

## **Homily on Names of Mary - from 2007**

***The Most High God has so exulted your name that your praises shall never fade from the mouth of men***

**In 1683 Europe was in turmoil. The turks had overrun much of the southern part of the Balkans, The next prize they had their eyes peered on was Vienna. Which is the center of the Holy Roman Empire, the center of Christendom as it was known then. It was that power representing the civil part of life, the date was approaching, the date for the battle to take place. It looked very bleak for the Roman Catholic Church with 100,000 troops sent by Sultan Mehmed IV who himself sent a message to the King Leopold I: Await us in your residence so we can decapitate you. That was from the head of the Moslem force in those days, of the Ottoman Empire.**

**However there were other plans in the making. From Poland to the rescue came King John Sobieski somewhat secretly. John Sobieski was no stranger to the Turks and he had routed them in his own homeland. several times. Success won him the name Lion of the North, and on September 11, 1683 he prepared to repel them again. This time at the gates of Vienna. But he didn't do this before he first stopped at \ Czestochowa, at the shrine of the Black Madonna in his Polish homeland. She had already seen scars on her face from hordes who attacked and marred both Ikon and countryside but were valiantly routed. And now, amassing troops from Germans and others they also came to the gates of Vienna, but yet undiscovered by the Turks in the vicinity.**

**When the Turkish troops of 500,000 plus heard the name Sobieski, fear of the Lion drove them into confusion and disarray on the 12th of September. Yesterday we recognized the anniversary of "9-11" not totally unrelated to the events described here. But the 12th of September 1683 was the day that Pope Innocent 11th declared would be the feast of the Blessed Name of Mary, after the victory thwarting the Moslem advance in Europe at the center of the Holy Roman Empire.**

**The feast was newly established for the Universal Church, and like so many other feasts, it was not invented at that time. It enjoyed a history well before 1683, in Spain especially. Many of these feasts build up. The Church traces the Name of Mary, as it is itself the mirror image of Mary. Many names come from a locale: I mentioned Czestochowa. We think of Lourdes, Loreto, Fatima, Knock, Medjugorje and of course Guadalupe that are locational images of the names of Mary. But there are also names that are theological: the central-most being Mary Mother of God with which we begin each calendar year. And there are Our Lady's names which are drawn from historical features such as this one. Some one hundred and fifty years before the Turks were routed here once before, with 125,000 troops, and in Lepanto, Greece, some fifty years after that, when again the Turks sailed into harbor and were routed at Lepanto despite great odds in their favor. The weapon of conquest was not galleons or muskets or swords or troops though they outnumbered the Christians 20-1. It was the rosary. And thus the feast of the Rosary was established by Pius V after that victory. Obviously the devotion of the rosary was thoroughly rooted into Christian**

**history well before this and lesser feasts were peppered through Christendom, but now a new universal feast was acclaimed. So too with today's commemoration: The Blessed Name of Mary.**

**The Names of Mary come together in theology, location and history, the experiences we collectively share as Christians. and what a wonderful treasure we have in the Name of Mary itself. That name is not the Name above all names: that Name is Jesus' Holy Name. We acknowledge that, from Philippians: Every knee shall bend at the Name of Jesus but like the new Adam the new Eve has her Name too. And like the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so the Immaculate Heart of Mary is conjoined to that Heart.**

**And we can see one of the beautiful images from medieval times, the picture, the Icon of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Genazzano Italy, having appeared to the faithful on a bright blue evening almost cloudless, but with one cloud shrouding the Image which it is told brought the Image from Albania in 1463 to its present resting place in the Augustinian Church, where its fragile relief has resisted attack and earthquake for 550 years. The eyes of the Blessed Mother and the Eyes of the Child Jesus are practically touching each other, as if to drink in the meaning of "Do Whatever He tells You!" in wisdom and inspiration. What a stroke of genius that artist had to represent such a beautiful Image, and for God to preserve it for centuries. The eyes nearly touch and the union of Mother and Christ Child are readily seen..**

**Next, across the Atlantic several decades after the bloody**

**conquest of Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe , rendered in the Nahuatl language as "the one who crushed the serpent," alluding to the satanic "serpent" in Genesis, even as the beautiful lady identified herself as "Mother of the true God."**

**Popes have visited locational centers where Mary has appeared to renew the faith of those lands, to beseech Our Lady to protect once again the same Europe from the present spiritual dangers. For secularism has ravished and made museum pieces of much of what was thriving as Christian Cathedrals and the lifestyle built around it. Look at those cathedrals that arose, with the first major basilica in the West of Mary Major in Rome, and the centuries of logic, design, prayer and sweat that went into their construction, to say nothing of the centuries of worship by pauper and prince alike . How many are named after Mary for she is the Model of the Church: France alone produces a veritable litany of Cathedrals under some title of Notre Dame. Around which a whole cluster of cities drew their spiritual inspiration.**

**The Names of Mary also come out of the Scriptures, not only New Testament but even the anticipated Old Testament as well. The Virgin shall conceive and bear a son (Isaiah 7: 14). What are the first words we have in the New Testament about Mary? They are "Hail Mary, full of grace." The Greek text in Luke's first Chapter is an intensification - more than - grace, complete, more than which cannot be. Flowing over. So it is translated as "full of grace" The first words we hear. Her Name is given, and though there is some variance on the etymology of the Name, Miriam, or the Hebrew designating myrr or sorrow, and all**

of these are appropriate, and maybe that is part of the mystery. After the word Mary, the angel calls forth her prominence which is the door through which our Savior can come into the womb. She is full of grace because she is destined by God from all eternity to be the one who would bear His Son Jesus Who is His Son from all eternity, The Father's Son Jesus now made Flesh in time. The names of Mary in Scripture are full of grace and we can ponder on those root expressions as many an artist and cathedral builder or perhaps mother cradling her child did through the ages.

Mother of my Lord: we heard that today in the beautiful passage of the Gospel where Mary does not sit home after she received the Incarnate Word, that growing Divine Embryo within her, but she goes in haste to visit her relative Elizabeth in the hill country - not an easy journey. In the wonderful exchange that takes place whereupon John the Baptist recognizes, through the impetus of the Holy Spirit, Who is in the womb of Mary and leaps for joy in Elizabeth, in turn causing her to acknowledge both Lord and Mother of the Lord. "How is it that the Mother of my Lord comes to me? And she rightly predicts "Blessed is she who believed that the promise given to her would be fulfilled." She also knows that this promise is fulfilled in her as well in her advanced age. And note that it is the *Little* Baby that influences the *Bigger* Baby John both in their mothers' wombs. Not the other way round. These divine-human interactions center about Names - Full of Grace - Mother of the Lord. Already we see WHY Mary is full of grace. Elizabeth shouts it out: Mother of the Lord, Mother of God.

***Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and are faithful to it.*** When Jesus was ministering and the Apostles recognized and drew Jesus attention to His Mother. His response emphasized that not even the Immaculate virginity was equal to Mary's all-encompassing faithfulness, a perfect image of the Infinte Faithfulness of God. So many times in her recorded appearances throughout history it is her faithfulness and trustworthiness that becomes the pivotal point of drawing over weak hearts of faith to cling to her message despite local ridicule: Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje, to name just a few. Mary on earth led the way herself by her steadfast faithfulness despite hardships and the horror of seeing her Son dispised, mocked, vilely hated, tortured, and crucified.

Then there is Jesus' use of the word "Woman" - which in the Gospels at first glance sounds harsh and cold for one's Mother. But at the Cross when John was given to Mary and Mary to John, it was a symbolic way of entrusting the mother to the next of kin to care for her. But it was much more. Mary was the new Eve, as Jesus was the new Adam, and here she represents the "woman" and the entire Church and all of humanity really. Jesus bequeathed his mother to the church and to mankind. It is a universal designation raising her to the highest honor, and used in great respect therefore.

We know Mary as the Woman clothed with the sun, from the book of Revelation, still another designation, another title from sacred scripture. **Clothed with the Sun! *Qua visitabit nos oriens ex alto*** - the Morning Star will visit us from on high - the rising sun, Jesus Chirst, we echo this in

**the *Benedictus*, at Morning Prayer throughout the world. The same "Morning star" Who died and came back to life, Jesus Christ, sung with triumph and gratitude during the Exsultet of Easter Vigil Candle - all about Jesus Christ. And Mary is clothed with Him, not just the sun of the planetary system. The Son of God. Think of the enormous ramifications of that. Power and light, but with the Light of the Son of God who once *encapsuled* in her Womb now clothes *her* in glory, His glory.**

**Our entrance antiphon today says: *The Most High God has so exulted your name that your praises shall never fade from the mouth of men.* How true that is: *All generations shall call me blessed*, we have just heard in the Gospel *Magnificat*. In the Responsorial Psalm these are words applied from the Book of Judith, in her maternal thanksgiving, but they apply even more eminently to our Blessed Lady.**

