

JUNE 28 2025 FATHER JOHN BERTAIO

Let me address our ladies who are listening to us—and gentlemen as well.

The question I have is this: Are you a mother? Maybe a grandmother? Perhaps even a godmother?

I'm sure you know that we all come through God from a mother, as a gift of humanity.

Did your mother have a heart of gold—one you still remember fondly? Not all of us are as lucky as others. Over the years, I have met several people who suffered abuse or were abandoned. My heart aches for them. They need our prayers and, we hope, one day, reconciliation.

I've been told that a mother's heart is always affected when the mother and child relationship is hurt. Again, please, let us pray for those who are hurting.

Some of us have been very blessed with ideal moms. As I've told you before, I was blessed to have a wonderful mother—a lady in my life who I was proud to call my mother. Was she a saint? Only God knows. But to me, she was the best.

You see, moms teach us even before we are born, and they continue to teach us as we grow, nourished by their love and example. And although some are not perfect, let's always love and respect our mothers, just as Jesus did in his 33 short years of life on earth.

Liturgically speaking, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary began as early as the 12th century. In the 17th century in France, Saint John Eudes helped popularize this devotion, along with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which we especially venerate in June.

Like in Saint Luke's Gospel, it is mentioned twice that Mary kept all these things in her heart, pondering the Word of God. This shows us how to listen to the words of Holy Scripture, how they speak to the depths of our hearts, and how we can respond in faith.

Mary, throughout her life, is a model of contemplation. That's key to remember—contemplation. She reflects in her heart, a heart that would know great suffering because of her “yes” to God.

Many people believe that God rewards faithfulness with material goods or protection from suffering. But Mary, most blessed among women, reveals this isn't always the case. In her confusion and suffering, she continually turns to God. She reflects everything in her Immaculate Heart.

As her children, we are called to follow her example of contemplation, that we might love with a heart like hers.

Saint Peter writes, “Jesus teaches us that over and above any human authority—even that of our parents—there is the primary duty to do the will of God.” And he continues, “Once we are consoled by the joy of finding Jesus, we shall be left deeply impressed by the duty to leave our home and family to serve our Heavenly Father.”

Thus, the mission of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is ours as well. By doing the will of God—even with some suffering—we will one day share eternal happiness.

So, in brief, why this memorial to the Immaculate Heart of Mary? One of my commentaries writes that it commemorates the joys and sorrows of the Mother of God—her virtues and perfections, her love for God and her divine Son, and her compassionate love for all of humanity.

Why not include Mary in your daily life? It's pretty simple. One way is this: at the start and end of each day, pray a Hail Mary. Before getting out of bed in the morning and before going to sleep at night, pray a Hail Mary.

For those of us whose mothers have gone home to God, it's as though Mary and our mothers are tucking us into bed. How comforting that is.

And when we wake up—even if we're having a bad hair day, or the floor is cold—focus on Mary. She's right there with you, encouraging you.

Remember when we were children, and our moms would gently touch us on the shoulder and say, "It's time to get up"? "Oh, Mom, Mom, please..."

My mom would sit on the side of the bed and say, "Let's pray a Hail Mary." And by the time we finished, I was ready to go.

Good memories. A wonderful memory.

For those who don't have those memories, please, let us pray for them at this Mass. Let us pray that every child deserves to be loved and respected—from the moment of conception to natural death.

Mary's heart can be with each of us through our history. And in these days, with so many challenges, what do you have to lose?

In your own special heart, in your own special way, turn to Mary. She knows what you need. She will give you what you need. Just trust. Trust in her.

God did. God trusted Mary, giving her Jesus, who held everything in her heart.

I can't stress enough how important it is to give everything to Mary. Our Popes do it. Our Bishops do it. The Priesthood—all of us—trust everything we have to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

She knows what you need. She will give you what you need. All you need is just a little tiny bit of faith. And then she will take over from there.

Follow her, no matter what.

As we complete this reflection, please pray with me for those who did not have a good experience with a mother. That one day—hopefully here on earth, but definitely one day in heaven—they may be reconciled.

Because life is too short, and it's worth living in peace, in great love, humility, and most of all, in love for Mary.

Amen.