

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Next Sunday, November 5, I invite you to begin the 33-Day preparation for the Consecration (or re-Consecration) of our hearts and lives to Jesus through the hands of Mary. We have done this each year that I have been here in the parish, and I have found it to be a powerful experience. I will have the books out this weekend, and invite you, if you don't have one, to take one, and begin the preparation.

Why Consecration?

To consecrate something means to make it holy and set it aside for God. Last week, we heard that we are to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. To consecrate ourselves means that we *choose* to give God what belongs to Him – ourselves: our lives, our bodies, our desires, our love, all that we are and hope to be; we give Him our past, our failures, our sins, our brokenness; we give Him our talents, our intelligence, our very being. It all belongs to Him anyway, for everything we have and are comes from Him, but He allows us to have free-will, so we can choose to cling to ourselves. The history of the world shows us, though, that we will not be happy clinging to ourselves, but only if we give ourselves away. So, the short answer (after this long paragraph) is that we Consecrate ourselves to God so we can be happy.

Why Consecration to Mary?

There is a God-wound in us. We see this in Adam and Eve – they didn't trust God. They believed that God was out to get them, that He was keeping something from them, that He didn't really want them to be happy. This is very much the state of the world today. Sometimes we're afraid of God. Sometimes we think He doesn't really want us to be happy: after all, isn't that why He has so many prohibitive rules?! (Incidentally, remember, the heart of the Gospel is that God wants to marry us, He *wants* us to be happy! The rules are for freedom, not restriction... but that's a topic for another day.) Because of this, for many of us it is hard to approach God. Mary is one of us, though. She is human and knows our broken condition. We don't have the "God-wound" with her, and so, in a sense, we can feel safe with her. Because Mary is without sin, her whole life was directed to God. She is the perfect disciple, and can lead us to Jesus' Heart. So when we consecrate ourselves to Mary (or to Jesus through Mary), we are taking the *fastest, easiest, safest* and *most sure* way to God, to letting Him love us, to letting ourselves be His.

The image I like to use is that of a small child who has been invited to a birthday party in a town several miles away. While the child might be able to get there on his own, most likely he will get lost, or tired, or hurt as he makes his way there. But if he goes *with* his mother, she will put him in the car, and all he has to do is let her drive him to the party. He gets there quickly, easily and safely. It is not that we go to Mary instead of going to Jesus; rather we go to Jesus *with Mary*, and she knows the best way to get to Him.

What do I have to do for this Consecration?

We are using a particular preparation for the Consecration: Fr. Michael Gaitley's book *33 Days to Morning Glory*. Each day from November 5-December 8 (the day of Consecration, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception) there are a few pages of reading. Usually, this only takes between 5-10 minutes. The reading is designed to build on itself to help us understand Marian Consecration through the theology of St. Louis de Montfort, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Teresa of Calcutta, and St. John Paul II. As we come to understand Marian Consecration more and more, the hope is that our desire to give ourselves to Jesus through Mary will also grow, so that we can give her the beautiful gift of ourselves on the Day of Consecration.

Just a couple of things to ponder as you prepare for the Consecration. First, it's all about relationship – relationship with Mary and with Jesus. The process is not about jumping through hoops to get a "prize". When things get tough, remember to keep focused on the love Jesus and Mary have for you. They're not looking for people without faults or defects, they're looking for persons who are willing to love them. Also, if you get behind in the reading, don't get discouraged. If you miss a day (or a few), don't think you have to stop and begin again from the beginning. Simply attempt to catch up. Maybe that will take a few days but it is not impossible.

When we get to Consecration Day (December 8), I will invite those who have prepared to Consecrate or re-Consecrate themselves after the Holy Day Masses. It will be a great way to move toward Christmas, to prepare our hearts to be a beautiful gift for the newborn Christ Child. I pray that you join me in this holy endeavor of giving ourselves wholly over to Jesus through the gentle hands of Mary.