

Pentecost
11 May 2008
Mother's Day

LESSON: Mary as Mother of the Church at Pentecost

Our Novena of prayer – our time of expectant longing and prayer is ended! The Holy Spirit has come!

As we heard in last week's first reading and as Fr. Thoms mentioned in his homily – as we began this novena – The disciples were gathered together and “they devoted themselves to constant prayer, together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.”

- ✠ All are gathered in the same place, in the Cenacle, inspired by the same love and the same hope.
- ✠ In their midst is the Mother of God. In this scene Tradition sees Mary's motherhood for the whole Church.
- ✠ “The era of the Church began with the ‘coming’, that is to say, with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, together with Mary, the Lord's Mother” (JP II *Dominum et vivificantem*).



Our Lady – so essential (as Fr. Thoms reminded us) to our spirituality – lives in these days between the resurrection and the coming of the spirit – a kind of second Advent, an expectation which prepares the Church (gathered together in that upper room) to receive the fullness of the Spirit which comes upon them.



- ✠ This Advent is at one very like and very different from the first – the one which prepared for Jesus' birth.
- ✠ Very similar because in both we find prayer, recollection, faith in the promise and a burning desire that the promise be fulfilled. Mary, bearing Jesus in her womb, remained in the silence of her contemplation. Now, our lady lives deeply united to her glorified Son.
- ✠ This second waiting is very different from the first.
- ✠ In the first Advent, the Virgin is the only one to live the promise which is fulfilled in her womb.
- ✠ Here, she waits accompanied by the Apostles and the holy women. This is now a *shared* expectation, that of the Church which is about to be formed publically around our Lady.
- ✠ “Mary, who conceived Christ through the workings of the Holy Spirit, the love of the living God, presides over the birth of the Church on the

day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit Himself descends upon the disciples and pours out life in unity and in charity upon the Mystical Body” of Christ – the Church – and US! (Paul VI, Address, 25 October 1969).

We celebrate the coming of the Paraclete – the Holy Spirit – closely united to our Mother by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation” (*Lumen Gentium* 59).

- ✍ St. Luke reminds us in his Gospel of the important role that Mary had in Jesus childhood.
- ✍ Now, “he wants us to understand that just as Mary had a major role in the Incarnation of the Word, she was intimately involved in the beginning of the Church, Christ’s Body” (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* 29).

Mary is our path to a better openness to friendship with the Holy Spirit and a greater receptivity to His promptings in our lives. The Apostles understood this – and this is why they gather “together with Mary, the mother of Jesus” in the Cenacle.

ILLUSTRATION: Our Mothers on Mothers Day

Today, as the Church celebrates Pentecost, and as the secular world celebrates Mother’s Day, perhaps we are able to see the role of Mary as Mother of the Church and our Mother – as we see that mirrored in our own mothers.

You know how you *know* something but you only *really* begin to “know” once you experience it? That’s happened to me this past year.

- ✍ I knew it, but I never realized the “glue” that my grandmother was in my family.
- ✍ My grandmother & grandfather had 8 children – and they in turn had a total of 15 children – and they have had children – and they all centered around Mom-Mom – my grandmother.
- ✍ Many say that it’s men who have the power in this world – but whether that is true or not, my experience tells me that we are a matriarchal society – our families are centered around our mothers.



And what is a mother?



In and through our mothers we come to understand the irreplaceable role of women in all aspects of family and social life – which involve human relationship and caring for others. Here what John Paul II has termed the genius of women becomes very clear. It implies first of all that women be significantly and actively present in the family, since it is here above all that the features of a people take shape; it is here that its members acquire basic teachings. They learn to love inasmuch as they are unconditionally

loved [by a mother], they learn respect for others inasmuch as they are respected [by a mother], they learn to know the face of God inasmuch as they receive a first revelation of it from a father and a mother full of attention in their regard.

Don't we see that in Mary with Jesus

- ✍ as she cared for him and raised him
- ✍ as she stood by His side as He made His way through the streets of Jerusalem, carrying the cross
- ✍ as she stood by His side as he died there
- ✍ as she laid his dead and broken body in the tomb
- ✍ as she gathered with the Apostles in that upper room?
- ✍ Don't we see the important role of women and mother made manifest in Mary – and made concrete in our lives through our own mothers?



Mom – thank you. Thank your mom today for being that concrete image to you!

But we have to move forward into the importance of Mary's presence in keeping us open and docile to the Holy Spirit in our lives.

- ✍ Throughout her life, Mary grew continually in love for God the Father, God the Son (HER Son Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit.



- ✍ She never offered the least resistance to the power and action of the Spirit (the will of the Father, the presence of the Son) in her life: "Be it done to me according to thy word" she says to the angel.
- ✍ She never denied God anything!
- ✍ She is truly the perfect daughter of God!
- ✍ Mary, because of her constant openness and willingness to follow God's will, she is the creature God loves most.
- ✍ As for us, in spite of our own sins and failing (much like those the prodigal son gives his father) – even though we are sinners,

God loves US with an infinite love and fills US with the Gifts of the Spirit – as often as we open ourselves up to receive them

APPLICATION: The Spirit in our Lives

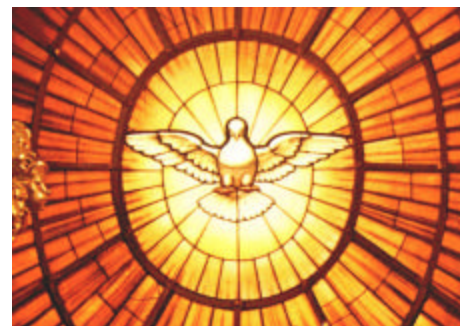
Everything that has happened in the Church from that first Pentecost until now is the work of the Holy Spirit

- ✍ the evangelization of the world
- ✍ conversions
- ✍ the strength and courage of the martyrs
- ✍ the holiness of the saints...

- ✍ St. Augustine taught “What the soul is to the body...the Holy Spirit is in the Body of Jesus Christ (which is the Church).”
- ✍ The Spirit gives us life and draws us together as one.

The Holy Spirit is also the one who makes us holy.

- ✍ All our good works, the inspirations and desires which make us want to be better people...
- ✍ it’s all the work of the Paraclete – the Holy Spirit.
- ✍ The Spirit comes into our lives to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen, to console, to illumine the mind of the one who receives Him – and through that person, the minds of others.



After the Day of Pentecost, Mary is truly the heart of the newly born Church. The Holy Spirit, who prepared her to be the Mother of God, now at Pentecost prepares her to be the Mother of the Church and of each one of us.



The Holy Spirit never stops acting in the Church.

- ✍ On every side the Spirit is awakening us to new desires to be holy, with new signs for hope.
- ✍ Our Lady, working with the Holy Spirit in souls, exercises her maternity over all her children – just as our mom’s do for us – consoling, encouraging, leading, teaching and, most importantly, loving.
- ✍ And so, as we celebrate the coming of the Spirit, we recognize why Mary is given the title “Mother of the Church.”

Mary, mother of us all, pray for us and help us, like you, to be open and responsive to the working of the Holy Spirit in our own lives.

