



Message on the Month of the Blessed Mother

1 May 2026

**His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo
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Her witness enlightens our path

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May Jesus and Mary be in your souls.

I am writing to you in anticipation of the month particularly dedicated to the Blessed Mother, the month of May. The **origin** of this *dedication* dates back many centuries. Historians point to the hymns of 13th century Alfonso X “the Wise” King of Castile and León followed by the writings of 14th century Dominican, Blessed Henry Suso as being the seeds of the devotion of Our Lady this month. In the 16th century the Benedictine Wolfgang Seidl published a volume on the devotions and teachings connected to May. At roughly the same time, in Rome, St. Philip Neri was teaching the youth to honour Our Lady with songs, flowers, praises and acts of virtue and mortification. However, it wasn’t until the Baroque period, the end of the 17th century in Italy and in Germany, when we see this month develop significantly with the establishment of Confraternities and devotions including the singing of litanies and crowning statues with crowns made of roses. In the modern sense, nevertheless, the recognized initiator of the Marian Month *per se* in terms of its formalization including daily prayers and practices is the 18th century Jesuit Fr. Annibale Dionisi, in Rome, followed by other inspired pastors of souls such as Archbishop G.M. Saporiti of Genoa and the Jesuit Fr. A. Muzzarelli. The holy Rosary, originally linked specifically to the month of October, is now introduced in the month of May as well. Subsequently, at the beginning of the 19th century throughout Europe and the Americas as well as in the missions, this devotion spread rapidly. It came to be an important and beautiful expression of the Church’s devotion to the Mother of Jesus and to this day, it continues to help us journey in faith, keep the fire of devotion burning in our hearts and challenge us to live the life of faith, virtue and justice after the example of the one who alone was chosen to be the Mother of God.

During these four weeks we are invited to contemplate the mystery of Our Lady’s life and to rediscover how **her witness continues to illuminate the path of the Church**. As our mother and model, Mary offers timely wisdom and guidance on what it means to be disciples of Christ whose daily living is marked by spiritual discernment and apostolic action (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 63-65).

One of the defining characteristics of Mary’s life is her **profound openness to the action of God**. At the Annunciation she receives a mission that exceeds human understanding, yet she responds with a heart ready to cooperate with his divine plan (Lk 1:38; CCC 494). The Church recognizes in this moment a pattern of authentic discernment: attentiveness to God’s initiative, trust in his promises and the courage to respond generously. These same attitudes are essential



for us who seek to listen to the Holy Spirit in the present moment of our history (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 5).

Mary's *fiat* – her free and courageous “yes” – reveals the **interior disposition** that lies at the heart of Christian discipleship. God initiates, grace is offered, and we respond in freedom. We are reminded that freedom is not the ability to do anything whatsoever, but the ability to choose what is good (*Veritatis Splendor*, 35; CCC 1731-1733). The sacred dialogue between grace and freedom remains at the centre of the Christian life. As St. Augustine reminds us: “God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us” (*Sermo 169*,11,13). Each day, in countless places around the world, the Lord continues to speak to human hearts, inviting them to cooperate in his saving work.

Mary also manifests a deep capacity for **contemplation**. The Gospel of St. Luke relates that she “treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart” (Lk 2:19; CCC 2717). Our Blessed Mother's quiet attentiveness to the mystery unfolding before her reminds the Church that discernment is never rushed. Like Mary of Nazareth we are invited to cultivate spaces of prayer and reflection in our homes, schools, communities and hearts where the Word of God can take root and illuminate our path forward (*Verbum Domini*, 86-88). Attentiveness to the voice of God requires humility, openness and trust in the action of the Holy Spirit, truly listening to God.

Mary's contemplative heart never withdraws from the needs of the world. Her life is marked by a readiness to respond when God calls her into **service**. Whether it is her visit to Elizabeth after the Annunciation (Lk 1:39-45), welcoming the shepherds in Bethlehem (Lk 2:16-19), presenting the Child Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:22-25), or standing faithfully beneath the Cross (Jn 19:25), Mary remains steadfast in her participation in the saving work of Christ (cf. LG 58). In this way, the Blessed Mother reveals that authentic discernment always leads to witness and action (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 120). This can be difficult for us, we want to do God's will but perhaps we are unaware of what he wants, or unsure of how to respond.

The month of May invites us to put aside our doubts, insecurities, and fears; **to renew our own response to God's call**. Standing devoutly and spiritually beside Mary, we learn again the courage of her surrender and the confidence of her faith (*Redemptoris Mater*, 14-15). The same Holy Spirit who overshadowed her (Lk 1:35), desires to work within us, forming Christ anew in the hearts of all believers (cf. Gal 4:19). When we turn our hearts to Mary, in her **faith** we learn anew how to welcome God's action in our lives. In her **humility** we discover the freedom that allows the Holy Spirit to work within us. In her **fidelity** we see the perseverance required to remain close to Christ even in moments of uncertainty. As such, my prayer for the faithful of the Archdiocese of Toronto is that especially this month we will think about how to honour Mother Mary and consider how her witness illuminates our daily life and vocation so that under her maternal care, may we continue to journey with renewed openness to the Holy Spirit.