Your Son Jesus to save us from sin. We praise You for choosing Mary to be His mother, for teaching her to believe Your message, for helping her to accept Your holy will. Strengthen us by Your Spirit to be like Mary: to ponder Your word in our hearts, to obey Your will, to love Your Son, to sing Your praises every day. Father, we praise You through Jesus Christ Your Son in the love of Your Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

**PRAYER TO MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS**

Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin, Help of the Christians, we place ourselves under your motherly protection. Throughout the Church's history you have helped Christians in times of trial, temptation and danger. Time and time again, you have proven to be the Refuge of sinners, the Hope of the hopeless, the Consoler of the afflicted, and the Comforter of the Dying. We promise to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, your Son, to proclaim His Good News of God's love for all people, and to work for peace and justice in our world. With faith in your intercession, we pray for the Church, for our family and friends, for the poor and abandoned, and all the dying. Grant, O Mary, Help of Christians, the graces of which we stand in need.

*[State your intention(s) here...]*

May we serve Jesus with fidelity and love until death. Help us and our loved ones to attain the boundless joy of being forever with our Father in heaven. Amen.

Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us!

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**October 15, 2017**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Let us continue our efforts to deepen our relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

**St John Vianney:**

“Let us live as the Blessed Virgin lived: loving God only, desiring God only, trying to please God only in all that we do.”

**Our Lady of Vocations:**

This title of Mary comes to the Church from the Rogationists Fathers and the Daughters of Divine Zeal whose primary focus (apostolate) is the promotion of vocation. Their founder, St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, founded these religious orders. There are many images of the Blessed Virgin Mary that fall under this title of Mary. Most of them deal with Mary inspiring and protecting vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Archbishop Carlson has stated on a couple of different occasions that if each parish in the Archdiocese of St. Louis would produce one seminarian every ten years, the shortage of priests would come to an end in our Archdiocese. (Please note that this is one seminarian and not one priest). We would think that each parish could produce one seminarian every ten years but sadly we are not. We therefore too should pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary to help increase vocations to the priesthood and religious life. We can also help increase vocations to the priesthood and religious life by praying by name for an individual who we think maybe a good priest, inviting and supporting our young people to think about the priesthood and religious life, and by letting people know how much you value the Sacraments.

**Prayer For Vocations:**

Hail Mary, full of grace; all generations call you blessed. Hail Mother of God; when asked by the angel to bear the Son of the Most High, filled with faith, you responded: "Let it be done unto me." Holy Mother of Jesus, at the wedding feast at Cana, you prompted your Son to perform his first sign. Be with us as we discern our life's work and guide us in the way we are called to follow in the footsteps of your Son. Holy Mother of the Savior, at the foot of the cross you mourned the death of your only Son. Bless and embrace the loving parents of all priests, deacons, brothers and sisters. Holy Mother of the Good Shepherd, turn your motherly care to this nation. Intercede for us to the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers to the harvest in this land dedicated to your honor. Queen of Peace, Mirror of Justice, Health of the Sick, inspire vocations in our time.

Let the word of your Son be made flesh anew in the lives of persons anxious to proclaim the good news of everlasting life. Amen.

**Prayer for Vocations:**

Lord Jesus Christ, Savior of the world! We humbly beg of Thee to manifest in Thy Church the Spirit Whom Thou didst so abundantly bestow upon Thy Apostles. Call, we pray Thee, very many to Thy priesthood and to the religious life. And may zeal for Thy glory and the salvation of souls inflame those whom Thou hast chosen; may they be saints in Thy likeness, and may Thy Spirit strengthen them. O Jesus, give us priests and religious according to Thine own Heart! O Mary, Mother of Jesus! Obtain for fervent souls the grace to hear and the courage to follow thy Divine Son in the path



of religious perfection.  
Queen of Apostles, pray for us.  
Queen of Virgins, pray for us

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**October 22, 2017**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Let us continue to develop our relationship with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

St. John Vianney Quote:

“The Blessed Virgin’s life was full of sorrow...Every time her tender glance fell upon her Divine Son, she suffered...”

Let us look at the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Eucharist. In many ways Mary what it means to be a living Tabernacle for Christ. She was the first to receive the Body and Blood, Soul & Divinity.

Fr. Rolheiser in his book: *Pour One Great of fidelity: Waiting for Christ in the Eucharist*; has this to say about the Eucharist: “The Eucharist fulfills what Mary prophesied when she was pregnant with Jesus –namely that, in Jesus, the mighty would be brought down and lowly would be raised up. It was this very thing that first drew Dorothy Day to Christianity.”

Scott Hahn in his book *Hail Holy Queen* has the following to say about the Blessed Virgin Mary: Mary is the test of how well a Christian has accepted the gospel. It’s not that she’s central figure of salvation history. She’s not: Jesus is. But our understanding of Mary reveals everything about how we understand Jesus and His saving work.

We live our sonship best by listening to Mary and loving as she loves. Listening means responding when she says, “Do whatever He tells you.” Loving means standing by Christ, even to the cross. Loving means choosing, Him in every instance, over sin.”



I think the above quote from Scott Hahn, acts as a reminder that faith is about doing what Jesus tell us to and the one thing that Jesus told us to do was to go to Mass (Do this in remembrance of me). The more that I fall deeper and deeper in love with Christ (choose Christ over sin out of love and not out of fear) the easier it is to choose the good.

### **Mary and the Eucharist Prayer I**

Hail Mary, sweet Mother of the Eucharist. With sorrow and much love, You have given us your son Jesus while hanging from the Cross. We, weak creatures, anchor ourselves to You to be worthy sons of this great LOVE and SORROW. Help us to be humble and simple, help us to love all men, help us to live in grace always to be ready to welcome Jesus into our heart. O Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, we, by ourselves, will never be able to understand this great mystery of love. Gain for us the light of the Holy Spirit, because only in that moment we will be able to perceive even for just one instant, all the infinite love of your Jesus in giving Himself to us. AMEN

### **Mary and the Eucharist Prayer II**

Written by John Paul II

O virgin mother, guide and sustain us so that we might always live as true sons and daughters of the church of your son. Enable us to do our part in helping to establish on earth the civilization of truth and love, as god wills it, for this glory. Amen

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**

**October 29, 2017**

**Spiritual Ponderings**

**Images of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Let us once again learn more about God through learning about the person He chose to be the Mother of His Son.

**St. John Vianney:**

“It is impossible to meditate with devotion upon the Mysteries of the Rosary and live in a state of sin.”

**Our Lady Undoer of Knots**

The title of Mary as “Virgin Who Unties Knots” traces its roots to Argentina and back to Germany and has recently become very popular in the United States. Maybe one of the most surprising things about this devotion is that it began to flourish because of Pope Francis.

Ann Ball in her book: *The Other Faces of Mary: Stories, Devotions, and Pictures, of the Holy Virgin around the world* writes the following: “The Virgin Maria Desatordar de Nudos (The Virgin Mary Undoer of Knots) was brought to Argentina in the early 1980’s by Jesuit Father Jorge Bergoglio (the future Pope Francis), who when rector at the Jesuit University of El Salvador ut who went onto become the cardinal archbishop of Buenos Aires. He had found the image at the Church of ST. Peter am Perlach during a visit to Augsburg, Germany. He was intrigued by the old name and image of Mary called Knotenluserin, the “One who unties Knots.”



Fr. Bergoglio brought a few post cards back with him and commissioned a painting to be made from the postcards. The devotion remained mostly unknown though for the next twenty years. Eventually word began to spread from his students to others and devotion finally took off.

Learning that this devotion grew from only a small group of people praying it to a worldwide phenomenon is quite inspiring. It reminds me of one of the most important lessons that the Blessed Virgin Mary teaches us and that is with God all things are possible.

**Mary, Undoer of Knots, pray for me.**

Virgin Mary, Mother of fair love, Mother who never refuses to come to the aid of a child in need, Mother whose hands never cease to serve your beloved children because they are moved by the divine love and immense mercy that exist in your heart, cast your compassionate eyes upon me and see the snarl of knots that exists in my life. You know very well how desperate I am, my pain, and how I am bound by these knots. Mary, Mother to whom God entrusted the undoing of the knots in the lives of his children, I entrust into your hands the ribbon of my life. No one, not even the evil one himself, can take it away from your precious care. In your hands there is no knot that cannot be undone. Powerful Mother, by your grace and intercessory power with Your Son and My Liberator, Jesus, take into your hands today this knot.

*[Mention your request here]*

I beg you to undo it for the glory of God, once for all. You are my hope. O my Lady, you are the only consolation God gives me, the fortification of my feeble strength, the enrichment of my destitution, and, with Christ, the freedom from my chains. Hear my plea. Keep me, guide me, protect me, o safe refuge!