

DAY 19: Heart-Pondering Prayer

Are you ready for your consecration to Mary? If not, then get ready! As I said in the beginning, after Consecration Day, everything changes. A gloriously new day dawns in our spiritual lives. Indeed, when we give Mary our "yes," she begins to arrange all the events and details of our lives in such beautiful, tender, and loving ways. So, we need to get ready. Specifically, we need to get ready to *recognize* the multitude of mercies that will come to us through her Spouse, the Holy Spirit.

Oftentimes, we don't recognize the many gifts that God pours out to us in our daily lives. What we do recognize are daily annoyances, burdens, difficulties, and inconveniences. These win our attention. These get us complaining. These get us in a bad mood and sap our energy. Wouldn't it be a tragedy if, after we started receiving even more gifts and graces through our consecration, we didn't change this negative attitude? Yes, it would be. So, we need to get ready, and Mother Teresa will help us.

Mother Teresa lived in some of the poorest environments on earth. She had to put up with burning heat, bad breath, stuffy rooms, nagging fatigue, endless responsibilities, bland food, hard beds, body odor, cold water bathing, and an agonizingly deep spiritual aridity. Yet, despite all this, she radiated joy. She smiled. She marveled at the good things God did in her life and in the lives of others, and she pondered the countless loving details arranged by Our Lady. Seeing and recognizing all this, she didn't complain.

How did Mother Teresa develop such a spiritual sensitivity and attitude of gratitude? What was her secret? Two things.

First, she followed the example of Mary who was always "pondering in her heart" the "good things" that God was doing in her life (see Luke 2:19, 51). Of course, like Mother Teresa, Mary also lived in poverty and surely bore her share of darkness in prayer. Yet she also found God in the details, pondered his goodness in her heart, and responded with praise: "*Magnificat!*" Indeed, she praised and thanked God in all things, because she found God in all things and pondered deeply in her heart his many signs of love.

Second, Mother Teresa followed the example of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the soldier saint and master of practical prayer. Specifically, she lived his method of making a daily examination of conscience ("examen"), whereby one reviews the day, at the end of the day, in the presence of the Lord. Contrary to what people often think about the examen, it's not simply a laundry list of sins. In fact, Ignatius directs people to spend most of their time reflecting not on sins but on the blessings of the day. It's really an exercise in recognizing the good things God is doing in our lives and how we are or are not responding to his love. It's an imitation of Mary's attitude of heart-pondering prayer. (To learn a method of making the examen, see [endnote 73 in the print edition of *33 Days to Morning Glory*].)

God is always showering his love and mercy down on us in so many ways. It's important that we begin to recognize these blessings and thank him for them, especially because this shower of blessings is going to turn into a torrent of grace once we consecrate ourselves to Mary. So, let's get ready. Let's remember that, according to Mother Teresa, one important way that we live out our consecration is by recognizing God's blessings and pondering them, with Mary, deeply in our hearts. Such heart-pondering prayer leads to praise and thanks, and praise and thanks sets us on fire with divine love.

Today's Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me to recognize and ponder in my heart all the good you do for me.