



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©
* Knights of Malta *

October
2010

Chancellor's Update

**Motivational speech given by Jesus Figueroa OSJ to a Moms in Touch International Chapter at
God Of A Second Chance Ministry non-denomination church in Washington, DC**

Good afternoon on this glorious afternoon and many blessings to you all. It is an honor and pleasure to be here. I'd like to thank Sr. Pastor and First Lady Darrel Best, Minister Anita Woods, and Ms. Swanzetta McKoy for inviting me here to share some words of encouragement and to all the Praying Moms and guests for your involvement in this ministry and for your confidence and trust. Before I begin with my theme, it is important that I set the tone right by sharing with you a critical piece of my background and time of my life that will tie to the relevancy of today's discussion.

I am of Puerto Rican descent and was born and raised in the Bronx in NYC in 1964. Raised in the tenements and housing projects amongst all the filth, graffiti, crime and drugs and misbehaviors of that time to include all the family problems that typical uneducated, non-religious and poor families go through – high school dropouts, divorces, affairs, cheating, lying, gambling, and even the murder of a kin. What was also challenging and confusing was getting raised in a household where my parents were at different intellectual and spiritual levels – my mother was college bound, where my father was a high school dropout. Even though both had differences, they held on and exercised very strong family values. The greatest challenge was that my father did not practice or live the faith. Through the grace of God, this spiritual disconnect was filled by God (through my mother) who would take my sister and me to church and taught us to pray and would pray with us. She also was the one who encouraged and convinced my dad to even send my sister and me to Catholic school despite being a very low-income family. My mother prayed for both of us every day and night throughout our childhood and teenage years, and even today, that God would inspire us, protect us, and not abandon us. If it weren't for my mother's prayers for divine protection and guidance and her cooperation with God's Will throughout the critical early years of my life in a culture and environment that was predominantly Godless, I cannot say that I would not have been so blessed and able to be with you today. God listened and answered her prayers and kept His promise as read in 1 Cor 7:14, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband: otherwise your children should be unclean; but now they are holy." After all these years, I have now come to learn with this invitation that my mother was a Praying Mom!

With this experience and testimony I have just given you, I'd like to talk to you all about two things that I believe are necessary for the success of Praying Moms: First, *cooperation with the Will of God*; and Second, *constant prayer* to help reach that end; for one cannot be attained without the other. To cooperate with God's Will requires that we love and worship God above all things and comply with all things as commanded and that we imitate Him. "Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet 1:16) "For if the first fruit be holy, so is the lump also; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." (Rom 11:16) For the purposes of this discussion, the *first fruits* and *root* here represent the parents and the *lump* and *branches* their children. So for "our children to be holy" we as "parents must be holy". So how do we as parents attain holiness? What must we do first within ourselves? It boils down to the answer that Our Blessed Lord gave to the scribe who asked him which was the greatest commandment of all; wherein our Blessed Lord replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like to it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31) We recognize this whole response by our Blessed Lord as the Ten Commandments. God's commandments are universal, timeless and perfect! He, as our creator, with full knowledge of our sinful nature, had set these rules in place so we can reach holiness and be with Him for eternity. The first three commandments pertain to the Love of God and the next seven pertain to the Love of Neighbor. If we follow these we will be cooperating with the Will of God, and as Christ further said to the scribe, we will "not be far from the kingdom of God." (Mark 12:34)

Once we as parents have put God first in all things in our hearts and souls and live our lives in cooperation with His Will, God will afford us the grace, means and strength to be good stewards of our children's souls so that they too can be holy and attain

Jerusalem 1048-1291, Cyprus 1291-1310, Rhodes 1311-1523, Malta 1530-1798, Russia 1798-1907, U.S.A. 1908-

<http://sovereignorderofsaintjohnofjerusalemknightsformalta.org/>

the means to remain holy and “not be far from the kingdom of God.” As Christians, if we know that all good things come from God such as our children; then we must be good stewards of the gifts (our children) that God has given us for a good steward knows that what he or she has belongs to God. As good stewards, we echo down to our children the Truth as presented to us by Our Blessed Lord with full knowledge and acceptance that the Truth we echo down to our children is not ours – but God’s. We are entrusted to maintain and nourish our children’s innocence so that they can get back to God. For we know from Our Blessed Lord, that “unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:2) And we do not want to fail as good stewards for “whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6)

Unfortunately though, we as Christians know that the Devil with his legions of bad angels lurks out there constantly to negatively affect our ability to be good stewards by attacking our weaknesses and sinful fallen nature, thereby affecting our ability to cooperate with the Will of God and lead our children back to God. The Devil’s intention is to keep us from cooperating with God’s Will and to influence others to do the same so no one can ever be with Him (God). To meet that end he attacks the root (which is the parents, the family). He works non-stop to contaminate the root so that the branches (our children) can also be contaminated and for the cycle to continue endlessly so that all could be separated from God for all eternity. However, to assist in performing our delegated duties as God’s stewards of our children’s souls and to arm us against this constant evil assault so we can protect what is rightfully God’s, Paul the Apostles reminds us that we must take on the armor of God through constant prayer. “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.” (Eph 6:12) Therefore, we must pray always just as our Blessed Lord did. Throughout the gospels he constantly instructs us to do so. For example, “Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matt 26:41) “Therefore I say unto you, all things, whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive; and they shall come unto you.” (Mark 11:24) “Take ye heed, watch and pray. For ye know not when the time is.” (Mark 13:33) “And he spoke also a parable to them, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint.” (Luke 18:1) And last but not least, “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Prayer is a powerful weapon against the Devil. It is our direct link to God. In this instant, regarding our children, it is a crying out to God for His intervention and protection; a beseeching and an appeal to His Goodness for the things our children need; to the things that are necessary. It is an elevation of the mind to God with a view to asking proper things from Him with faith, trust, sincerity, fervor and humility - for we know that God has given us an infallible promise when he said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7) "Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever you ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive." (Mark 11:24) Since the assaults against us and our children are generated by that which we cannot see, it requires God’s grace through prayer to repel it. It requires joining our children in prayer.

In closing, I say to the Praying Moms and to all others, to continue your prayers and good example to all. To do the Will of God and to show all other mothers and fathers and society that true love for God and for one’s children requires exercising the duties expected and commanded of good stewards of God. Teach children to trust in God and build them a solid foundation so they can develop strong holy roots. It will become their defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. Constantly pray for them and teach them the ways of God. Pray for all other people such as friends, educators and elected officials that affect and influence our children. Pray that they too be good stewards by cooperating with the Will of God and that they instruct properly and not scandalize our youth. As good stewards of God, keep yourselves spiritually healthy by learning as much as you can about God so it inspires you to love Him and worship Him. Serve Him with joy, gratitude and humility and then go forth and teach your children how to pray and how to be holy; make God’s Will a reality to all through your constant prayers and acts of love. As stewards of our children’s souls, do all you can to maintain their innocence as children so they can reach the kingdom of God. Lastly, educate them about God and how to be holy so they too can be good stewards and lead other souls to Christ. Thank you very much for your time and attention, and many blessings and success to you all. God bless you!

Copyright 2010 by the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Inc. All rights reserved. The O.S.J. Messenger and the Chancellor’s Update are among the authorized publications of the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Inc. and the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem-Knights of Malta. World Headquarters and Convent of the Order are located in Reading, Pennsylvania in the United States of America.



Jerusalem 1048-1291, Cyprus 1291-1310, Rhodes 1311-1523, Malta 1530-1798, Russia 1798-1907, U.S.A. 1908-

<http://sovereignorderofsaintjohnofjerusalemknightsformalta.org/>