

Mary's Month and the Order of Malta
By Father Joseph Johnson

The month of May is dedicated to honoring the Blessed Virgin Mary. How fitting that in the United States it includes the civil holiday of Mother's Day since Jesus gave His Mother to be our spiritual mother in one of His last words on the Cross! May 1st is the Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker when we recall the Virgin's faithful husband and his humble labor to provide for the Holy Family. May 31st is the Feast of the Visitation when we see Mary moving from contemplation of "the Word made flesh" in her womb into action!

For the Order of Malta, the month of May always sees the international pilgrimage of the sick to Lourdes. Knights and Dames from around the world bring "our lords the sick" to the miraculous spring given by Our Lady to Saint Bernadette as a sign of heavenly care. Mary's apparitions reflect the same concern as at the Visitation: tend to those in need by bringing God's Merciful Love to them!

At the Visitation, Mary's elderly cousin Elizabeth was miraculously pregnant and needed assistance. Despite her own pregnancy, Mary went "in haste" to serve her cousin. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta often remarked about this "haste" as a sign of Mary's beautiful self-forgetfulness. She becomes a model for us to forget our own needs in order to serve others. Too often we make excuses—usually being "too busy"—for why we cannot help others. "Too busy" normally means my needs come before the needs of others. Charity delayed too frequently becomes charity denied.

In order to be merciful, we need to forget ourselves and place the needs of others first. This is how we learn what love is in our families. Parents deny themselves all sorts of things to care for their children. One definition of love is simply this: the ability to say "no" to ourselves in order to say "yes" to others.

Mary's self-forgetfulness brought the Lord of Mercy to encounter the world's need. At the Visitation, Jesus is recognized by Elizabeth's child in the womb: our patron John the Baptist! Let us pray that by Our Lady's intercession we too may welcome Jesus and proclaim Him to the world through our loving service of the sick and the poor!