

Sixth Sunday of Easter (B)

May 13, 2012

I *must* talk about Mary. If I don't, Easter is incomplete. The Gospels don't say a word about Mary after Jesus says to John from the cross: "Here is your mother." So, I open with Mary and Jesus. From the moment Mary murmured "Let it happen to me as you say," Jesus was literally her life. "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." And not knowing what lay before her, Mary never took back the radical yes she had given to God: "Let it happen to me as you say."

But what has Mary to do with Easter? Very simply, Mary reveals, without words, what Easter is all about, what the paschal mystery means. Easter is not a one-man show – Jesus alive, alleluia! Yes, Jesus is alive, but here God's Word comes through loud and clear: Jesus died *for us*, and he rose *for us*. He came alive to give us life. Such is God's Easter gift. This is what we call redemption. Christ's dying and rising for us.

That much is hardly new for us. But the most remarkable example of God's Easter giving is Mary. Why do I say that? Because Mary now lives in God's presence the way God has destined all of us to live one day: whole in soul *and* body, in spirit *and* flesh, her complete person a glorious, ecstatic yes to her God. This is Easter. And Mary is Easter in its fullness. Mary is, to perfection, what Jesus was born to do, lived to do, died to do, rose to do.

So much for Mary and Jesus. So much for Mary and Easter. What of Mary and us? One can get to God without devotion to Mary. With God all things are possible. But I simply submit: it's not a good idea, not thoroughly Catholic. For all that only Jesus saves, Catholicism is not a me-and-Jesus religion. We who believe have been built by baptism into a community. And this community has two parts: the Church in pilgrimage on earth and the Church triumphant in heaven. This is the whole Church, the total Christ. With all these sisters and brothers we are linked together in love. "Love one another."

But linked in love especially with one: with Mary. For several good reasons. First, because Mary is mother not only of Jesus but of his brothers and sisters as well. Scripture scholars tell us that when the crucified Christ murmured “Here is your mother,” he was speaking not only to the apostle John but to all who believe in him. Here is our mother, a mother who cares for each of us personally, a mother to this vast communion that reaches from earth to heaven and to her son Jesus.

Today is Mother’s Day. Mothers are those who have given birth not just to children, but to ideas, books, businesses, and dreams. Mothers are people of creativity, ingenuity, compassion, and enduring patience. Regardless of the different details of our stories, or the families we come from, we have all collected mothers along the way. We have hopefully found those people who nurture the best in us and enrich the lives of those around them. Say hello today to one of your mothers – a wonderful Jewish mother!

A second reason to honor Mary: Mary will disclose to us, better than I can, the feminine side of God, the female face of God. In the way Mary lived, in the way she imaged God, in the very person she is and has always been, Mary reveals that it is God who is the Mother of mercy – caring and concerned and compassionate. