

JUNE 1, 2020
Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church
John 19: 25-27

“MARY THE MOTHER OF THE CHURCH”

It is providential that we start the reopening of the Church and the celebration of the Eucharist with today's Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of the Church. By this, we are asking her intercession as we start to receive the Body of Christ in the Holy Mass.

When the angel Gabriel declared that she would become the Mother of the Savior, Mary entrusted everything to God. From the conception, birth until Jesus' death, Mary stood by her Son, supported Him all throughout and gave her life for others as example *par excellence*. She is the best description and face of humility, obedience, and a loving and dedicated mother. Our Church portrayed the Blessed Virgin Mary with the apostles and disciples who at the first Pentecost, joined in prayer with the first members of the Church. The Pentecost which we celebrated yesterday, is the birth of the Roman Catholic Church. It's the Church's birthday yesterday.

“The title ‘Mother of the Church’ (*Mater Ecclesiae*) was applied to the mother of Jesus by Pope Paul VI in November 1964 at the close of the Second Vatican Council. The title was first used in the 4th century by Saint Ambrose of Milan and more recently the title was favoured by St. Pope John Paul II and then incorporated into the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Her maternal role towards Christ's faithful is founded on the words spoken by Jesus from the cross to the Beloved Disciple, who represents all future disciples: ‘Behold your mother’ [John 19:27]. As John Paul II wrote: ‘In her new motherhood in the Spirit, Mary embraces each and every one in the Church, and embraces each and every one through the Church.’ In March 2018, Pope Francis inserted into the Roman Calendar the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to be celebrated each year on the Monday after Pentecost. ‘The Church is feminine,’

Pope Francis said, 'She is a Mother.' When this trait is lacking, he added, the Church is just like a charitable organization or a football team. A too masculine Church can become 'a church of old bachelors, incapable of love, incapable of fruitfulness.' Pope Francis assigned the feast to the Monday immediately following Pentecost, 'to 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.'"¹ All teachings of saints and popes pointed to one: the Blessed Mother is always willing to embrace us members of the Church, sinners and saints, into her maternal arm. She will always protect, intercede, pray, and love us.

We can summarize the role of Mary's feast day today through the words of St. Pope John Paul II: Mary is present in the Church as the Mother of Christ, and at the same time as that Mother whom Christ, in the mystery of the Redemption, gave to humanity in the person of the Apostle John. In this sense Mary, Mother of the Church, is also the Church's model. Indeed, as Paul VI hopes and asks, the Church must draw 'from the Virgin Mother of God the most authentic form of perfect imitation of Christ.' The decree (of this memorial of Mary, the Mother of the Church) was signed on 11 February 2018, the memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, at the 160th anniversary of the Lourdes apparitions.

So, my brothers and sisters let us ask Mary the Mother of the Church to continue giving us strength to persevere and be a good example to other members of the Church through our good works and words. Mary is our mother, she will intercede for us to Jesus, her Son. Like all mothers, she will not fail us, will always love us whoever we are, sinners or saints. Like her, may we be faithful disciples of Jesus and be instruments of love to others. Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us. Amen.

¹ www.associationofcatholicpriests.ie