

## **Mary leads us once again to Jesus, her Son**

Homily by Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo

October 13, 2019

Rosary Congress  
Cathedral of St. Mary, Fargo

October is traditionally celebrated in the Church as the month of the Holy Rosary. It's a time for all the faithful to turn to our Blessed Mother in a particular way, asking for her intercession, but also meditating on the mysteries of our faith. And that's really what the rosary is; it's a meditation on the mysteries of our faith, along with Mary, our spiritual mother. Throughout this week, all around our diocese, we've been celebrating a diocesan Rosary Congress. Here at St. Mary's, and at parishes in every deanery, we're praying the rosary while also in adoration before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

And that's what Mary always does: she leads us to Jesus. As we pray the words of the Hail Mary in the rosary, we are led more deeply into the whole mystery of our salvation in Christ. Mary was filled with wonder as she carried Jesus in her womb, and looked on him with adoration at the time of his birth. She put all her trust in him at the wedding feast of Cana where he performed his first miracle. She followed him on the way to Calvary and stood with him at the foot of the cross. And she believed with faith in his resurrection, so that she too could be taken up to dwell with him in heaven. Mary is the model of faith for us all, because she was the first to believe in the good news proclaimed by Gabriel. She was not only the mother of Jesus; she was his first disciple, the woman of great faith.

And that's the theme that runs through our readings today as well: the gift of faith. In the second Book of Kings, Naaman, the pagan general, was cured because he trusted in the prophet's word and believed in God's power to save. At first he was reluctant to follow the simple instructions of Elisha. But finally he obeyed and washed in the humble waters of the Jordan River. Faith was awakened in him, and because he believed, he was healed of his leprosy. He experienced a profound conversion and went back to his homeland a changed man, determined to worship no other god but the Lord, the one true God of Israel.

Paul's faith is put to the test when he is put in chains and imprisoned. He suffers for his faith in Christ and his resurrection. He acknowledges that we must die with Jesus so we might also live with him. When others scoffed at the death and resurrection of Jesus, he held fast and put his faith in the One who called him. Again and again, Paul endured hardships because of his preaching of Christ. But he persevered in faith, knowing that our Lord would never abandon him. Paul knew that Jesus had called him for a reason, for a mission, and he held fast to the vision of Jesus that he experienced on the road to Damascus. Because he put his full faith in Christ, he was able to carry the Gospel to many lands, and win many hearts over to the Lord.

And then in today's Gospel, we find the ten lepers who approached Jesus, hoping they might be healed. "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" To be a leper was a kind of living death. They experienced the slow and painful decay of their bodies, but even more painful was the isolation they experienced. They were cut off from the community, and left to fend for themselves. They were unwelcome even in places of worship, and could not take part in the religious rituals of their own people. Imagine if we were shunned and locked out of our parish because we had

contracted an illness through no fault of our own. But they put their faith in Jesus, and trusted that he could heal them. They cried out from a distance, not even daring to approach Jesus, and he responded with compassion. On their way to the priests, they realized that they had been healed. One of them, a Samaritan, came back to thank Jesus, and he replied, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you." This attitude of thanksgiving and worship born of faith is essential for us as Christians. Part of our faith is the acknowledgment of God's greatness, his generosity and love, his fatherhood. Like the Samaritan, we put our faith in Christ and give thanks for the great gift of his redemption, not just for the healing of our bodies but for the salvation of our souls.

All of this we bring to the celebration of this Mass, the sacrifice of the Eucharist. Along with these great models of faith, especially our Blessed Mother, we come before this altar, ready to join ourselves once again to Jesus. And in a spirit of adoration, we kneel before him in the Eucharist, worshiping as Mary did at every moment of her life. No one was closer to Jesus during his time on earth than Mary, his mother. No one believed in him more fully, even through hardships and sorrows. So it makes absolute sense that we should ask Mary to accompany us on our own journey of faith. She leads us to Jesus now so that we might dwell forever with him in heaven. She prays for us and with us as we gaze on him with the eyes of faith.

On this day in 1917, our Blessed Mother appeared one final time to the children of Fatima, where she had shown herself to them over the course of several months. And in a great sign that has come to be called the miracle of the sun, she showed to the gathered crowds the beauty and power of God. She showed them that they must turn away from anything that would stand in the way of their faith. And thousands of people who saw that great sign believed and were transformed. Our Blessed Mother comes to us today with the very same purpose. In the observance of this Rosary Congress, Mary leads us once again to Jesus, her Son. She urges us to put our faith in him and to repent of our sins. She prays for us so that our hearts might be opened to God's grace, and she strengthens our faith. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.