**Hail Mary, full of grace, we repeat those words of the Archangel Gabriel every day in the rosary - at least 53 times. And millions more around the world each day - it never ends. Constant praise and veneration given to the Mother of God. *Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners:* words entered and cultivated by the Church. But they're not invented either. Elizabeth already acclaim Mary as Mother of the Lord Who is God. The Church simply adds from Luke's Gospel text of Annunciation and visitation passages an intecessary plea to pray for us *now, right now*, when we're at battle, when we're waiting for childbirth, when we're looking for a job, praying over the sick person, averting war, - whatever the *now* points to in our lives - or**

whether we are fighting the forces of evil as they were in Lepanto, or on land in Vienna, or the millions of troops praying the rosary preparing for battles to follow, or in the aftermath of 9-11 or in the memory of those gone before us; and - at the hour of our death - and how wise it would be to remember that we never know when that might be and that we are prepared. Yes, we pray at the hour of our death because that hour can be today, that can be *this* hour! How wise the Church gives us this perspective of readiness. And what a beautiful way by which we as her children praise the name of Mary.

How many beautiful names are there which enrich our lives and bring her as a faithful companion to the Lord. Fr Benedict Groeschel The Litany of Loretto: Mother of the Creator, flows from the solemn dogma from earliest councils of the Church, especially Ephesus, and Constantinople. Virgin most prudent / Seat of Wisdom / Cause of our Joy - Mystical Rose: we remember "Lo How a Rose e'er Blooming" - an Advent reminder of the coming of the Savior. But Saint Brigid adds: "The Virgin may suitably be called a blooming rose. Just as the gentle rose is placed among thorns, So this gentle Virgin was surrounded by sorrow." And we are reminded of the Castilian Roses Saint Juan Diego picked in winter for our Lady of Guadalupe to be the sign for the Archbishop in Mexico City. Tower of David, Arc of the Covenant (as the Arc held the most precious commandments of God in it and moved in company to protect the Hebrew people in the Old Testament, so Mary houses the most precious treasure earth has ever witnessed: Jesus Christ. "Ven con nosotros a caminar: Santa Maria, ven!" ) House of Gold: King David and

**Solomon had their gold; King Jesus has Mary. Gate of Heaven, Refuge of Sinners, Comforter of the Afflicted - Our Lady of the Knots - - words we can chew on and digest their sweetness, that pause in our lives, that color our spirituality. They display the color of Mary's array of virtue and her love for us, like native costumes exude the pride of their people and customs - Mary and her Divine Son often being at the center of such sparkling celebrations.**

**And the myriad of confirmed Miracles that pour from the honor of her Name - Lourdes, Fatima, Czestochowa, Kazan, La Salette, Loreto, Medjugorje, Knock, Walsingham!**

**Mary threads through the Church continually, she must, for she is the one mirrored in the Church - *O Virgin of Virgins our mother. To thee do we come, sinful and sorrowful.* The Church has always fostered just that.**

**So we have our challenges, but we need look back on those who met those challenges with the protection of the Holy Mother of God, as she did in the battles against the Turks in Lepanto and again in Vienna, or as she converted the people of Mexico in the millions after the appearance of *la Guadalupana* by the time Lepanto was fought victoriously 40 years later. Every nation has a particular focal point of pride attached to Our Lady: from the ancient Our lady of the Pillar in Zaragossa, Spain, attributed to St James the Apostle's vision to the Lady of the Millennium who is with Child as is Guadalupe to Our Lady of the Millennium. And of course - la Pieta, a particular embrace of the Mother of Sorrows.**

**Artists and composers have poured out their most precious moments of inspiration in paintings, sculptures and choral compositions honoring Mary's *Ave Maria* and *Salve, Regina*. There is a universe contained in Mary's name, and yet it all points to Christ Who is the Name above all others. She always points to Him, and unfailingly so.**

**A summary of this interlocked praise and the deference Mary gives to her Divine Son is contained in the beautiful Names of Mary and Jesus from the following song. Let's listen and cherish them:**

**Mary the dawn, Christ the Perfect Day;  
Mary the gate, Christ the Heavenly Way!  
Mary the root, Christ the Mystic Vine;  
Mary the grape, Christ the Sacred Wine!  
Mary the wheat, Christ the Living Bread;  
Mary the stem, Christ the Rose blood-red!  
Mary the font, Christ the Cleansing Flood;  
Mary the cup, Christ the Saving Blood!  
Mary the temple, Christ the temple's Lord;  
Mary the shrine, Christ the God adored!  
Mary the beacon, Christ the Haven's Rest;  
Mary the mirror, Christ the Vision Blest!  
Mary the mother, Christ the mother's Son  
By all things blest while endless ages run. Amen.**