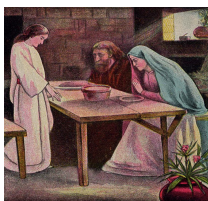




***The Armor of Faith***  
**Topic Summary: Our Lady of America**  
***Part VI: Family and Purity***



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## **Introduction**

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican with a love for music ministry. The Dominicans, I always mention, are also known as the Order of Preachers. Sharon is still our only cradle Catholic on the team, and, as everyone knows by now, I am simply here to ask questions, because I was really good at it when I was two, and that is pretty much where my abilities remain. Anyway, to answer my questions, correct my pronunciation, and make sure I know which century I am talking about is why we have our panelists, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

We are also joined by special guest panelist, Donna Mae. Donna Mae is the artist who sculpted the statue of Our Lady of America which was carried at the 1993 World Youth Day at Denver, Colorado. While Donna Mae did not personally meet with Sister Mary Ephrem, she did converse with Sister via phone and mail as Donna Mae sculpted the statue and therefore, Donna Mae became part of the history associated with Our Lady of America.

Donna Mae, we are happy to have you back as a member of our panel.

Let us open with a prayer:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

Dear Lord, we also lift up the prayers in our prayer basket. You know what is written on each one and you know the hearts of those who offer their thanks and praise and their petitions for the blessings of Your great mercy.

We pray especially for the parents of our day. We ask that You will grant them an increase in faith, as well as a thirst and desire to learn of Your Holy Word, so that as they learn, they may so teach their children.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

If you would like to add your prayers to our prayer basket, send us an email at [armoroffaithradio@gmail.com](mailto:armoroffaithradio@gmail.com). Please include the word “prayer” in the subject line so that we will give it priority and capture it for our prayer basket. Just so you know, Sharon and I lift up our prayers with those in the Armor of Faith Radio prayer basket during our daily prayers.

If you haven't discovered, yet, you can listen to us on any device where you can connect to the Internet, including your smartphone. In addition to [wcatradio.com/armoroffaith](http://wcatradio.com/armoroffaith), we are available through a number of streaming services, such as iHeart Radio, Spreaker, iTunes, and CastBox, among others. Simply search for “Armor of Faith Radio” and select the episode you desire. We will be happy to keep you company wherever you are and wherever you are waiting.

We would also like to ask your assistance in evangelization. By sharing the URL for our show, you can help us spread knowledge of our faith. All you need to do is share the URL, [wcatradio.com/armoroffaith](http://wcatradio.com/armoroffaith) via email or social media and tell family and friends as well. Several of the streaming services through which we are available on demand also have share options, so we invite you to join the evangelization and help us spread the good news of the Gospel and our faith in Jesus Christ. You can also help us by selecting the follow or subscribe option associated with the service through which you listen to our show.

### **Current Day Commentary:**

When I became Catholic, we did not have social media. That was probably a good thing, because I wonder what new Catholics today think when they enter the Church Christ built upon Peter to find so much vitriolic division, among Catholics, expressed via social media. Of course, divisions among the faithful are not anything new, but in our day of social media, the divisions appear to be amplified in terms of their vitriolic tone. Of course, one can make the case that in our day, we have not experienced the violence of conflicts past, but suffice it to say, as word travels from ear to ear, no matter the media, perceptions and falsehoods are used to set us against one another. Who do we think is smiling in the midst of the chaos but the one who whispered into the ear of Eve?

It may sound like I am blaming social media, but the issue is not the media, for it is simply a tool of communication. The issue is the means by which the tool is used. Various organizations have found social media to be a powerful platform by which to sow a message. Ideological organizations have also discovered the power of the platform by which to sow outrage and elevate emotions by which to manipulate people to their cause. Rather than a tool for reasoned discussion, social media has become a political battle ground. I have noticed the impact on my

own emotions and find myself having to temper my responses, especially as I witness the falsehoods and manipulations via what we call our main stream media. It seems like they do not even care any more whether they are caught in their deceptions and disinformation as long as enough people believe the lie.

Don't get me wrong. I have found a lot of nice people on social media, but I find the tide of vitriol a sorrowful thing. In the feeling of anonymity, which social media appears to produce, the worst of our tendencies seem to surface. The manipulators and propagandists rely on this human weakness and endeavor to target it. The social media political trolls and various organizational operatives fan the flames to turn us against ourselves.

I have pointed out that the same tactics employed to sow Marxism/Leninism are also being used as a means to divide the faithful and destroy the Church from within. I have also pointed out that our path to salvation is not about whether this group or that is right or wrong, rather, it is about whether we understand what God asks of us. So, while the political voices rage, how are we, the laity to respond? Who do we follow?

I believe the answer is contained in this scripture.

(1 Corinthians 1:10-17)

*10 I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose. 11 For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you. 12 I mean that each of you is saying, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I give thanks [to God] that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one can say you were baptized in my name. 16 (I baptized the household of Stephanas also; beyond that I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with the wisdom of human eloquence, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.*

There is nothing wrong to listening to the opinions of others and considering that with which we agree or disagree, but we must also remember, especially as emotions rise, we are not called to the divisions driven by our parsing of words, but we are called to the unity of love for God and one another.

So, I have set the stage as to a grave challenge before us, and we see from scripture that it remains with us, even centuries after the warnings of Saint Paul. Next time, I will talk a little about how; whether we are new to, relearning, or advancing to ever deeper understanding in our faith; we may approach the political divisions of our day and discern our path to live by God's Holy Truth.

## **Why Catholics Do What We Do:**

### ***Saints – Part I:***

I sat down to begin my brain storm as to where to go after the Spring Cleaning of our souls. I had a blank in my head and perhaps a moment of panic, but the Holy Spirit came to the rescue and said to do a series on Saints. Yep, this sounds like a great place to go from cleaning our souls to being saints.

Catholics have a long tradition of asking Saints for help in times of trouble and for as long as I can remember, we are taught that we should all strive to become saints. Why? Who are the people we call Saints? What is their importance in our lives? Do we pray to them? How can we justify praying to dead people when we can go straight to Jesus? Who decides who can become a saint? How does a person become a saint? The questions go on and on. Catholics are often challenged on this as it is so strange to our neighbors who do not understand the ways of the Catholic traditions and teachings. Today we will begin a study of these questions and perhaps find more from which we can learn.

Let's begin with a statement from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

Many popular devotional practices involve veneration of the saints. The saints have a special place in the Body of Christ, which includes both the living and the dead. Through Christ, we on earth remain in communion both with the saints in heaven and with the dead who are still in Purgatory. We can pray for those in Purgatory and ask the saints to pray for us. Through their prayers of intercession, the saints in heaven play an integral role in the life of the Church on earth. "For after they have been received into their heavenly home and are present to the Lord, through Him and with Him and in Him they do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, showing forth the merits which they won on earth through the one Mediator between God and man." The saints, the members of the Church who have arrived at perfect union with Christ, join their wills to the will of God in praying for those in the Church who are still on their pilgrimage of faith. (USCCB)

In just that statement we can already see more questions. What does it mean to venerate? What does it mean to be in communion? Oh, and purgatory?

In searching for definitions and explanations to many of these questions, I came across a site called The Conversation. This is one of the best definitions I have found to begin this study. This site tells us:

### ***Who's a 'saint'?***

Most people use the word "saint" to refer to someone who is exceptionally good or "holy." In the Catholic Church, however, a "saint" has a more specific meaning: someone who has led a life of "heroic virtue."

This definition includes the four "cardinal" virtues: prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice; as well as the "theological" virtues: faith, hope and charity. A saint displays these qualities in a consistent and exceptional way.

When someone is proclaimed a saint by the pope – which can happen only after death – public devotion to the saint, called a “*cultus*,” is authorized for Catholics throughout the world. (Schmalz)

We all have known people in our lives who we believe are saintly in nature. We hear others say, things like, “she was such a saint” or “he had the patience of a saint”. When we say this, we think of someone who is very very good in behavior, manners, speaking, devotion to God and their love for all the people around them. We all strive to behave in a saintly fashion.

So I think it safe to say that we all agree on what “saintly” means to the general public. For this discussion, we will look into what it means to be a saint in the Catholic Church.

Before we get to why we call on saints, I think we should look into what it takes to be declared a saint. Can anyone be declared a saint? When we meet a Mother Teresa, or John Paul II, or when we hear of the things they do or say, we recognize the saintliness of their lives. This does not mean that all saints are famous or well known. This means that we are fortunate to have such people among us to be examples of God's plan.

The definition from *The Conversation*, uses the term, “heroic virtue.” We all want heroes to be examples in our lives. In our history, we have heroes who were astronauts, settlers, presidents, medical personnel, cowboys, scientists and teachers. There are many adults today who talk about the parents who helped them grow up with good morals; the teacher who taught to explore and learn; the coach who guided on the path of truthfulness and fairness; and the policeman who straightened them out and turned them from going down the wrong path to becoming a righteous and above average citizen.

As we progress in this discussion, I ask all of you to think of heroes you have and how they have interacted in your lives. Who do you want to follow? What is it that inspired you because of what they said or did? Are their words and actions held firmly within your heart? Does your hero deserve to be a saint?

Next we will talk about the beatification and canonization of saints. This is the process the Catholic Church takes to review all the events of a person's life and to find all the virtues that are required in order to be declared a saint. We want to first understand how this happens and then we will explore some of the saints themselves.

*Have a blessed week All. Remember, you are loved dearly by God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit and yes, by us as well.*

If you would like to learn more about Saints in our lives, we invite you to follow the links in the reference section of the topic summary for this show. You can obtain the topic summary by visiting <https://wcatradio.com/armoroffaithstudyguides/> and look for episode 153.

## **Discussion:**

During our last discussion, we mentioned that Saint Joseph is mentioned several times in the early life of Jesus, but that we do not hear of him after Jesus is grown. Much of what we know

about Saint Joseph, we must infer from what scripture tells us about Saint Joseph's obedience to God. In the first instance, we see Joseph draw from his understanding of what God asks of him as to forming his plan with regards to divorcing Mary quietly. As I mentioned, the old joke is, if you want to make God laugh, tell Him your plans.

God sent His angel to Joseph to put in place a new plan for Joseph, but just like Mary, part of the plan of God rested in the obedience of Joseph to accomplish what God entrusted to him, which was to provide for and protect the only begotten Son of God and His Virgin Mother. This was not done with a great trust fund, but it was done with the trust of God in Joseph and the trust of Joseph in God.

From a few segments of scripture, we might not think there is much we can learn, but if we reflect, we might observe there is much for us to study and grasp, especially by those who are entrusted with the fatherly care of another. We certainly did not have time to go into all of that last time, but as timing would have it, there is a new book available, written by Father Donald Calloway, MIC, which Scott Hahn describes as, "...a summary of the whole of the study of St. Joseph — the wisdom of the saints, the teachings of the popes, and the reflections of theologians."

The title of the book is Consecration to St. Joseph: The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father. It is available for purchase through the website, [www.consecrationtostjoseph.org](http://www.consecrationtostjoseph.org) or you can also visit [www.fathercalloway.com](http://www.fathercalloway.com), and at the upper right hand corner, you will see an oval that says, "Consecration to St. Joseph, Click here."

We invite you to visit those sites to explore more about this book which outlines for us, the love of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church and the Terror of Demons. We are also pleased to announce that Father Calloway has agreed to join us for our 16 Jul 2020 show, where we will discuss his book and what Saint Joseph brings to the faithful.

Today, we are going to discuss the call to family and purity, but before we do, I want to get to a question we did not have time to address last time.

Sister Mary Ephrem attributed the following to Saint Joseph:

Jesus and Mary desire that my pure heart, so long hidden and unknown, be now honored in a special way. Let my children honor my most pure heart in a special manner on the First Wednesday of the month by reciting the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary in memory of my life with Jesus and Mary and the love I bore them, the sorrow I suffered with them. Let them receive Holy Communion in union with the love with which I received the Savior for the first time, and each time I held Him in my arms. Those who honor me in this way will be consoled by my presence at their death and I myself will conduct them safely into the presence of Jesus and Mary.

**(Question 1:** The actions requested here are actions of devotion. On the First Wednesday of the month, as a devotion, we are called to pray the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary as well as to receive Holy Communion with love. To do these things in honor of the pure heart of Joseph, some might criticize as idolatry. Why is a devotion such as this not idolatry?)

- Honor or veneration is not worship → worship is for God alone
- The honor of Joseph is in memory of His obedience to God
- We often honor someone by continuing to do what they would have justly done
- The focus, though, draws our attention to Christ → pray the Joyful Mysteries
  - ➔ Annunciation of the birth of our **Lord and Savior**
  - ➔ The visitation of Elizabeth where John leapt in the womb at the presence of **His Lord** (Luke 1:41-44)
  - ➔ The birth of **our Lord**
  - ➔ The presentation of the **baby Jesus** at the temple
  - ➔ The finding of the **child Jesus** at the temple
- We are also called to receive the Eucharist → Joseph calls us to Christ

The statement Sister Mary Ephrem attributes to Saint Joseph begins, “**Jesus and Mary desire that my pure heart...**” This reference to a “pure heart” is set as an example for us. If we examine the definition of “pure,” by our friends Merriam-Webster, it is basically summed up as “unmixed with any other matter,” and “free from dust, dirt, or taint,” or “spotless or stainless.” When we speak in terms of purity of the heart of the faithful, we are speaking of “moral personality,” as referenced in CCC: 2517.

(CCC: 2517)

2517 **The heart is the seat of moral personality:** "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication...." **The struggle against carnal covetousness entails purifying the heart and practicing temperance:**

**Remain simple and innocent,** and you will be like little children who do not know the evil that destroys man's life.

**(Question 2:** So, let's examine this a little. When we say “purity of heart,” or reference a “pure heart,” we must understand that we are not talking about the physical construct of our heart, but the spiritual structure. **What does that mean? What is the spiritual structure of our heart and what is this goal of “purity?” Is it simply a heart which avoids sin?)**

- In alignment with what God asks of us
- In alignment with the purity of God's heart, which is perfect love
- In alignment with the moral virtues which dispose us to what is good, right, and just
  - ➔ *Cardinal Virtues (other virtues extend from these)*
    - ✓ Prudence (right reason in action – CCC: 1806)
    - ✓ Justice (obedience to God and upright conduct toward neighbor – CCC: 1807)
    - ✓ Fortitude (resolve to resist temptation – CCC: 1808)
    - ✓ Temperance (careful discernment and moderation of desires – CCC: 1809)
  - ➔ *Theological Virtues (relate directly to God – CCC: 1812)*
    - ✓ Faith (our belief in all God has revealed to us – our understanding demonstrated through our deeds and how we lead our lives – CCC: 1814)

- ✓ Hope (our desire for the kingdom of heaven and trust in the love and mercy of our Savior – CCC: 1817)
  - ✓ Charity (our love for one another as Christ loves us – our doing for others in need – CCC: 1824)
  - In alignment with the meaning and purpose of God's commandments
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Early in her writings, Sister Mary Ephrem attributed the following to Our Blessed Mother from a series of messages from 25 - 27 Sep 1956:

*I am Our Lady of America. I desire that my children honor me, especially by the purity of their lives.* (Neuzil, 5)

Sister Mary Ephrem related that because of her duties, she had to move onto her tasks, but felt Our Lady remain with her. Later that day, Sister Mary Ephrem attributes the following to Our Blessed Mother.

*My child, I entrust you with this message that you must make known to my children in America. I wish it to be the country dedicated to my purity. The wonders I will work will be the wonders of the Soul. They must have faith and believe firmly in my love for them. I desire that they be the children of my Pure Heart. I desire, through my children of America, to further the cause of faith and purity among peoples and nations. Let them come to me with confidence and simplicity, and I, their Mother, will teach them to become pure like to my Heart that their own hearts may be more pleasing to the Heart of my Son.* (Neuzil, 6)

**(Question 3:** Sister Mary Ephrem wrote that Our Lady told her, “*I desire, through my children of America, to further the cause of faith and purity among peoples and nations.*” We must remember, the date attributed to this message was in Sep 1956. The culture of America was not the same, then, as it is today. Why do we think America would be chosen to further the cause of faith and purity among peoples and nations? What is our current direction as a nation towards accomplishing that mission?)

- America holds a leadership role in the world
- America holds a heavy cultural influence on the world through its economic products, technology, services, and academic advances
- America holds a significant moral influence on the world through the freedoms and rights guaranteed by our Constitution
- God has blessed the nation with a variety of resources through which to influence the world

(Luke 12:47-48)

*47 That servant who knew his master's will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; 48 and the servant who was ignorant of his master's will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating shall be beaten only*



*lightly. Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.*

Sister Mary Ephrem related in her diary:

Our Blessed Mother called herself Our Lady of America in response to the love and desire that reached out for this special title in the hearts of her children in America. This title was the sign of her pleasure at the confidence our land places in her and as a reward for its staunch and childlike devotion to her. (Neuzil, 6)

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Sister Mary Ephrem wrote in her diary:

