

# A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

## *Mary's Month*

Here's a favorite joke: Jesus is taking one of his customary tours around heaven with St. Peter and notices a few faces who don't belong and who should clearly be someplace a bit warmer. "What are these people doing here?" Christ asks Peter, who sighs and shrugs and shakes his head in exasperation.

"What can I do?" Peter says. "They come to the front door and I turn them away, and then they just go around to the side door, and your mother lets them in."

That's Mary.

The mother waiting at the door, always willing to let us back in when we've been away—forever patient, forever listening, forever untying her apron to dry our tears or take our hand and lead us gently back to her son. "To Jesus, through Mary," an old saying goes. Who would not want to make that kind of a journey?

This is a time when we have a chance to reflect on that journey, and on Mary's meaning in our own lives and in our faith because May is the month of Mary. According to CatholicCulture.org:

This Christian custom of dedicating the month of May to the Blessed Virgin arose at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In this way, the Church was able to Christianize the secular feasts which were wont to take place at that time. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, books appeared and fostered this devotion. The practice became especially popular among the Jesuit Order. By 1700, it took hold among their students at the Roman College and a bit later it was publicly practiced in the Gesù church in Rome. From there it spread to the whole Church. The practice was granted a plenary indulgence by Pius IX in 1859.

However it began, and however it was fostered, devotion to Mary in May has become ingrained in us. During this month, in almost every corner of Catholicism, we hold May processions, and recite the Rosary, and pay tribute to the Mother of God, and the Mother of us all.

And, in the cycle of the seasons, it only seems natural that May would be the month of the Blessed Mother. It is a time when spring is at its fullest, when the days have lengthened and brightened and the earth begins to push forth new life. What better time to honor and celebrate the woman who brought new life to us all—who stands across history as the New Eve?

St. Louis Marie de Montfort, whose personal piety and devotion to Mary still inspire the world, put it simply: "We never give more honor to Jesus than when we honor His Mother, and we honor her simply and solely to honor Him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek—Jesus, her Son."

Which is why so many of us find ourselves ultimately at salvation's back door—turning to the one we know will never turn us away. After all, as St. Thérèse of Lisieux put it, she is more Mother than Queen.

This month, in particular, we remember her as both Mother and Queen—with gratitude, and with boundless love.

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