

Reflections

Volume 101

International

Catholic Family Newsletter

December 2023

Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness

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Communion of Saints



John Paul II "We are now standing in the face of the greatest historical confrontation humanity has gone through. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel versus the anti-Gospel. This confrontation lies within the plans of divine Providence; it is trial which the whole Church, and the Polish Church in particular, must take up. It is a trial of not only our nation and the Church, but, in a sense, a test of 2,000 years of culture and Christian civilization with all of its consequences for human dignity, individual rights, human rights and the rights of nations."

The Church in Crisis

Blessing to All:

By: Richard Pickard

The Church conservative priest, bishops and cardinals around the world are watching and reacting to Pope Francis' statements and his removal of various clergy that have openly opposed some of his statements and beliefs. Where can the truth of our Faith be found today? And why is Francis calling conservative Catholics names?

The New York Times reported in August 2023...Pope Francis decried the "very strong, organized, reactionary attitude" of some **conservative U.S. Catholics that prioritizes issues like abortion and sexuality over caring for migrants and the environment.**

The pontiff decried the "backwardness" of American conservative Catholics, saying the faction rejects the broad scope of the Church's mission and the changing of doctrine over time. These Catholics, he said, embrace a narrow, outdated view. I would like to remind these people that backwardness is useless."

Many Catholics are unaware of the war raging within the Vatican and around the Christian world. Priests, Bishops, Cardinals are opposing Francis openly. This is not a minor scabble. When the Blessed Mother appeared at Akita, Japan, in the 1970s she told Sister Agnes Sasagawa: **"The work of the devil will infiltrate even into the Church in such a way that one will see Cardinals opposing Cardinals, Bishops against other Bishops."**

Is this coming true since Pope Francis was elected?

Cardinal Raymond Burke is considered a leading voice among Catholic conservatives and papal critics. He has written in the preface to a new book that Pope Francis is risking confusion and even schism in leading the upcoming Synod on Synodality in Rome. "Synodality and its adjective, synodal, have become slogans behind which a revolution is at work to change radically the Church's self-understanding, in accord with a contemporary ideology which denies much of what the Church has always taught and practiced,"

What is Francis Up To?

Last October 4, 2019, Pope Francis blessed the controversial pagan "Pachamama" statue in the Vatican gardens, as a special prelude to the opening of the Amazon Synod. Numerous bishops, cardinals and theologians condemned the ceremony.

In February 2021, Pope Francis further tightened the screws on Catholic conservatives over the use of traditional Latin Mass, rebuking bishops who had allowed it to be said in parishes without previous permission from the Vatican.

¹In September 2021, Pope Francis lashed out at the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), saying: "They are the work of the devil."

²Last year in December 2022, Francis defrocked Father Frank Pavone, the nation's leading Catholic pro-life advocate. Pavone hosted the show "Defending Life" on EWTN for many years until the bishop of Amarillo, Texas, revoked Pavone's permission to appear on the Network.

Also in 2022, Francis shocked Catholics by appointing a **pro-abortion economist to the Vatican's Pontifical Academy for Life.**

And last month in November 2023 Francis removed conservative Bishop Strickland, Tyler Texas. Strickland promoted conservative catholic teachings and was critical of Francis allowing approval of the pagan goddess into the Church. Strickland also believes that Francis is the Pope but is undermining the Deposit of Faith in the Church. Strickland was one of the few American bishops to defend him publicly.

Strickland replied, "The blasphemy is that this holy priest [Pavone] is cancelled while an evil president [Biden] promotes the denial of truth and the murder of the unborn at every turn, Vatican officials promote immorality and denial of the deposit of faith and priests promote gender confusion devastating lives...evil,"

¹ <https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=52296>

² <https://www.ncronline.org/vatican/vatican-news/pro-life-activist-and-trump-apologist-frank-pavone-dismissed-catholic>



The smoke of Satan is in the Church. We must support our Priests, Bishops and Cardinals with prayers. Be aware of what is going on in the Church. Talk to your Priests and Bishops. ***Start prayer groups in your Parish for the***

wisdom of the Holy Spirit to enter into the Church and protect the faithful. We have had bad Pope's in the past and history will decide on Pope Francis. We as Catholics should stay Catholic and pray to our founder, Jesus Christ, for help in this trying times. Remember Jesus said to Peter, "**And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church,* and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.**" (**Mathew 16:18**)

How Do You Pray?

By: Richard Pickard

Sometimes we get a bit complacent about what we reply to our family or friends when they ask us for prayers. "*Sure, I will pray for you,*" is an automatic response that many of us quickly reply. And then, we forget to do just that.

We ask for prayers from others and we expect they will follow through and pray for our intention. The letter of Paul to the Colossians 1:9 gives us an inside look at St Paul's reaction to being ask for prayers. "*And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.*" We do not know what St Paul is praying for, but whatever it is, he is praying each day. He shows us perseverance in prayer is important. Praying one time for a friend or family member who asks for our prayers, is fine, but don't stop there. Pray each day for them.

Remember the parable Jesus gave in Luke 11:5-13 about persistence in prayer? "**And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three**

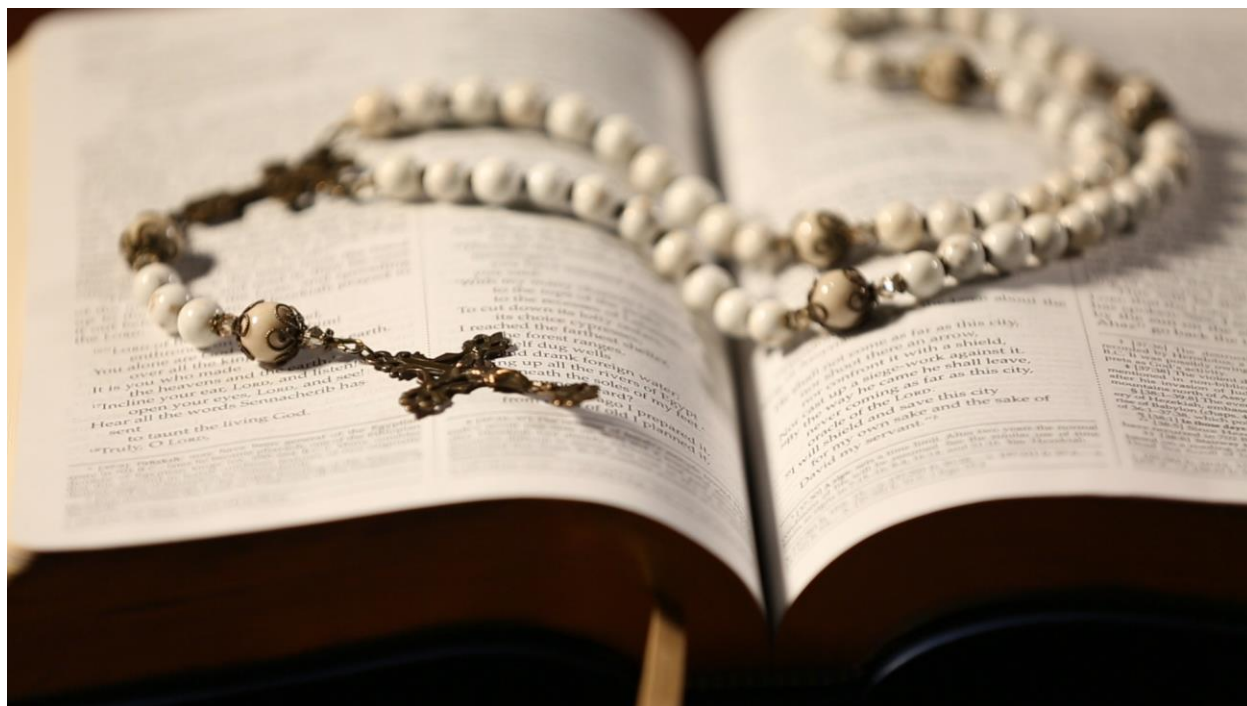
*loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his **persistence** he will rise and give him as many as he needs. So, I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for [a]bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

Don't give up on your prayers for family members or friends. No matter what sin they are living in. Sins of the flesh, addiction to drugs, pornography, pedophilia, incest and another other sin which leads them away from God's kingdom.

Your persistence in prayers and your daily sacrifice will bring down graces into their souls. Trust in Jesus. He won't let you down. You may not see any changes in your lifetime, but change will happen in the souls of those you pray for.

Pray for our church leaders. The Church is in troubled waters.

Guess What? The Hail Mary Is in the Bible!



One of the aspects of the Catholic faith that Protestants struggle with the most is the honor that Catholics give Our Lady. In particular, the "Hail Mary" seems to be a particular point of contention. Some Protestants point to that prayer and say, "That is proof of Catholics' idolatry of Mary. It uses language that should be only for God. AND it's not in the Bible either!"

