

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

MARY AND BIBLE THUMPING PREACHERS...

Recently, a very good parishioner here at Saint Charles told me that as he was coming home from work one evening, two young men from the "First Bible Church" were handing out religious leaflets at the Oakwood Heights train station. One of the pamphlets they were distributing was clearly anti-Catholic. The title was, "Mary's Command to Catholics." He told me that when he read the pamphlet he was disgusted.

It clearly misrepresented the Church's teaching on the Blessed Virgin Mary. The leaflet claimed that we Catholics worship the Blessed Mother as sort of a "Goddess." When the parishioner pointed out to these two men that this was totally wrong, they wouldn't hear of it and so he ripped the pamphlet up which was a good idea.

Over the years, as a priest wearing my Roman collar, I have been accosted by Bible thumping preachers in public places about the validity of Catholic teaching. One memory I have was of pumping gas at an Exxon station and having a young fellow in my face stating that Catholics worship the Pope and statues. Nothing I said could convince this individual of his error.

One thing to be said for some fundamentalists is that they have a very precise knowledge of the Bible. That is a good thing. However, the Bible has to be interpreted correctly. It is important to remember too that the Church anticipated the Bible and not the other way around. The Church bases its doctrines upon the Bible, the tradition and the magisterium, which is the living teaching voice of the Pope and the bishops in communion with him.

What does the Catholic Church teach us about Mary? Well, certainly, we do not worship her but offer her the highest veneration, even higher than the saints. The Catechism of the Church tell us this: "The Church honors the Blessed Virgin Mary with special devotion. This special devotion differs essentially from the adoration that is given to God..."(Catechism #971).

Mary deserves such great respect because she is the Mother of God. It was her great privilege to bear Jesus Christ the Son of God within her womb. Mary herself expressed her gratitude for such a great honor when she said, "The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is His name." She did not point to herself but always exalted God! And that is the way it should be!

The Church also teaches that Mary was conceived without sin and was totally pure, never touched by the stain of corruption. So it is right that we exalt her, even though she was a human being, like you and me.

Mary is the greatest intercessor we have with Jesus and the proof of this is in the Bible! Remember the story of the Wedding at Cana? Mary was present at this wedding as was her son Jesus. When the wine ran out it was an embarrassment to the hosts who prided themselves on great hospitality. Mary assessed the situation and came right to her son with the request: "They have no more wine." And we know the story, Jesus changed water into wine-his first miracle worked at the behest of the Blessed Mother!

Jesus still works miracles for us through his mother Mary's hands even today. One of my favorite titles for Mary is "Mother of Mercy." She looks with compassion on our weakness and problems and she can help us.

The Late Archbishop Fulton Sheen, the great televangelist, used to tell this humorous story: One day the Lord complained to Saint Peter, "How is it that all these people are getting into heaven?" Saint Peter says, "Well, don't blame me, every time I close the door, your Mother opens a window!"

I don't know about you, but when it comes to that, I won't be too proud to climb through a window-and I'll be really grateful to the Blessed Virgin Mary for opening it!

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome