

Homily - Memorial of the B. V. Mary, Mother of the Church Seminarian Retreat – May 20, 2024

Dear brothers, today, the Church celebrates the Virgin Mary as the Mother of the Church, a title proclaimed by Pope St. Paul VI and later emphasized by Pope Francis, as he established this liturgical memorial for Monday after Pentecost.

In entrusting His Mother to the care of the beloved disciple, Jesus demonstrates his human affection for Mary amid His suffering. This scene seems to contrast with the earlier instance at the wedding in Cana, when Jesus appeared to distance Himself from His Mother, indicating that His hour had not yet come.

At Cana, Jesus revealed his power. Upon reaching the hour that he predicted at that time, now that He appears powerless – although He is truly about to accomplish all for which He came into the world – He affectionately ensures the welfare of the Mother by whom He had become man. John is portrayed as the heir of this responsibility representing all believers, highlighting the bond of love and duty within the Christian community.

The Lord's gesture invites all to receive Mary into our lives as our own Mother, guiding us in our Christian journey. We are brought to partake in the affection between Christ and his Mother. We praise Mary's ecclesial sense, as her presence unites and supports believers, just as she stood by the cross and received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, Mary remained with the apostles, symbolizing the perpetual presence of the Mother of

God with the Church as our own good Mother. Mary's motherhood fosters unity among believers as children of the same Mother.

Jesus' words, "Woman, behold, your son," and "Behold, your mother," indicate Mary's universal motherhood. Despite her subtle presence, Mary is recognized as the one who accompanied Jesus in his mission and continues to do so for the Church.

Just as it is essential for us to have a mother, God decided to have a Mother Himself. God chose Mary, to take flesh through her in the Incarnation. Similarly, the Church is described as a Mother, carrying out a maternal task on behalf of Jesus for every believer.

Pope Francis describes Mary's role as one who remained steadfast in faith and encouraged the apostles after the Resurrection. Mary's presence in the Church is seen as essential for remembering Christ and responding to the needs of others.

While Mary is not the Church herself, she represents the maternal aspect of the Church, guiding and nurturing believers as a mother does. Mary's role as Mother of the Church is central to the Christian faith, guiding and supporting believers in our journey with Christ, who is at once the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Reflecting on the example of Mary can deepen our spiritual life and strengthen the bonds of unity within the Church community. Ultimately, the Church needs to look at Mary to place herself before the mystery of who we are called to be as the Lord's Body and as Mother.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Church, guide us through her example and intercession, for us to be faithful to the mission of our Mother Church.