On November 8, 1954, a short time after the visit of the Angel of Peace, Our Lady spoke to me in these words: *"It is the wish of my Son that fathers and mothers strive to imitate me and my chaste spouse in our holy life at Nazareth. We practiced the simple virtues of family life, Jesus our Son being the center of all our love and activity. The Holy Trinity dwelt with us in a manner far surpassing anything that can ever be imagined. For ours was the earthly paradise where once again God walked among men."*

Sister Mary Ephrem wrote in her diary that approximately three years later, on 7 Oct 1957, Our Lady said to her:

*Making the rosary a family prayer is very pleasing to me. I ask that all families strive to do so. But be careful to say it with great devotion, meditating on each mystery and striving to imitate in your daily lives the virtues depicted therein. Live the mysteries of the rosary as I lived them, and it will become a chain binding you to me forever. They who are found in the circle of my rosary will never be lost. I myself will lead them at death to the throne of my Son, to be eternally united to Him. "Write these words upon your hearts, my dear children, because of the compassion I have for you in my Immaculate Heart. Oh, if you knew the punishments I am holding back from you by my pleading and intercession on your behalf!*

*Will you do as I wish at last, my children?* (Neuzil, 11)

**(Question 4:** As Sister Mary Ephrem writes of what she spiritually felt from Joseph and Mary, the sanctification of family and purity were common themes. **What role does family play in relation to purity of heart?)**

- Children learn from their parents
- Parents are called to teach their children
- Parents are called to protect their children
  - ➔ Protecting children includes protecting innocence
  - ➔ Protecting children includes teaching the ways of God
  - ➔ Protecting children includes teaching them the virtues which make for a more loving world

- ➔ Protecting children includes preparing them for the vocations God has laid out before us
- ➔ Protecting children includes helping them see all the blessings which God offers through living the fullness of our Catholic faith

**(Question 5:** As we look at the condition of families in America, we observe that the traditional family is under heavy attack by politics, culture, finances, technology, and ideologies. Given our current direction and the overwhelming array of forces against us, we might be tempted to despair. **What might we do to help turn the tide?)**

- If we are to teach our children, we must first learn ourselves
- Parents must engage religious formation with their children
- Parents must help their children understand the blessings of their faith
- Parents must endeavor to be an example of faith with their children
- Families must live as examples of their faith in service of their communities
- Families must lovingly encourage one another to remain strong in faith
- Families must pray together, especially the Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet
- Families must talk about their faith together
- Families must engage the community with charity, ministry, and love
- Families should consider means to share in ministry together
- As we engage with others, we must always be prepared to give the reason for our hope

### Quotes:

(Deuteronomy 11:18-21)

*18 Therefore, take these words of mine into your heart and soul. Bind them on your arm as a sign, and let them be as a pendant on your forehead. 19 Teach them to your children, speaking of them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up, 20 and write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates, 21 so that, as long as the heavens are above the earth, you and your children may live on in the land which the LORD swore to your ancestors he would give them.*

(1 Peter 3:15-17)

*15 Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, 16 but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.*

– Words attributed to Jesus by Sister Mary Ephrem

*The Voice of My Heart is the Voice of Mercy. If man will not listen, there is no more I can do, for he ties My hands.*

### Final Thoughts:

There is no doubt that America has been blessed in many ways and holds a position of leadership in the world. As we reflect on the scripture of Luke 12:48, which reads:

(Luke 12:48B)

*Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.*

We must consider our blessings and our calling, as well as what we are able to do to achieve that calling. The virtues to which we are called are also blessings we may share. The direction of our country, though, is not toward God. The children of His creation are drifting away. We might seek to blame this condition or that, and indeed we must be wary of the tactics being employed against us, but we must also consider where we stand and to what direction we are turned. If we know the fullness of our faith, we make it more difficult for the one who would deceive and divide us. We also become part of the effort to accomplish the will of God.

I'm sure the thought by some who are listening is that we cannot change the world. By ourselves, that may be true, but we are not alone. Still, if we do not do our part to teach and encourage the generations, we become part of the weakness which will cede to the evil one his day.

We know the end, she will crush its head, but we also want to ensure we do not become a spiritual casualty along the way. If we put on the armor of faith, if we educate our children of this armor, if we wear the armor with confidence and hope in our Lord and Savior; through our belief in Him, through our trust in Him, His Mercy will be there for us; for as we are told by Saint Faustina, He is love and mercy itself.

**Wrap Up:** Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we turn our discussion to our youth as torchbearers.

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to share the blessings of our trust and faith in You. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation,** and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

**Next Session:** Our Lady of America – Part VII: Our Youth as Torchbearers

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