

# From the Chaplaincy



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## MAY FLOWER

By Fr. Francis Ongkingco

After the children left the Church, the priest took it upon himself to fix the pews and gather the scattered photocopies of Marian prayers recited by the children before the statue of Mary. He also started removing the wilted flowers that had been offered to our Lady the previous day and placed the fresh ones closer to the foot of the statue.

As he gathered the fallen brown petals and leaves, he found a small, neatly folded piece of paper. He picked it up and examined it closely. On one side was written: *TO MAMA MARY*.

“It must be one of the kids who left a prayer petition to Mary,” he thought to himself.

Gently, he opened the fragile “Marian package” and was amused to read the following note to our Lady:

Dear Mama Mary,

I am Carlo, a boy who gives you flowers. Sorry today coz my flower got squished. My brother Pablo squished it. I boxed him coz I am angry. Sorry for boxing Pablo, but I am still mad. Promise I will bring you two flowers tomorrow. I will tell Pablo to say sorry to you also.

Carlo

P.S. What flower do you like me to bring you tomorrow?

Of all the offerings to our Lady that day, the priest felt that the boy’s simple letter was the best. In his innocent and sincere words, he expressed what true devotion to our Mother is.

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St. Louis de Montfort, the author of a *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* distinguishes between true and false devotion to the Mother of God. He first identifies seven kinds of false devotion:

- (1) the critical,
- (2) the scrupulous,
- (3) the superficial,
- (4) the presumptuous,
- (5) the inconstant,
- (6) the hypocritical, and
- (7) the self-interested.

The *critical* would be “proud scholars, people of independent and self-satisfied minds, who deep down in their hearts have a vague sort of devotion to Mary.” The *scrupulous* devotees are “those who imagine they are slighting the Son by honoring the Mother.” *Superficial* devotees “are people whose entire devotion to our Lady consists of exterior practices.” The *presumptuous* are people who “sleep peacefully in their wicked habits, without making any great effort to correct them, believing that their devotion to our Lady gives them this sort of liberty.” The *inconstant* are “those whose devotion to our Lady is practiced in fits and starts.” The *hypocritical* are those who “hide their sins and evil habits under the mantle of the Blessed Virgin so as to appear to their fellow-men different from what they are.” And the *self-interested* are those who only think of her when they’re in need.

In contrast to these false attitudes, St. Louis gives five marks of authentic devotion that are:

- (1) interior,
- (2) trustful,
- (3) holy,
- (4) constant, and
- (5) disinterested.

He says that it is *interior* when “it comes from within the mind and the heart and follows from the esteem in which we hold her, the high regard we have for her greatness, and the love we bear her.”

It is *trustful* when “it fills us with confidence in the Blessed Virgin, the confidence that a child has for its loving Mother. It prompts us to go to her in every need of body and soul with great simplicity, trust and affection. We implore our Mother's help always, everywhere, and for everything.”

A *holy* devotion is one that “leads us to avoid sin and to imitate the virtues of Mary. Her ten principal virtues are: deep humility, lively faith, blind obedience, unceasing prayer, constant self-denial, surpassing purity, ardent love, heroic patience, angelic kindness, and heavenly wisdom.”

It is *constant* when it “strengthens us in our desire to do good and prevents us from giving up our devotional practices too easily.”

Finally, it is *disinterested* when “this devotion inspires us to seek God alone in his Blessed Mother and not ourselves.”

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The remaining days of May invite us to ask ourselves about our devotion to Mary. If we find ourselves lacking in some aspects, let us not get discouraged. It is enough to consider and live St. Josemaría's encouraging advice:

**“How does a normal son or daughter treat his mother? In different ways, of course, but always affectionately and confidently, never coldly. In an intimate way, through small, commonplace customs. And a mother feels hurt if we omit them: a kiss or an embrace when leaving or coming home, a little extra attention, a few warm words.”**

*(Christ is Passing By, #142)*

Only by becoming children once again will we be able to confidently run to her, so that she herself may hint to us what small flower we can offer her each day.

