

It gives me great pleasure to tell you that I love Mary. I not only love her; but I obey her. I love her because she is the mother of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and I obey her because she said, "Do whatever he tells you," (John 2:5)- words spoken to the servants at the wedding feast.

As the mother of Jesus, she is a mother with authority. Jesus is bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, and daughter of the Most High Father in heaven. Mary holds a unique place in the heart of Jesus, and as a member of his Mystical Body I feel that love for her in my DNA.

I love Mary because she humbly accepted her vocation, "Be it done unto me according to Thy word," (Luke 1:38). She nourished Jesus from his infancy, and stood by him at the cross. Jesus honored her with his dying breath, making her the mother of His Church, "Behold thy Mother," (John 19:27).

I Love Mary because God chose her to be "Blessed among women" fitting her to bring us his Only Begotten Son. I love and honor Mary, because she helped God with his Redemptive Plan. He wanted to give us eternal life, and Mary complied.

Here a few things that God accomplished through her obedience. He loved us enough to: 1. bring us Jesus, 2. call us his children, 3. give us spiritual gifts, 4. save us from our sins, 5. forgive us when we repent, 6. comfort us when we grieve, 7. heal us when we are sick, 8. strengthen us when we are discouraged, 8. answer our prayers, 9. bless us with his Presence, 10. grant us wisdom, 11. show us mercy, 12. make us temples of the Holy Spirit, 13. prepare us for the Heavenly Kingdom, 14. open the gates of heaven, and 15. Give us the desire to honor Mary on her birthday.

I love Mary and honor her especially on her birthday, which the Church has designated as September 8<sup>th</sup>, nine months after the designated date of her

Immaculate Conception. When I'm alone on her birthday, I join the whole choir of saints and martyrs in heaven and along with Jesus celebrate her big day. I get a cupcake and put a candle in it, and sing happy birthday in union with the angels. (After all, Mary is Queen of Angels).

Before I retired from the active ministry, I had a Mass-party each year for her. We sung Happy Birthday, decorated the Church, had the children bring flowers to the altar; and then, after Mass went to the auditorium for cake and ice-cream. We also had a contest for the best drawing of Mary and gave out ten prizes. The kids loved it especially the Hispanic children.

I have to confess, I was born on September 8<sup>th</sup>, and have been keenly aware of the connection since I was very little. In fact my maternal grandmother was also born on her birthday, and prayed all her life that one of her children, she had nine, would be born on Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>. None were until I came along in the next generation. Maybe that's why I feel called by God to light a spark in your heart. Celebrate Mary's birth in your own personal way this year and every year.

Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with Thee, Blessed are Thou among women, and Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus."