

No Knot Too Tight

SHORT REFLECTIONS ON MARY,
UNDOER OF KNOTS



Peter Darcy

“The knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith.”

~St. Irenaeus of Lyon, (d. 202 AD)

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By Peter Darcy

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Our Lady as Spiritual Vessel

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the "spiritual vessel", "vessel of honor," and "singular vessel of devotion" described in the Litany of Loreto. These are gracious but mysterious descriptions, to be sure, but they manifest the unique character of the one who unties knots and dissolves problems for us. They tell us that she is a receptacle of grace and favor whose capacity to help us is literally unlimited.

Tabernacle as Vessel

For many years I struggled to understand these unusual images applied to Our Lady, but Pope John Paul II finally solved the problem for me in his 2003

encyclical [*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*](#). He referred to Our Lady as the “tabernacle” of Jesus’ Eucharistic Presence:

Mary also anticipated, in the mystery of the incarnation, the Church’s Eucharistic faith. When, at the Visitation, She bore in Her womb the Word made flesh, She became ... the first “tabernacle” in history in which the Son of God, still invisible to our human gaze, allowed Himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating His light as it were through the eyes and the voice of Mary. (55)

Our Lady was the tabernacle of the Eternal Word Himself! In that very same moment, she became a “vessel” into which all the prayers, intentions, sufferings, desires, longings, hopes, and joys of God’s faithful throughout the ages could be placed.

Our Spiritual Mother

Just as a baby enlarges the womb of his mother by his growth, so the physical Presence of Jesus in Our Lady’s womb, and in her life for thirty-three more years, *enlarged* Mary’s spirit and created an openness within our Mother’s soul that was destined to be made available to every other child of God after the Resurrection. She became like a spacious room into which any needy child can enter with confidence.

It is not too bold to say that, as Mother of the *infinite* God, Mary’s spiritual availability to her children has *no limit* in receiving whatever we wish to place within her heart for safekeeping.

Our natural mothers have understandable human limitations which diminish their ability to respond to our needs in certain areas of our lives, but Mary, our spiritual Mother, has no such limits. Or perhaps we can say that she has one limit: Mary cannot do – or ask for us – anything contrary to the Will of God. Rather, she teaches us to bring our prayers, our requests, and our desires into greater conformity with God’s Will.

Mary’s Love for Us

Our Lady’s love is a mother’s love that is not tainted by sin, human imperfection, or self-interest in any way. Too often, perhaps, we underestimate her maternal willingness to plead for our intentions before God’s Throne. She *wants* to help undo our problems and answer our concerns. We reap little benefit from Mary’s immense love if we do not approach that vessel of grace with total confidence.

In the famous apparitions of the Miraculous Medal in 1830, Our Lady appeared to St. Catherine Labouré with open arms and rays of light issuing from jeweled rings

on her hands. The curious thing was that a number of the jewels were not sending forth any light. When St. Catherine asked our Blessed Mother why that was so, Our Lady simply responded that those were the graces that her children *had not asked for*.

We Need but Ask

This striking image teaches us that the spiritual vessel of Mary's heart is open both for giving and receiving. A treasure of grace awaits us in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and all we have to do is ask for what we need. Mary will help us. She will purify our prayers if they are not in accord with God's Will. She will raise them up to the Throne of Grace and then dispense the treasures of Heaven to us. She will untie our knots and reconcile us in the areas of our life where we need it most.

Have you devotedly placed all your concerns in the spiritual vessel of Mary's heart? If not, do so today! Mary has no lack of room for any concern of yours. In fact, such a loving Mother will look out for your needs as if you were the only child in the world who needed anything.

Our Lady, Undoer of Knots and sacred Tabernacle of God, we entrust all our problems to your heart, knowing that you will take care of them!

The Dissolving Power of the Precious Blood

In any discussion of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, we must consider the source. Since Jesus had no biological father, His physical make-up, including His Precious Blood, could only have been contributed by His holy Mother. It is union with this Blood that Our Lady offers to the world as she stands at Calvary, assisting Christ in the dissolution of all the world's sins.