As it turns out, however, the Hail Mary comes from the New Testament almost word-for-word; and most of its words come straight from the mouths of angels, apostles, and righteous Jews, no less!

The Hail Mary has two sections: a greeting and a petition. Both are rooted in New Testament passages. Within each section, we can break down the text into two parts, which gives us four total sections of the prayer to reflect on.

Part 1 of the Hail Mary...



Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee.

Scriptural reference: "And coming to her, he said, 'Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.'" (Luke 1:28)

Explanation: The angel Gabriel greets Mary with "Hail!", a title usually reserved for royalty. This treasured title serves as a foreshadowing of Mary's role as the Mother of the King of Heaven. Then Gabriel calls her "favored one" (also translated as "full of grace") and one with whom the Lord is present. This confirms God's special presence, His life of Grace and Love, within Mary.

When we pray the Hail Mary, our greeting echoes the greeting of God's own angel and the reality of her role in salvation history.



Part 2 Luke 1:41-45

Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the holy Spirit cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed* that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

Elizabeth's words are inspired by God Himself, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity: the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we can say that this greeting of admiration and blessing is pleasing to God and an appropriate way to address Mary.

When Catholics ask for Our Blessed Mother's help, we use the words of the Bible. Our prayer using the words of the bible to the Mother of God, Jesus Christ, is an echoing of God's words about her. These are not man-made words, but inspired by God through his message, Angel Gabriel and the words of Elizabeth spoken through her by the Holy Spirit of God.

The last part of the Hail Mary prayer is "Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen." We realize we need help and we are asking Mary to pray for us. Jesus gives us the same message in Luke 23:34. "'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" If Jesus Christ can ask the Father to forgive us, why cannot be ask His Mother to pray to her Son for us, to receive forgiveness.?

Nowhere in the Catholic Faith is it written that we are to worship Mary. Nowhere! But those that oppose the truth recognized in this simple pray to Mary, try to use it to say "Aha...See there. You are praying to Mary as if she were a goddess!" Not so, not so. How many Protestants have asked others "to pray for them?" When someone is sick in the hospital, it is most common for you to ask someone to pray for you to be healed!

When others try to destroy the Catholic devoting to Our Mother, Mary, they are not being honest about the reason we all pray and ask others to pray for us.

Devotion to Mary or to the Saints is totally different than the worship we give to God alone. The devotion you have to your parents or friends is totally different than the honor and worship you give to God.

Don't be ignorant of your faith, my brothers and sisters. Praying for each other is a vital part of our love for each other.

The last words on Jesus' lips before he died was a prayer..."Father forgive them, for they know no what they are doing."

The last prayer on your lips might be asking the Mother of God, to intercede for you, through the simple biblical prayer of the Hail Mary.



Mary is the Mother of Jesus and the Mother of all. She will take your petition straight to Jesus. Remember, that a Mother's request is most powerful. Jesus could not refuse her request at the marriage at Cana. Even though Jesus said, it was not his time, he did his first miracle. Mary's request to Jesus, when you ask her for her help, will be received by Jesus from the most blessed Mother who is full of Grace.

Honoring Mary? Did Jesus Honor His Mother

By: Scott Hahn, Former Evangelical Minister, Now Catholic Apologist



I recall the days when I was still in a sort of spiritual “no man’s land” between my Evangelical past and my eventual home with Rome. I could no longer honestly preach as a Protestant minister, **but I still had lingering doubts about Catholic doctrine. One by one, however, my doubts fell away as I studied Catholic theology and tradition until, finally, only the Marian doctrines remained.**

These were substantial obstacles for me. Cradle Catholics often have no idea of the repugnance “Bible Christians” feel for Marian doctrines and devotions. It was then that someone mailed me a plastic rosary. As I opened the package, I felt I was facing the toughest obstacle of all. Yet, by that time, so many doctrines of the Catholic Church had proven to be biblically sound that I decided to step out in faith on this one. I began, hesitatingly, to pray my first Rosary, offering it for a specific intention, a situation that seemed hopeless by human standards.

Wonder of wonders, my prayers were answered. That seemingly impossible situation was completely reversed. This was success far beyond my expectations. I was astonished.

Still, a greater miracle was under way, one that was revealed to me by a conversation with an old friend from college. He knew me when I was most ardently anti-Catholic, and he had been watching my Romeward journey with increasing alarm. One day he called and cut right to the point: "So, Scott, are you worshiping Mary yet?"

"C'mon, Chris. You know that Catholics don't worship Mary. They simply venerate her."

