

Baby ☉ Body ☉ Soul

Imitating the Virtues of the Blessed Mother

In my work as a Catholic mother, nurse, and birth and postpartum doula, I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on Mary, Our Blessed Mother. Not only is she a supreme model of motherhood, but she also longs to be our spiritual mother. She always stays near us, offering maternal help and guidance throughout pregnancy, birth, and the daily trials of mothering. All we have to do is turn to her and ask for her intercession. As Our Lady of Guadalupe told St. Juan Diego, “All those who sincerely ask my help in their work and in their sorrows will know my Mother’s Heart in this place. Here I will see their tears; I will console them and they will be at peace.”

Not only are mothers in need of Mary’s nurturing care, they can also be strengthened by following her example. When the 10 Marian virtues – purity, prudence, humility, faith, devotion, obedience, poverty, patience, mercy, and sorrow – are applied to motherhood, women can find greater meaning, peace and healing in their daily lives. Mary can grant women the graces they need through her Son Jesus to help them be better mothers and blossom into the beautiful women they are made to be.

No matter what the circumstances, every pregnancy is a pure and sacred gift. Motherhood is in itself a calling of purity because it is blessed by God. The obedience to that calling is mirrored in Mary’s Fiat, “Let it be done.” When a woman devotes herself to the process of pregnancy, birth and the sanctity of her motherly vocation, she devotes herself to God. In return, God gives Himself and the Blessed Mother to nurture and care for her.

When we respond to God with our own fiat, we cannot know the outcome. The experience of labor and childbirth is a calling into a great unknown. In these instances, where we often have little control, we are called to surrender to a greater hand. God’s plan most often unfolds in the realm of mystery and uncertainty, and He uses every experience to shape our souls and draw us closer to Himself.

St. Teresa of Avila wrote, “Patience obtains all things.” When faced with unexpected circumstances that can arise in labor and delivery, patience is one of the best preparations for becoming a new parent. Cultivating the seeds of patience and willingness to accept the ‘unplanned’ during pregnancy and labor, is practice for the patience required as a new mother.

Fear and anxiety are normal, and faith is the light that guides us to be the gentle and strong protectors of the lives that have been entrusted to us. However, mothers, as blessed treasures, are also in need of grace and care. A mother’s humility of spirit, her

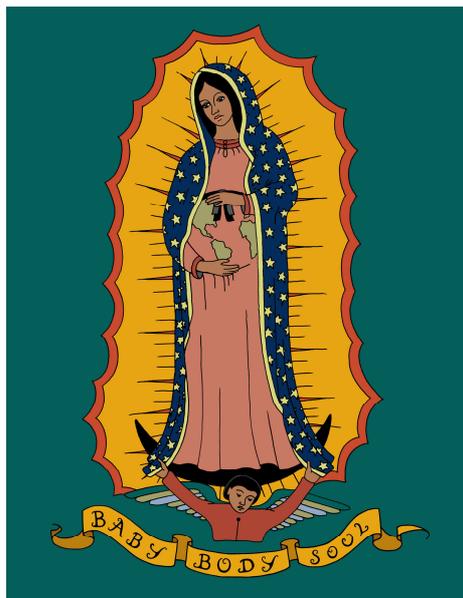
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willingness to ask for and receive care, is like a flower which, when it receives the gifts of sunshine, rain and nourishment from the soil, is in turn able to give beauty and nectar to the world.

Pope Benedict XVI spoke of “women as bearers of love, teachers of mercy and artisans of peace.” A mother’s mercy, love and compassion should extend to her expectations of herself, her body and her family. As the saying goes, “The crack is what lets the light in,” so also the recognition that we, our family, and our children are imperfect allows space for God’s mercy to be experienced in our families.

Mary’s maternal love can carry us through life’s heartaches with tenderness, healing and restoration. Having been through unimaginable depths of pain, sorrow and heartbreak, Mary always remained strong and humble, submitting to the Father’s will. We cannot carry the huge load of life’s demands, disappointment and suffering alone. Mary beckons all her children, with their worry, imperfection, and woundedness, to come to her so she can intercede on our behalf and bestow graces on us through her Son Jesus.

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