

May Devotion

Sermon – St. Benedict's Parish

9 May 2010

Our pastor, Fr. Joe [Porpiglia] let's me preach today because he knows how much I love this occasion...seeing so many of you gathered to honor Mary, the Mother of God.¹

We just heard in the Gospel that Mary is John's mother now². She is our mother too. I am reminded of another Gospel passage. Mary, in her famous Magnificat,³ says "...all generations shall call me blessed."⁴

"...all generations shall call me blessed..." I think of my grandmothers. They both had names you don't hear much anymore...unusual names today... Do any of you have grandmothers with unusual names? Both of my grandmothers were named after titles of Mary.

One grandmother's name was Regina.⁵ That's the Latin word for Queen. Mary is the Queen of Heaven, and we are gathered to crown her statue tonight. Which one of you eighth graders will be crowning her tonight? Oh, Chelsea⁶...that's great! Thank you. You can see that Mary is called "Queen" in one of our windows too. There [last nave window on Main Street side]⁷ you will see the letters "M" "R." That stands for Maria Regina – Mary the Queen.

My other grandmother's name was Dolores.⁸ That's Latin for sorrow, or deep sadness. Mary is sometimes called Mother of Sorrows.⁹ Mary's life was not always easy, especially when she had to see her Son Jesus die on the cross.

"...all generations shall call me blessed..." Here tonight there are babies, 3rd graders who have just made their First Communion, Eighth Graders on their way to high school, middle age folks, and some of our – how shall we call them? – "classic" parishioners! We are all here to honor Mary.

"...all generations shall call me blessed..." If you every get the chance, please visit Nazareth.¹⁰ The childhood home of Mary is there. During my brief study in Israel,¹¹ Nazareth was the only place I cried.¹²

¹ Mother of God (Theotokos) is my favorite title for Mary.

² John 19:26-27.

³ Luke 1:46-55.

⁴ See Luke 1:48.

⁵ Regina (Murphy) Hynes.

⁶ Chelsea Brodka. Her parents and brother Jesse were with her surrounding the statue of Mary during the Crowning. Her classmate, Grace Garlick, was the crown-bearer in the procession. Grace's parents and her brother Zach were with her too around the statue.

⁷ I recently posted about our windows on the parish blog: [St. Benedict's Blog: Windows of St. Benedict's, Part I](#)

⁸ Dolores (Dunbar) Lukacovic.

⁹ I have had other connections with "Mater Dolorosa." My grandmother's parish, when she lived in Ashtabula, Ohio, was Mother of Sorrows. I participated in Mass there many times. Her daughter and my aunt/godmother Judy, was married to Carlos Law in that parish; I served as ring-bearer at their wedding. Also, my first official job in the Church was at St. Mary of Sorrows Parish, Buffalo, NY. I served as a musician.

¹⁰ I was thinking of a line from *The Blessed Virgin Compared To The Air We Breathe*, by Gerard Manley Hopkins – "...And makes, O marvellous! [sic] / New Nazareths in us, / Where she shall yet conceive / Him, morning, noon, and eve;"

¹¹ Summer of 2007 on Fulbright-Hays Grant.

¹² See parish blog: [St. Benedict's Blog: Thinking about Mary](#)

There is now an altar over the spot where Mary said “yes!” to God. There is a sign on it that says “the Word here became Flesh.” It is where Mary became the Mother of God. For two thousand years, the faithful have visited Mary’s home in Nazareth and called her blessed.

Sometimes, in the Church, we make holy things too complicated. Mary teaches us otherwise. It’s as simple as saying “Yes!” to God. That’s all you need to do most of the time.

“Yes, I will go to Mass on Sunday.”

“Yes, I will do a little more for the poor.”

“Yes, I will honor my mother and father.”

By the way, Father Joe Fifagrowicz reminded us in his homily this morning¹³ that before there was a holiday to honor mothers,¹⁴ there was a commandment – Honor your father and mother!¹⁵

Yes. Mary is the mother of Jesus and our mother too.

You see that window? [pointing to west transept window]. When I took some of you First Communion children for a tour of the church last Saturday, I mentioned why Jesus’ hand is held the way it is. Can we all hold our hands like His? [three fingers touching, two pointing upward]. See the Infant of Prague statue – that’s Jesus when He was a baby - [pointing to the eastern transept corner] the hand is the same way.

The three fingers symbolize the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The two fingers mean that Jesus is both God and man. Mary’s “yes!” gave Jesus, the Son, His Body.

You look like your mother; so does Jesus!¹⁶ He is one of us because Mary said “yes!”

Of course you look like your mother Church! You are the Body of Christ. And Mary is your mother too.

There is a beautiful old song we sing at this time of year when the church bells ring; Glen¹⁷ was playing it right before our celebration began. – *O Queen of Heaven, be joyful, Alleluia! The Son whom you did bury in sorrow, Alleluia! Rose in splendor as He promised, Alleluia! Pray for us to God, Alleluia!*¹⁸

How sad Mary must have been when Jesus died, yet how joyful she must be now because Jesus rose from the dead. We ought to be happy with her because Jesus is alive.¹⁹

Yes, she looks like you... so look to her more often. We will see her someday.

¹³ 8:00 AM Mass today - Sunday, 9 May 2010.

¹⁴ It is Mothers’ Day in the United States today.

¹⁵ See Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16.

¹⁶ The idea is from Jaroslav Pelikan’s *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture*, Yale University Press: New Haven, 1996. See pages 139 ff - “The Face That Most Resembles Christ’s” for Dante and St. Bernard of Clairvaux roots.

¹⁷ Glen Hufnagel, our music director.

¹⁸ Regina Coeli, 12th Century?

¹⁹ The Church’s devotion to Mary is to be integrated into the liturgical calendar. See Pope Paul VI’s *Marialis Cultus*, 31. *We have already spoken of the veneration which the Church gives to the Mother of God in the celebration of the sacred liturgy. However, speaking of the other forms of devotion and of the criteria on which they should be based we wish to recall the norm laid down in the Constitution Sacrosanctum concilium. This document, while wholeheartedly approving of the practices of piety of the Christian people, goes on to say: “...it is necessary however that such devotions with consideration for the liturgical seasons should be so arranged as to be in harmony with the sacred liturgy. They should somehow derive their inspiration from it, and because of its pre-eminence they should orient the Christian people towards it” (93).*

Tonight rejoice with Mary, the Queen of Heaven for all generations shall call her blessed...

...And, it's our turn!