

2-11-1971

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Recommended Citation

McLaughlin, Charles B. (1971) "The Importance of Mary in Our Lives," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 22, Article 6, Pages 13-15.

Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol22/iss1/6

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THE IMPORTANCE OF MARY IN OUR LIVES

(Homily by the Most Rev. Charles B. McLaughlin, Bishop of St. Petersburg)

My dear People:

Two years ago, I had the privilege of addressing you in a similar position. At that time, the Diocese of St. Petersburg was less than six month old, and we did not have an adequate amount of time to prepare for your coming and, so, perhaps the arrangements were not all that they should have been. At that time, I had asked for the opportunity of inviting you back again so that the Diocese of St. Petersburg could properly host this most important meeting. I now have that opportunity and I welcome you most enthusiastically. I wish to thank you for coming here and demonstrating by your time and work involved that the cause of our Blessed Mother is still an important cause, not only for the Church, but for the world. I hope and pray that this movement will gain momentum and that it will spread its influence. Perhaps the true devotion to our Blessed Mother is needed more today than ever before during the past 25 years in order to bring us back to that proper balance of things that we seem to have lost. However, I do want to welcome you, and hope that you will have a wonderfully comfortable and pleasant stay in St. Petersburg, and if there is anything any of us can do for you, please let us know. Again, we are delighted to have you. A thousand welcomes.

On June 30, 1968, our Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, enunciated clearly the Catholic doctrine concerning the Virgin Mary. You are all familiar with it. There is nothing new about it. It is traditional doctrine. And it seems to me we should begin

to preach this doctrine more widely and to adapt it to present-day liturgical practices.

The Vatican Council in the Constitution on the Church gave Chapter 8 completely over to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God in the mystery of Christ and the Church. In Section IV, we read the following: "Clearly from the earliest times, the Blessed Virgin is honored under the title of Mother of God on whose protection the faithful took refuge in all their dangers and necessities. Blessed by the Grace of God as God's Mother next to her Son, and exalted above all Angels and men, Mary intervened in the mysteries of Christ and is justly honored by a special cult in the Church." We continue on through that same section. "This cult, as it always existed, although it is altogether singular, differs essentially from the cult of Adoration which is offered to the Incarnate Word as well as to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and it is most favorable to it. The various forms of piety toward the Mother of God which the Church, within the limits of sound and orthodox doctrine, according to the conditions of time and place, and the nature and the ingenuity of the faithful has approved, bring it about that while the Mother is honored, the Son, through whom all things have their being, and in whom it has pleased the Father that all things should dwell, is rightly known, loved, and glorified and that all His commands are observed. In the same degree, this most Holy Synod deliberately teaches this Catholic doctrine and, at the same time, admonishes all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult of the Blessed Virgin be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the Magisterium of the Church for her in the course of centuries be made a great moment and those decrees which have been given in the early days regarding the cult of the images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints be religiously observed."

Today people need to be taught how to pray. Young people especially need to be taught to pray. There is no better avenue,

in my way of thinking, to this goal than through the knowledge and through instruction and in devotion to the Mother of God. To serve the Church today, as well as the world, devotion to the Blessed Mother should be expanded in keeping with the words I have just read of the Second Vatican Council, and especially in keeping with improved and adjusted liturgical practices.

For this reason, I, therefore, wish to encourage such meetings as that which is going on at the present time. I hope this movement will gain momentum and will become an important part of the leaven of prayer and devotion that the Church seemingly needs today.