

10 May 2009 – Mother's Day – 5 Sunday of Easter (B)

LESSON: Transformation in Christ Takes Time

All of us are here today because we **love** Jesus Christ and we want to follow him more and more closely.

- ✍ In other words, there is still a gap between the kind of Catholic we **would like** to be, and the kind of Catholic we **actually are**.
- ✍ We **know** that a follower of Christ should be patient, self-controlled, faithful, generous, and kind.
- ✍ And we also know that although we follow that recipe **sometimes**, many other times we **don't**.
- ✍ In the face of this contrast between the **desire** of our hearts and the **reality** of our daily lives, we can be tempted to **frustration**.

But today the Church is giving us an **antidote** to that frustration in the **example of St Paul**.

In today's First Reading, St Paul shows up in Jerusalem **three years after his dramatic conversion** on the road to Damascus.

He has been **believing** in and **following** Christ for **three years** already.

And yet, he arrives in Jerusalem, and what happens?

- ✍ His **bold and abrasive personality** gets him in trouble right away.
- ✍ He shows up full of faith and love for Christ, overflowing with zeal and sincerity.
- ✍ But his old violent and intimidating temperament hasn't **gone away**.
- ✍ In a matter of **days**, he instills **deep fear** in the Christians, and he **infuriates** the Jews so much that they start **plotting to kill him!**
- ✍ Things are so bad, in fact, that he has to be **sent away to Tarsus**, his home town, **500 miles** away!
- ✍ And notice what happens **as soon as** he's gone; St Luke writes: "The Church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria **was at peace**."

The great St Paul didn't become a saint **overnight** - **it took time** for God's grace to **transform** him, and it takes **time** for God's grace to transform **us** too.

ILLUSTRATION: Fast Food vs Motherhood

This truth is very **difficult** for us to accept.

In the modern world, we are trained to have a "**right now**" **mentality**:

- ✍ fast food,
- ✍ around-the-clock help-desks,
- ✍ overnight delivery,
- ✍ Internet shopping,
- ✍ 24-hour gas stations...
- ✍ we have a **mental and emotional habit** of expecting results "**right now.**"

But Jesus taught us so often that the Kingdom of God, our transformation in Christ, is like

- ✍ a **mustard seed**, that takes time to grow,
- ✍ a **farmer's field**, that only gradually produces its crop,
- ✍ a **diligent merchant**, who spends years and years searching for the pearl of great price.

How can we **overcome** our modern, right-now mentality so as to let God work in our lives at his own, wise pace?

Well, one thing we can do is **look to our mothers**. Motherhood is a **school of wisdom**:

- ✍ For nine months a mother **bears her child**, who grows slowly, but surely and steadily, in her womb.
- ✍ She knows that she **cannot rush** the process; she must be patient, both before and after the child's birth.
- ✍ And so each day becomes a **precious opportunity** to love, to hope, to wait, and to trust in the **mysterious designs** of God.
- ✍ This is the experience of **every mother**, and most especially of the Mother of God, **Mary**.
- ✍ On this Mother's Day, we should **thank** our mothers for their hidden sacrifices, their constant love, and their invaluable generosity.
- ✍ And we should do so even more in **this day and age** when mothers are **under attack** by a culture that undervalues motherhood.

But we should not **only** thank them, we should also **learn** from them.

If motherhood is a school of wisdom, then by God's providence we each have **a lot to learn** from our mothers (including the Blessed Virgin Mary).

And there is no better way to show our **gratitude to them** than by being **good students** of all the wisdom they have to share with us – their children.

APPLICATION: Doing Our Part though Loving Obedience to God's Will

In many ways, we are all like St Paul, full of **rough edges** that God is gradually grinding down.

If we become **impatient**, we will only get in his way, and we may even **give up on him** altogether.

But **being patient** doesn't mean we just sit around and **twiddle our thumbs**.

Jesus makes it clear in today's Gospel that we have **to do our part** in order for our lives to bear the fruit he wants them to bear.

And one **key way** to do that is through **loving obedience** to God's will.

- ✍ This is what St John refers to in today's Second Reading, when he writes: "Children, let us not love one another in **word or in speech**, but in **deed and truth**."
- ✍ It's easy to say pretty words, to **talk the talk** of being a good Catholic.
- ✍ But that talk has to translate into **actions** and the strength of **virtues**, into honesty, purity, faithfulness, courage, self-sacrifice, and obedience to Church teaching – no matter how difficult that may be.
- ✍ We may falter sometimes, we will make mistakes, but we always rise again from our failures and begin again to live the life of Christ
- ✍ It's what the resurrection is all about – rising from sin to live in God's grace.

Our **loving obedience to God**, our wise and all-powerful Father, in **big** things and **little** things, is the surest sign of **humility**, and humility is the **shortcut** to holiness, wisdom, and lasting happiness.

- ✍ Humility **gives God's transforming grace room to work** within us, just as a child who obeys his parents allows their **wisdom to shape his life for the good**.

Through the Sacrifice of the Eucharist offered at every Mass, Jesus **renews His commitment to transform our lives**, just like He transformed St Paul's.

When He renews that commitment today, let's renew our **own** commitment to **let** him transform us, rising from our mistakes, **patiently following his guidance**, until we are built up, walk in the fear of the Lord, and are filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.