

A number of years ago, I frequently visited the home of one of my high school friends. His parents were fallen away Catholics who had become evangelicals. They identified themselves as "born again" Christians who had developed a personal relationship with Jesus since leaving the Church. Unfortunately, they had also taken many issues with the Church and because I was a Catholic, they decided to voice their objections against the Church just about every time I went to their home.

One of their main concerns was that Catholics have too high a regard for the blessed Mother. To make their point, they pointed to today's gospel reading that "doing the will of my heavenly Father" is what is most important for becoming a disciple. After all, Jesus says that it is those who do the Father's will who are "my brother, and sister, and mother." To this I replied, "And who did the Father's will more than the Blessed Mother?" This led to an awkward silence.

Indeed, as Catholics we greatly honor our Blessed Mother because as the first disciple of Christ her Son, at every moment of her life she did the Father's will. "*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to thy word*" (Lk 1:38). In saying this, we sense the Blessed Mother's tremendous joy in doing the Father's will. St. John the Evangelist adds that when the wine failed at Cana, Mary said, "*Do whatever He tells you*" (Jn 2:5). These are the last words recorded from our Blessed Mother in John's Gospel and again highlight Mary's joy in doing the Father's will.

The Church loves to contemplate Mary because she is an icon of the whole Church. She is a little "Church in miniature" if you will. In other words, Mary is like a mirror in which the Church can better see herself and what she is called to become. For example, like Mary, while the Church is holy because she is joined to Christ, yet she is unlike Mary in that she is always in constant need of renewal.

For us today, I know that many of you have a beautiful devotion to our Blessed Mother. Many of you pray the rosary and that is a great devotion. And I commend you for that. Our Holy Father once said that we should have no fear in opening our hearts to Christ. He takes nothing from us that is of value and gives us everything in return. And I would say the same is true for Mary. In opening our hearts to her, she takes nothing from us that is of value and draws us ever closer to her Son. May we be not afraid, then, to entrust ourselves totally to Mary that she may help us joyfully do the Father's will as she did. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.