



CONSECRATION
TO THE
Sacred Heart of Jesus
AND THE
Immaculate Heart of Mary



June 7, 2018

Mary, Mother of the Church

This past February 11th, on the Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, Pope Francis announced a new Memorial in honor of Our Lady: Mary, Mother of the Church, to be celebrated on the Monday after Pentecost, starting this year! The celebration focuses on the two events in which the Church was brought to life: at the Cross and at Pentecost. Our Lady had an important part in each of these events. Tonight we will look at these two mysteries, what the Church received, Our Lady's role, and what this shows us about her role in each of our lives and her role in the Church.

The Cross

We begin at the Foot of the Cross. The Church was given life from the side of Christ just as Eve was formed from the side of Adam. In this re-creation of the human race, which was promised just after the Fall in Genesis, we have Jesus, the New Adam and Mary, the New Eve

When Adam and Eve doubted God's goodness and committed Original Sin, Our Lord's immediate response was to promise redemption. This redemption was to come from the child of the woman who is at enmity with the devil. From this moment forward, the people of Israel looked with hopeful expectation for many generations for the One who would save them. Redemption looked different than they expected, however. A poor carpenter's Son dying on a Cross after being tortured doesn't look like redemption. But that act of self-emptying love changed EVERYTHING. Nothing is the same now. Death and sin don't have the final

say. Suffering has deep meaning and purpose. When we suffer, we don't suffer alone. God Himself knows what it is to suffer, and so we can find intimacy with Him during our suffering. The fruit of the Cross has the power to touch each one of us deeply, in way that will never leave us the same. Redemption is real and personal.

“On Calvary, Mary united herself to the sacrifice of her Son and made her own maternal contribution to the work of salvation, which took the form of labor pains, the birth of the new humanity. In addressing the words ‘Woman, behold your son’ to Mary, the crucified one proclaimed her motherhood not only in relation to the Apostle John but also to every disciple. The evangelist himself, by saying that Jesus had to die ‘to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad’ [Jn 11:52], indicates the Church’s birth as the fruit of the redemptive sacrifice with which Mary is maternally associated” (John Paul II, “The Blessed Virgin is Mother of the Church,” Sept. 17, 1997). St. Augustine wrote that “Mary is the mother of the members of Christ, because with charity she cooperated in the rebirth of the faithful into the Church” (Decree, Congregation for Divine Worship, Feb 11, 2018). Pope Saint Leo the Great wrote that “Mary is at once the Mother of Christ, the Son of God, and the mother of the members of his Mystical Body, which is the Church” (Decree). Mary is considered Mother of the Church because of her divine motherhood “and from her intimate union in the work of the Redeemer, which culminated at the hour of the cross” (Decree).

“Indeed, the Mother standing beneath the cross [cf. Jn 19:25], accepted her Son’s testament of love and welcomed all people in the person of the beloved disciple as sons and daughters to be reborn unto life eternal. She thus became the tender Mother of the Church which Christ begot on the cross handing on the Spirit. Christ, in turn, in the beloved disciple, chose all disciples as ministers of his love towards his Mother, entrusting her to them so that they might welcome her with filial affection” (Decree).

Let’s take a deeper look at this pivotal moment, a redemptive moment as well as a moment in which we receive Mary’s universal motherhood. As we hear from past popes and other spiritual writers, Mary was not a passive observer of her Son’s redemptive act. She joins her fiat to His as He suffers and dies on the Cross.

She could have resisted and questioned or grown bitter at this pain inflicted on her Son and thus on her. But instead she trusts and cooperates.

When Jesus was dying on the Cross, every breath was agony. He had to put pressure against the nails piercing His hands and feet and press his thorn-crowned head against the wood of the Cross in order to take a breath and speak. At any point of His life, Jesus did not waste words, but at this moment every single word is tied to this redemptive act, and so each word is especially precious. In this moment He gives us the words, “Behold your son... Behold your mother. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own” (John 19:27).

You might have noticed that this quote is perhaps a bit different than what you have normally heard. Commonly we hear, the disciple took her into his home. This is in the 7 most common English translations of the John’s Gospel as well as Spanish and Italian. I always loved this phrase, and I thought my family had lived it out by having her image in our home and welcoming her into our home. I thought it was a wonderful idea to welcome her to live with us, and I loved pondering what it would have been like for John to have actually lived with the Blessed Virgin Mary, to have cared for her and said Mass for her. (He wouldn’t have heard her Confession, though!) The original Greek, however does not have the word “home”, nor does the Latin. Instead, it simply reads he “took her into his own.” Pope Benedict XVI, in a general audience, said that while we commonly read that John the Beloved took Mary into his home, “the Greek text is far deeper, far richer. We could translate it: he took Mary into his inner life, his inner being... into the depths of his being...” (Benedict XVI, General Audience, August 12, 2009). What is my own? My interests, my time, my friendships and all the people I love, everything I do, everything I think about and everything I am involved in. John received her into his own! We are called to do the same. THIS is true Marian devotion.

Benedict further wrote that in receiving Mary into his own, John receives what is her own. What is Mary’s own? One of the many titles of Mary’s Immaculate Heart that St. John Eudes wrote about is “Empire of the Divine Will.” I picture a vast expanse of purity that is full of nothing but Our Lord’s loving Will. When I was speaking with a priest of receiving all that is her own, I was picturing “Empire of the Divine Will,” but he said

simply, “Christ.” That was another key to understanding this mystery. After looking up “into His own” in Greek and the various English, Latin and Spanish translations, I asked Msgr. Magee about it. He is a Scripture scholar and linguist, and one of my personal heroes. After confirming what I had found, he also pointed out that this is the exact Greek phrase in John’s prologue. “He came into His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). Then we have John 19:27 “He received her into his own.” It is no mistake that these phrases form bookends to John’s Gospel.

The prologue summarizes salvation history. What’s the problem of sinful humanity? We are His own, and we do not receive Him. I have always thought that to be a particularly painful scripture verse. We need to receive Him. The Passion is fruitless otherwise. Yet, it seems impossible for us to receive Him – our hearts are so closed and hardened by sin. Jesus shows us how He has provided for the impossible state in which we have placed ourselves. In the midst of redeeming us, He says, “Behold, your Mother.” And John received her into his own. In doing this, he receives everything that is her own: he received Christ into his own. John’s Gospel is brought full circle... through Our Lady, as Our Lord wills. “His own did not receive Him... he received her (Him) into his own.”

This is the pattern we must follow in our own redemption. It is a process by which we grow in sanctity as we embrace it more fully. I must be empty, empty, empty, always seeking to be emptier, so I can more fully receive her (Him) into my own. This is the surest, most fruitful way to receive Him into our hearts, and it is very Marian, modeling our hearts after hers. And that’s what life is all about, isn’t it? If I am not putting 100% of my love and effort into this endeavor, I am wasting the precious gift of life Our Lord has given me. I was created for union. Our Lady shows us the way, as we pray in the Immaculate Heart of Mary prayer: “lead me to that divine intimacy which alone can satisfy the immense capacity for love and union with which God has created the human heart...”

This leads us to the next verse of John’s prologue: “But to those who did receive him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by

human choice nor by a man's decision but of God." This is the sonship we receive from Our Lord through Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross. We receive her motherhood, which we need, each of us individually and the Church as a whole.

Jesus could have entrusted John and Mary to each other at any other time of her life: before the Passover, Easter, during the life of the early Church or even after her assumption in the form of an apparition. If He was really just looking for someone to provide practically for His mother, it would have made more sense for Him to have entrusted her to John's care before the Last Supper, and for this entrustment not to be worthy of mention in the Gospel. He chose to give us to her and her to us, however, when He was in the midst of redeeming us. He chose to tie her motherhood to the birth of the Church and the redemption of us all. This tells us where her place should be in our lives, where Our Lord Himself has placed her.

Pentecost

John Paul II wrote "The Evangelist St. Luke mentions the presence of Jesus' Mother in the first community of Jerusalem [Acts 1:14]. In this way he stresses Mary's maternal role in the newborn Church, comparing it to her role in the Redeemer's birth. The maternal dimension thus becomes a fundamental element of Mary's relationship with the new people of the redeemed [the Church]" (John Paul II, General Audience, Sept 17, 1997).

"As a caring guide to the emerging Church Mary had already begun her mission in the Upper Room, praying with the Apostles while awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit [cf. Acts 1:14]. In this sense, in the course of the centuries, Christian piety has always honored Mary with various titles, such as... 'Mother of the Church'" (Decree). Pope Paul VI called Mother of the Church the "tenderest of titles." It is not so much about a place of honor as it is about our loving relationship with her.

"The title 'Mother of the Church' thus reflects the deep conviction of the Christian faithful, who see in Mary not only the mother of the person of Christ, but also of the faithful. She who is recognized as mother of

salvation, life and grace, mother of the saved and mother of the living, is rightly proclaimed Mother of the Church” (John Paul II, General Audience, September 17, 1997).

What can our Mother do for us personally? Let’s look again at her role when she Jesus universalized her motherhood: at the Foot of the Cross and in the Upper Room at Pentecost.

Mary accompanies us through our own Good Friday. We each have our own story of sin and redemption. Our personal Good Fridays can last a long while, but there is always hope! Our Mother helps us to navigate through this darkness in surrender and trust. She has been there! She knows what this darkness is. She has faced great evil at the Foot of the Cross, the darkest darkness ever, and she never gave up hope. She helps us keep hope that the Resurrection is sure to come!

As she did with the Apostles in the Upper Room, she accompanies us through the times of waiting for the Spirit to enliven us, those days of patient prayer, of waiting.

“Having attentively considered how greatly the promotion of this devotion might encourage the growth of the maternal sense of the Church in the pastors, religious and faithful, as well as a growth of genuine Marian piety, Pope Francis has decreed that the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, should be inscribed in the Roman Calendar on the Monday after Pentecost and be now celebrated every year.

“This celebration will [notice the imperative – not hopefully, or could, but it will] help us to remember that growth in the Christian life must be anchored to the Mystery of the Cross, to the oblation of Christ in the Eucharistic Banquet and to the Mother of the Redeemer and Mother of the Redeemed, the Virgin who makes her offering to God. This memorial therefore is to appear in all Calendars and liturgical books for the celebration of Mass and of the Liturgy of the Hours” (Decree).

It seems we should have had this proclamation read with a blast of trumpets to gathered crowds cheering while confetti falls. This is a beautiful, joyous and momentous gift for the Church! I hope that from now on, we will all make special effort to attend Mass on the Monday after Pentecost to honor Our Lady,

Mother of the Church, and grow in appreciation for her role as Mother of the Church and of each of us individually.