"Really, Scott, what's the difference? There's no biblical basis either way."

I began fingering my rosary beads, and I was emboldened. I proceeded on biblical principles. First, I reminded Chris that, as a man, Christ fulfilled God's law perfectly, including the commandment to honor one's father and mother. **The Hebrew word for honor, *kabbed*, literally means "to glorify." So, Christ didn't just honor His Heavenly Father. He also perfectly honored His earthly mother, Mary, by bestowing His own divine glory upon her.**

Our veneration of Mary, then, is an essential part of our imitation of Christ. We follow Him not just by honoring our own mothers, but also by honoring whomever He honors—and with the same honor that He bestows.

Here was the greater miracle I gained through the Rosary. From that moment, I sensed how praying the beads deepened my own theological penetration of Scripture. Mary was no longer an obstacle to faith; she was opening its mysteries to me.



Jesus announced the Gospel, and then proceeded to fulfill it. But the Gospel did not change the Second Person of the Trinity. The eternal Son did not gain a single drop of glory for Himself—after living, dying, and rising as man—that He lacked beforehand. God did not create and redeem the world in order to get more glory, but rather to give it. There is no tug-of-war between the Creator and His creatures. The Father made and redeemed us through the Son

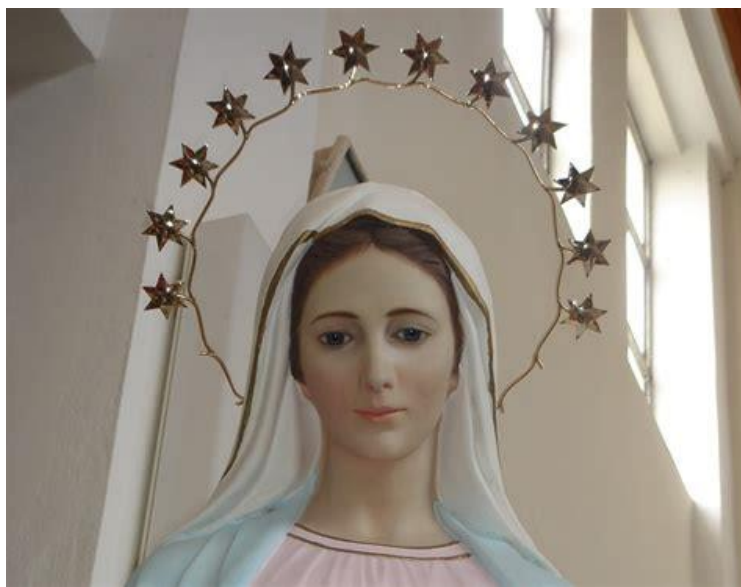
and the Spirit, but They did it for us—starting with Mary, in whom it was accomplished not only first, but best.

Do we detract from Christ's finished work by affirming its perfect realization in Mary? On the contrary, we celebrate His work precisely by focusing our attention on the human person who manifests it most perfectly.

Mary is not God, but she is the Mother of God. She is only a creature, but she is God's greatest creation. Just as artists long to paint one masterpiece among their many works, so Jesus made His mother to be His greatest masterpiece. To continue the metaphor: No artist is offended when we praise his greatest work. In fact, he might be offended if we don't. To affirm the truth about Mary does not detract from Jesus, although not to affirm it could.

Mary is directly related to God by a natural bond of covenant kinship, as the Mother of Jesus, to whom she gave her own flesh and blood. This bond is what enables us to share the New Covenant grace of Christ by adoption. Furthermore, Jesus is legally bound by His Father's law ("Honor your father and mother") to share His honor with Mary, as her Son. Indeed, He fulfilled this law more perfectly than any son has ever done, by bestowing the gift of His divine glory upon her. **And we are simply called to imitate Him.**

Mary is our Mother also. Please honor her as Jesus did. Ask for her help for your family. Her son Jesus listens to His mother, as a part of Him honoring her.