The month of July is dedicated to the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, which is both a physical and mystical phenomenon.

Scientists have examined particles of blood in the fibers of the Shroud of Turin, in the Sudarium of Orvieto, and in numerous other Eucharistic miracles, and they arrive at one astounding conclusion: the blood type of all these samples of blood is the same.

The blood type is AB negative, which is considered the "universal recipient" blood type. The *Catechism* states that by the sacrament of the Eucharist "we unite

ourselves to Christ, who makes us sharers in his Body and Blood to form a single body” (#1331). This means that Christ can *receive* any sinner who comes to Him.

We may call this the “divine blood type,” and it fits perfectly our conception of the Blood that was shed on the Cross for the salvation of the world. Christ’s saving Blood is the *Open Door of life* to all mankind.

The Source

But His Blood is actually Our Lady’s blood, isn’t it? Biologically speaking, the only parent of the God-Man who could have contributed the human DNA and blood for His physical constitution is His Mother. Her blood is the biological source of the Precious Blood.

We must not go so far as to claim that *Mary’s* blood is divine. It is not. The divine character of the Precious Blood comes from the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures of Christ. There is no comparable human reality to the infinite value of the Blood of the Son of God. Even Our Lady’s perfect holiness and purity is in a subordinate category.

But since Jesus derived His physical makeup from one source, we can say that the blood that the Immaculate One gave to her Son was as untainted as His sacred humanity.

A Gift Offered

Surely Our Lady knew the traditions of her own people and the ceremonies of their faith which required the shedding of blood as offerings for sin:

The covenant was sealed with blood and sprinkled on the people (Ex 24:8);

The blood of the paschal lamb was displayed on the doorframes and lintels of the Israelites’ homes before they departed from Egypt (Ex 12:21-22);

King Solomon dedicated the Temple with thousands of animal (blood) sacrifices to expiate the sins of the people (1 Kgs 8; 2 Chron 7).

These must have been vivid images in Our Lady’s mind as she stood at the foot of Jesus’ Cross contemplating His offering of the ultimate sacrifice of His Body and Blood for the sins of humanity.

She Applies that Blood

At that same place where Christ looked down upon her from the Cross, Mary received a new role. She became the Mediatrix of all the graces that flow from Calvary, and there she stands administering His Precious Blood to all believers.

Much as an accountant will “apply” a payment to reduce or cancel a debt on an account, Our Lady applies the Precious Blood to all the petitions and debts of sinful humanity. To all those who turn to her and ask for relief from sorrow, strength in suffering, or salvation from sin, she pours out her Son’s Blood in a direct manner upon their prayers. This is a spiritual action. It is a cleansing action. It is a dissolving action for all the knots of human problems.

The Dissolving Power of Blood

The Church, in the Sacrament of Penance, has the preeminent authority of applying the Precious Blood of Christ to the sins of humanity. It is a divine power to “dissolve” sin in a direct manner, given by Christ in a positive decree after His Resurrection (Mt 16:19; Jn 20:23). We call it by a word that has the same root: *absolution*.

What Our Lady offers does not replace the sacramental power and authority of the Church but accompanies it with the strength of her intercession. Hers is a dissolving and loosening influence on us. She applies the Blood of Christ to all human problems, all our sorrows and pains, and all seemingly impossible scenarios.

When the Precious Blood enters our lives and our problems, dilemmas are resolved, problems find their solutions, thorny situations work themselves out, closed doors open to us. These situations may not involve direct sin on our part, but they are part of living in a sinful world.

We have only to look to Our Lady, Undoer of Knots, the source of the Precious Blood, for help in dissolving the many knots of our lives. She waits to pour out the world’s greatest gift on our petitions.

Lepanto: The Day the Rosary Saved Christendom

The Battle of Lepanto (1571) was a critical moment in history. The Rosary played no small part in defending Christianity from the advance of Islam into Europe and releasing thousands of Christians who had been held as slaves by the Muslims.

In the month of October we turn to Our Lady's unique gift, the Holy Rosary, to assist us in our spiritual warfare and release us from the knots of our daily problems.

