

Dear John Doe -- and the millions of other American John Does:

Yes, there is a peace and strength at Notre Dame; and to get at the cause, let's walk down to the Grotto, John, and do a little thinking and traveling, too. At the Grotto look up at Our Lady there. Then let your eyes travel on up through the trees to where she stands, golden and resplendent, on the Dome, because a certain far-off Grotto and a distant Dome can answer your questions and give you peace and strength.

She is in her glory in Heaven now, that Mother of ours, but one day she stood helpless, yet courageous at the foot of a Cross and saw her Divine Son crucified. She knew that her Son was Divine, was God Himself come down to earth to teach the way to Heaven. She knew that He had to die for the sins of men to re-open Heaven, our real and everlasting home. That will be our reward one day for avoiding sin, and for bearing bravely the trials and distresses of this life. Always keep that Heaven in mind, John.

Our Lady knew also that He had promised to leave to His Church a teacher--a shepherd--who would guide His followers down through the ages. Yet despite that promise, His apostles were in despair over the chaos and confusion, just like you, John, and they were terrified, too.

So the night before He died, He took them aside. In His love, power and gentleness He told them--and all future men through them--to be unafraid (John xvi):

"I will not leave you orphans...My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid...In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world...It is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you...But when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will teach you all truth."

Christ always kept His word. He sent that spirit of Truth to His Church on Pentecost to protect His teacher and shepherd, the Pope, against error; and He certainly did not leave us orphans. His last thought was of His friends, His apostles and disciples and us, too, on down through the ages. So He left us a Mother, too. It's something like this, John. Just as Mary was the mother of the human nature and body of Christ (The Maternity of Mary), so on Calvary she became the Mother of men, spiritually. She became the spiritual Mother of all men--the Mother of all the world. Then, having provided a Mother and also a teacher for us, He bravely, lovingly and magnificently died for you and all men.

The teacher stayed on earth and taught down through the ages--surely and defiantly in the face of sceptics, doubters, heretics, "liberal" scientists and educators. But the Mother went to Heaven, where she was and is more powerful there at the side of her Son, interceding for and strengthening her sons on earth--keeping the watch, as it were, until they finally get home to Heaven.

See how they work together, John. Over at the original Grotto at Lourdes, France, in 1858 that Mother appeared to little Bernadette and said, "I am the Immaculate Conception." By her appearances there, her words and God's miracles she confirmed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception which had been proclaimed by the Pope four years before. That dogma had brought a roar of scorn and laughter from the "liberals and enlightened" scientists, philosophers and educators of that day. But, John, Our Lady just smiled and told her sons not to worry because those scoffers and liberals could not then, nor can they now laugh off or scorn or explain these daily-occurring miracles which are examined and approved by a scientific medical board.

There are the causes, John, for the serenity of Notre Dame's faith--the Divine Son, an infallible teacher, and Our Mother--whose Feast of The Maternity is celebrated tomorrow. And tomorrow, John, for further answer, you'll hear from the Pope.