

Mary continues to call us to prayer, conversion

We must not fall into the trap of looking at the Eastern Church's relationship with the Mother of God with arrogance, as being outdated.

The Mother of God teaches us one thing: to trust in the Word of God. How important it is today to trust in the Word of God!

We need the help of the Virgin and to learn from her, for she always performed God's will perfectly. In doing so, she delighted in the beauty of the duties God asked of her and she did them, singing joyfully the words of the Magnificat: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior!"

At some point, we all neglect our duties. Bishops forget to lead and to encourage the faithful and the clergy.

Priests sometimes forget to pray, to study, to wait and hear confessions.

Fathers forget to find the time to spend with their wives and children, without the TV or tablets, and simply play games with their children.

Maybe parents forget — or lack the courage — to tell their children they are wrong and making mistakes in their life. As parents, we will be accountable before Jesus Christ at the Last Judgment if we fail to teach our children the right way.

I know that to do God's will is not easy — it was not easy for the Mother of God — but it is possible.

For this reason, we go on pilgrimage to her shrine to ask her, "Mother of God, please help me. Help me because I am poor and in need."

Your Mother hears your needs and the groaning of your heart. The Mother of God of Mariapoch wept just like you do. Why does she cry? Because in her heart lies the suffering for her children.

There are many cases today of weeping icons of the Mother of God. They are for us important signs that call us to stop and ask ourselves about the direction in which we are going. Is it the way of truth? Are we moving toward God, via the Ten Commandments or the commandments of love? Or are we trying to find other commandments in our life? It is a very modern and popular notion to write our own commandments, abandoning the Ten Commandments of God that Moses received on Mount Sinai.

This year, we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the apparition of the Mother of God at Fatima, Portugal. There, she gave us two messages: prayer and conversion.

These messages invite us to abandon other plans and solutions given to us by this world. Instead, we should pray, be alone, and stay with God, or come to church to pray to him. I do not have all the answers as a bishop, but I am trying to find these answers in prayer.

We come on pilgrimage to petition the Mother of God because she is able to ask her Son Jesus Christ to help us and to protect us and our church, the entire Ruthenian Church in the United States.

We are here to ask her for the way of conversion. Only by conversion, will we be on the true path God wants for our life.

So when you return home, maybe you will call your mother and say, "How are you?" Say to her, "I love you. I thank you for everything." This is a good and human thing to do. We were created in this manner.

But also today, before we go to sleep, we need to find the time to say these same words to the Mother of God of Mariapoch: "Thank you for everything. Thank you for your protection. Thank you for all that you give me and for my life."

God bless you,
+ Bishop Milan

This text is based on the second part of Bishop Milan Lach's homily for the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at the Shrine of Our Lady of Mariapoch Aug. 13.

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