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Meditations: Mary, Mother of the Church (Monday after Pentecost)

Some reflections that can assist or prayer on this memorial of our Lady, Mother of the Church.

05/20/2024

- Maternal presence of our Lady in the Church
- Our Mother on Calvary
- The Church, like Mary, leads everyone to Christ

AFTER THE ASCENSION of Jesus, the Acts show us the apostles gathered in the Upper Room. *All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren (Acts 1:14).* Tradition has found in this scene a sign of our Lady's maternal role for the entire Church. Mary unites in her person two key moments in the history of salvation: the Incarnation of the Word and the birth of the Church. "Thus, she who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes . . . present in the mystery of the Church. In the Church, too, she continues to be a maternal presence."^[1] —

A mother's life is centered on her child right from the womb. She has the responsibility to watch over the gift God has given her. A newborn infant continues to have great need for her protection; and as the child

grows up she helps him take his first steps in life. The Gospel shows us some of the care our Lady lavished on Jesus. And in the Acts we see the same concern for the nascent Church, with Mary watching over the apostles and the first Christians. It was a time of “gestation,” amid persecutions and difficulties, when they especially needed her help. “She is the humble and discreet protagonist of the first steps taken by the Christian community. Mary is its spiritual heart, since her very presence among the disciples is a living memory of the Lord Jesus and a pledge of the gift of his Spirit.”^[2]

Also today our Lady continues watching over each of her children in the Church. Realizing we are part of a people that has the same Mother will help us to unite ourselves to each of its faithful, like the first Christians. Saint Josemaría said: “Pray to God that in the Holy Church,

our Mother, the hearts of all may be one heart, as they were in the earliest times of Christianity; so that the words of Scripture may be truly fulfilled until the end of the ages:

Multitudinis autem credentium erat cor unum et anima una — the company of the faithful were of one heart and one soul.”^[3] —

WHEN OUR LORD addressed John from the Cross, He gave his disciple a gift He had not wanted to deprive himself of in the most difficult moments of his life. He was God, but He needed Mary's support and closeness when saving us. And when everything was accomplished, He gave us the only thing He had left in life: *Woman, behold, your son . . . Behold, your mother (Jn 19:26-27).*

Our Lady helps us to persevere when the path becomes more difficult. Our Mother was not spared the trials of faith. No one can accompany us better than Mary during these trying moments so that they become a time of growth and maturity. “We can ask ourselves a question: do we allow ourselves to be illumined by the faith of Mary, who is our Mother? Or do we think of her as distant, as someone too different from us? In moments of difficulty, of trial, of darkness, do we look to her as a model of trust in God who always and only desires our good?”^[4]

With his words addressed to John, Jesus invites all Christians to welcome Mary into their lives. He wants us to draw close to her with confidence. “Her power before God is such that she can obtain anything we ask for; and as our Mother she wants to grant it. And also as our Mother she knows and understands our

weaknesses. She encourages us and makes excuses for us. She makes the way easy for us and, even when we think there is no possible solution, she always has one ready to offer us.”^[5]

AS SOON AS MARY heard that her cousin was expecting a child, she *arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth (Lk 1:39)*. Besides the material help that she was able to provide during those days, above all she brought Jesus and, with Him, the fullness of joy. Both Elizabeth and Zechariah would have been joyful due to the pregnancy they had thought impossible. But it is Mary who makes present the complete joy that is born from the encounter with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

“Our Lady wants to bring the great gift of Jesus to us, to us all; and with him she brings us his love, his peace, and his joy. In this, the Church is like Mary; she has to lead everyone to Christ and his Gospel.”^[6] This is the goal of the Church’s life and of that of each Christian: to bring the love of Jesus to all men and women as Mary did to Elizabeth. The Church reminds everyone that true happiness does not depend on success, wealth or pleasure, but on welcoming Christ. Only He can offer us the deepest joy.

Through our effort to identify ourselves with our Lady, Jesus will be able to be born, through grace, in the souls of the people around us. “If we imitate Mary,” the founder of Opus Dei said, “we will share in some way in her spiritual motherhood. And all this silently, like our Lady; without being noticed, almost without words, through the true and genuine witness of our lives as Christians,

and the generosity of ceaselessly repeating her *fiat*, which we renew as an intimate link between ourselves and God.”^[7]

^[1] Saint John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 24.

^[2] Benedict XVI, *Regina Caeli*, 9 May 2010.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 632.

^[4] Francis, General Audience, 23 October 2013.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 292.

^[6] Francis, General Audience, 23 October 2013.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 281.

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