

**HOMILY BY H.E. ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE**  
**APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**HOLY MASS FOR THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL**  
**OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH**  
**ASTORIA, NEW YORK**  
**JULY 16, 2023**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is good to be here again, and to be celebrating a special day of grace for your parish community: your patronal feast day, Our Lady of Mount Carmel. I am grateful to Fr. Pham for his kind invitation. You know that Father has been one of our valued collaborators at the Apostolic Nunciature. Please know that, because of my privilege of being the personal representative of the Holy Father to this country, I can convey to you the spiritual closeness and affection of Pope Francis. The Pope is especially fond of our Lady. He has great confidence, which all of us should have, in the maternal intercession and care that the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, gives to us.

Today's readings highlight three ways in which Mary accompanies us and leads us to her Son: by protecting us from evil, by proclaiming the good news, and by accompanying the Church in prayer.

*First: Mary is our Protector.* In our first reading from Genesis we enter the story of our own human history at that moment when man and woman had allowed trust in their Creator to die in their hearts.<sup>1</sup> Because they had listened to the lies of the tempter and had disobeyed God's loving command, Adam and Eve for the first time experienced shame. Sin introduced disorder, enmity, and suffering. We all know very well the condition that we have inherited from our first parents: every pain, every sorrow can be traced back to that first rupture between humanity and God. Yet, even while announcing the sad consequences of original sin, God hints at the coming of a Savior: the offspring of a woman, who will strike at the head of the serpent. We see in these words a divine prophecy of Jesus, and of Mary. Mary, the "new Eve", will cooperate with God the Holy Spirit in welcoming into the world the "new Adam", the Christ. By her trusting "yes" to God's mysterious plan, the Blessed Virgin cooperates with the saving work of Jesus, which is to crush the reign of sin and lead God's children back to communion with the Father. For us personally, Mary is constantly ready to stand against the evil which threatens us and to help us be faithful to the Gospel.

*Secondly, Mary proclaims the good news.* As powerful as Mary is, she knows that she possesses nothing that she has not received from God. Her entire life – her Immaculate Conception, her motherhood, her fullness of grace – is all pure gift from the Most High God. And her response to God's gift is to be a missionary disciple: to proclaim to others the great works that God has done in his mercy. Her very life magnifies the greatness of God, and she cannot keep silent. As she greets Elizabeth, her spirit rejoices in God her Savior, and her song is so full of heavenly grace that John, inside Elizabeth's womb, leaps for joy and is sanctified for his future mission. Mary is for this reason the first and greatest evangelizer. Having been encountered by God, having been filled with God's presence, she now brings

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 397.

God to those who are in need of his mercy. Mary's visitation of the family of Zechariah, and her unbounded canticle of praise for the kindness and mercy of God, is a stellar example of how we are called to be missionary disciples.

*Thirdly*, while powerful against evil and filled with praise of God's greatness, *Mary is also a woman of deep prayer*. Two times Luke's Gospel says that Mary "kept all these things in her heart",<sup>2</sup> indicating a habit of prayerful reflection characteristic of the Mother of Jesus. In today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we meet Mary in the upper room with the Apostles, some women, and other disciples. They are awaiting the promised Holy Spirit. For Mary, the Spirit's coming had deep resonance, since it was the same Spirit of God who had overshadowed her on the day that she became the Mother of God. With what reverential fear and exhilarating expectation this woman awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit! And what a companion she was to those other disciples: a true anchor of hope, a model of total purity and openness to the will of God. As Mary accompanied those first disciples in prayer, so she will always accompany us when we gather to pray to our Lord. She is a model of prayer because she is an open vessel to the inpouring of God's Spirit. And her prayer – her encounter with God – leads her into action: proclaiming, loving, and living the joy of the Gospel.

On this feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, let Mary, your parish's patroness, be personally present to each of you and to you entire community. As you face the particular challenges that meet you as part of the consequences of sin and humanity's wounded relationship with God, let Mary stand strong protect you in time of temptation and help you to practice love even when it hurts. When God touches you with his mercy, let Mary help you to recognize the Lord's goodness and to speak of it, or even *sing* of it, to others. When you go to pray, let Mary accompany you in prayer and help you to open as she did to God's wonderful plan.

To conclude, let us listen to the words of Pope Francis which he spoke last December on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception:

"By entrusting ourselves, consecrating ourselves to Mary, we say to her: 'Take me by the hand, Mother, guide me: with you I will have more strength in the battle against evil; with you I will rediscover my original beauty.' Let us entrust ourselves to Mary today, let us entrust ourselves to Mary every day, repeating to her: 'Mary, I entrust my life to you, I entrust my family, my work, I entrust my heart and my struggles. I consecrate myself to you.'"<sup>3</sup>

Our Lady of Mount Carmel, pray for us.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 2:19, 51

<sup>3</sup> *Angelus*, December 8, 2022.