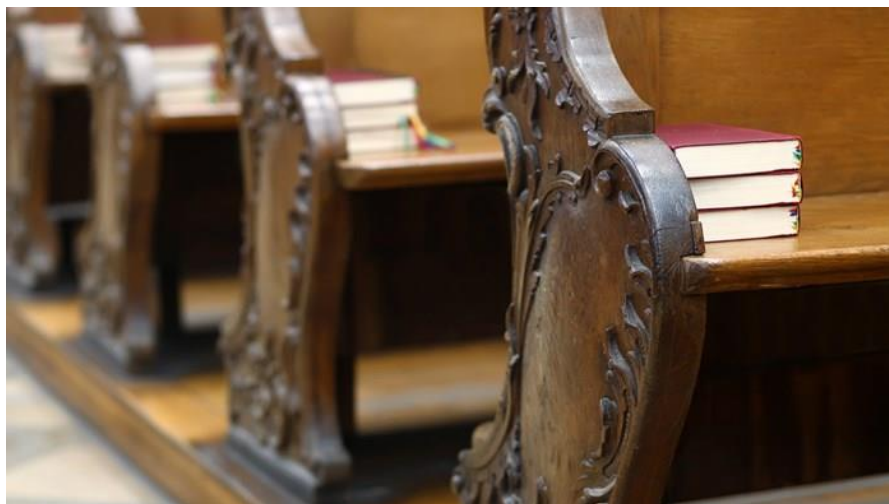


Rev: 21:1. "A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman* clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

Mary is the archetypal symbol of the Woman who is Israel, the twelve tribes from their father Jacob and the Church Jesus founded through the 12 apostles. As archetype of the Church, she is a sign that the Church is surrounded by God's power and protection ("Clothed

with the Sun"). She is in continuity with the original 12 tribes (Israel) people of God but stands also for the renewed people of God, the Church.

Protestants Can Affirm the “Communion of Saints” and the “Holy Catholic Church.”



By: Timothy George. [Dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University](#), a senior editor of Christianity Today, and a member of the Christian History advisory board. The Beeson Divinity School of Samford University is an interdenominational evangelical divinity school located in Birmingham, Alabama, United States.

The Protestant reformers understood themselves to be a part of “the holy catholic church.” Millions of Protestants still repeat these words every week as they stand in worship to recite the Apostles' Creed. The word *catholic* was first used in this sense in the early second century when Ignatius of Antioch declared, “Where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church.” Jesus Christ is the head of the church, as well as its Lord. Protestant believers in the tradition of the Reformation understand the church to be the body of Christ extended throughout time as well as space, the whole company of God's redeemed people through the ages.

Protestants, of course, do not equate “catholic” with “Roman Catholic.” To avoid this misunderstanding, some prefer to say “holy Christian church.” While there is nothing wrong with this term, we should not be embarrassed

by the older wording. The word *catholic* simply means “**general, universal, concerning the whole.**” **Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one, even as he and the Father are one, so that the world might believe. I think it is right to pray and work for the “full visible unity” of Christ's church on earth which we know for sure will be completely realized when Jesus comes again.** When we say that we “believe in the holy catholic church,” we are confessing that Jesus Christ himself is the church's one foundation, that all who truly trust in him as Savior and Lord are by God's grace members of this church, **and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.**

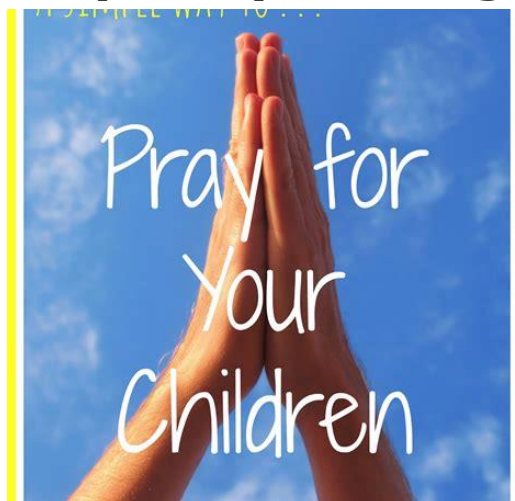
The “communion of saints” is another term from the Apostles' Creed that troubles some Protestants. “Saints” in the New Testament refers to baptized believers in a local congregation, such as the saints at Corinth, or Ephesus, or Colossae. Some of these believers were far from saintly in their behavior, but they were holy by virtue of their participation (*communio*) in Christ.

The New Testament also recognizes “**a great cloud of witnesses**” made up of men and women of faith who surround us as we walk the path of faith. Each Christian tradition can offer its own special “saints” to the entire body of Christ. In this way we can respond to the biblical call to holiness and also be drawn closer to one another as we look to Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).



Matthew 22:32... I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

You are important in the salvation of your family. Pray, Pray, Pray. Don't give up !



Reflections

**The International Catholic Family Newsletter
Is Published Monthly**

Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.



The Rosary is the 'weapon' for these times. – St. Padre Pio

St. Paul Ministry