



Archbishop Shelton's Pastoral Reflections

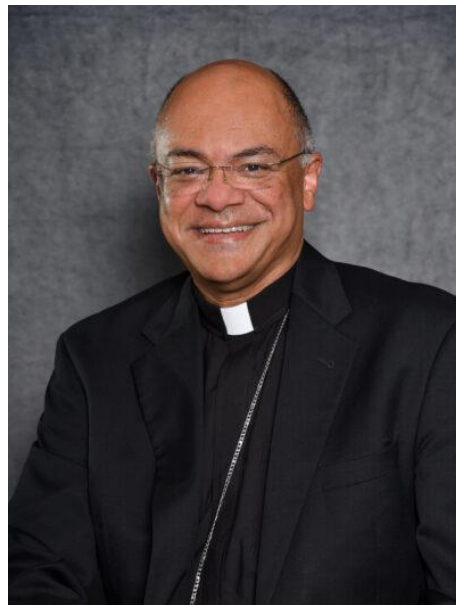
May 8, 2024

Mary, the Mother of God

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May is a bright and colorful month throughout all the 24 counties of Central Kentucky that make up our Archdiocese of Louisville. We are especially aware of the explosion of colors that we witness each year during the “Run for the Roses” on the first Saturday in May!

But May is also bright and colorful because it is a month dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God. Mary brings light into our lives because she is a beacon of hope in our world’s darkness. Her faith in her Son was severely tested by His cruel passion and death on the Cross, but she never gave up, standing with Him to the bitter end. How joyful Mary must have been when she learned that her beloved Son had overcome the darkness of death and brought everlasting light into the world by His Resurrection!



In addition to being the Mother of our Lord, we honor Mary as the Mother of the Church. We recognize that she plays a vital role in the life of our Church, especially in the Church’s liturgical, sacramental, and pastoral ministry. Mary’s witness as the first Christian disciple of Jesus Christ inspires us to follow her Son. Mary’s contributions to the Church’s missionary efforts and social justice outreach help us, her children, to seek and find her Son’s love and forgiveness. Our ardent devotion to Mary can teach us to forgive one another and to be peacemakers in our homes, in our communities, and among nations.

Mary, *Stella Maris* (Star of the Sea), serves as a guide for Christians who have lost their way. We turn to her in moments of anxiety or despair, and Mary’s contemplative spirituality serves as an example for us, guiding and encouraging us to walk with her, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Especially today, Mary is a source of consolation and encouragement for individuals and families who are forced to leave their homelands. Mary's intercession helps families who are fleeing injustice or persecution and seeking a better life for themselves and those that they love. Her own experience of being homeless and living in exile gives Mary a compassionate understanding of the challenges faced by all individuals and families who have been displaced and long for a better life.

One of Mary's most popular titles is "Our Lady of Peace." Mary inspires us to be peacemakers who refuse to seek violent solutions to the serious problems among nations and peoples. Her intercession helps us to overcome the serious sins of racism, nativism, and the intolerance of those who look, act, or think differently than we do.

Another of Mary's titles is "Mother of Perpetual Help." Mary is the person we turn to whenever we are threatened by illness, plagues, famine, and natural disasters. Mary is also able to help us face the serious economic, social, and political crises that confront us today.

Perhaps the most familiar of Mary's titles here in central Kentucky and among millions of people in our country is "Our Lady of Guadalupe." Mary appeared to a native Mexican, Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin, speaking his language and wearing native dress. Her presence among us today as our mother helps us to unite all the diverse peoples and nations of the Americas. Our Loving Mother teaches us to be united with Christ her Son as we travel together on a synodal journey toward a better world here and now and a better life to come.

As we celebrate the colorful month of May, let's remember to pay honor and respect to our Mother Mary. Let's ask her to show us the way to Jesus and to help us be faithful missionary disciples of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Shelton J. Fabre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Shelton J. Fabre
Archbishop of Louisville

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

The Church needs Mary in order to recover her own feminine face, to resemble more fully the woman, Virgin and Mother, who is her model and perfect image (cf. [Lumen Gentium](#), 63), to make space for women and to be “generative” through a pastoral ministry marked by concern and care, patience and maternal courage. The world, too, needs to look to mothers and to women in order to find peace, to



(CNS photo/Vatican Media)

emerge from the spiral of violence and hatred, and once more see things with genuinely human eyes and hearts. Every society needs to accept the gift that is woman, every woman: to respect, defend and esteem women, in the knowledge that whosoever harms a single woman profanes God, who was “born of a woman”.

Just as Mary, the *woman*, played a decisive role in the fullness of time, she is also decisive in the lives of each of us, for no one knows better than a Mother the stages of growth and the urgent needs of her children. Mary shows us this in yet another “beginning”: the first sign that Jesus performs, at the wedding feast of Cana. There, she is the one who realizes that the wine has run out, and who appeals to Jesus (cf. *Jn* 2:3). The needs of her children move her, the Mother, to beg Jesus to intervene. At Cana, Jesus says: “‘Fill the jars with water’. And they filled them up to the brim” (*Jn* 2:7).

Mary knows our needs; she intercedes to make grace overflow in our lives and to guide them to authentic fulfillment. Brothers and sisters, all of us have our shortcomings, our times of loneliness, our inner emptiness that cries out to be filled. Each of us knows this well. Who can fill our emptiness if not Mary, the *Mother of fullness*? Whenever we are tempted to retreat into ourselves, let us run to her; whenever we are no longer able to untie the knots in our lives, let us seek refuge in her.

Our times, bereft of peace, need a Mother who can reunite the human family. Let us look to Mary, in order to become artisans of unity. Let us do so with her maternal creativity and concern for her children. For she unites them and consoles them; she listens to their troubles, and she dries their tears. And let us look upon that tender icon of the *Virgo lactans* [of Montevergine Abbey]. That is how our mother is with us: how

tenderly she looks after us and draws close to us. She cares for us and remains close to us.

(A selection from the homily given by Pope Francis on the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, January 1, 2024.)

My Prayer for You

Please join me in praying these words of Pope Francis:

*Show us once again, O Mother, the path of conversion,
for there is no peace without pardon,
and there is no pardon without repentance.*

*The world changes if hearts change;
and everyone must say: beginning with mine.*

*But only God can change the human heart
with his grace, the grace in which you, Mary,
were immersed from the first instant.*

*The grace of Jesus Christ, Our Lord,
whom you generated in your flesh,
who died and rose for us, and to whom you always direct us.
He is salvation for every person, and for the world.*

Come, Lord Jesus!

May your kingdom of love, justice and peace come!

Amen.

+Shelton J. Fabre

(A selection from the prayer offered by Pope Francis on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2023.)