Christianity's Greatest Threat

Facing the historical reality of Islamic aggression towards Christianity, Pope Pius V desperately tried to unite the Catholic countries of Europe to save their civilization, but he met with little success. It was no easy task to bring such diverse cultures together. France, Portugal, and Germany were all involved in other wars, and England had fallen to Henry VIII's takeover of the Church.

Finally, when the Muslim invaders captured the important island of Cyprus in 1570, the enemies were at the gates, and nine maritime Catholic nations formed the Holy League to defend Christendom from invasion. The combined fleets of these countries assembled for battle under the leadership of Don Juan of Austria, who was 24 years old at the time.

The Enemy and the Patron

Müezzinzade Ali Pasha and the vicious Mustafa Pasha, protégés of Suleiman the Magnificent, were in command of the Islamic fleet of more than 270 ships, while the Christian fleet numbered only 206 ships but possessed better artillery. However, the greater size of the Islamic fleet was a formidable force. The two sides met in the Gulf of Patras, west of Greece, on the morning of October 7, 1571.

Leading up to the conflict, the Pope had called all of Christendom to unite in the recitation of Our Lady's Rosary as a spiritual force to protect Europe from anti-Christian Islamic aggression. On the day of battle, the Christian soldiers went to war with Rosaries around their necks or on their persons, and Christian Europe prayed with the Pope for victory.

While the details of the naval battle are too many to recount here, it is clear that the conquering Christian forces that day attributed their victory to the power of prayer. There was a miraculous change of winds at a crucial moment of fighting that turned the tide of the sea battle in favor of the Christian fleet and led to a decisive victory. The captured Islamic vessels were filled with as many as 15,000 Christian galley slaves, who were liberated when the Muslims surrendered.

It is said that Pope Pius V, seven hundred miles away in Rome, was given a vision of the Christian victory at sea as it took place and went immediately to his chapel to give thanks to Our Lady for her patronage of the Christian effort. The Rosary had won the day.

The feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, which we celebrate on the anniversary of Lepanto, was established by Pius V soon after the battle and originally called Our Lady of Victory. It is an everlasting testament to Mary's patronage in Christian warfare.

Untangling Our Conflicts

The Blessed Virgin Mary is never deaf to the cries of her children, especially those who are consecrated to Christ through Baptism. She helps all who call upon her.

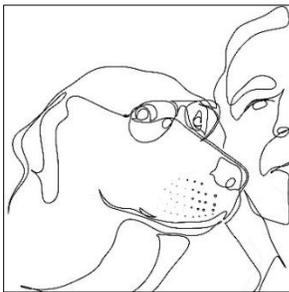
Some conflicts in our lives, like the Islamic oppression of Christendom in the 16th Century, require forceful responses. Often we must fight to defend the things we hold dear. Even if we do not wish it, war is often thrust upon us through the interpersonal and human problems we encounter daily. Evil exists in the world, and it sometimes entangles us in its web.

But are we to think of Our Lady as a warrior to help us solve these problems?

Yes, because she is the Undoer of Knots! With Rosary in hand – which has often been described as a sort of “spiritual weapon” – we turn to her and confront the knotty problems of life with great confidence that she will assist us to find the right solution to all our difficulties.

She defended all of Christendom when a whole civilization humbled itself before God using the simple prayer of the Rosary. Surely she can bring about any victory for her children who turn to her in their need!

About the Author



Peter Darcy is a writer, editor, and web designer who spent thirty years in the non-profit sector and Catholic missionary work. His great passion is educating others about the power of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness. In 2020 he launched the Sacred Windows initiative for this purpose. He is a columnist at Catholic365.com.

Darcy has authored or ghostwritten fifteen books dedicated to spiritual and leadership themes, including:

- * Praying with Fire: Learning to Pray the Catholic Way (2025)
- * No Knot Too Tight: Short Reflections on Mary, Undoer of Knots (2024)
- * Natures of Fire: God's Magnificent Angels (2021)
- * No Nonsense Non-Profit: Leadership Principles for Church and Charity (2020), and
- * The Seven Leadership Virtues of Joan of Arc (2020).

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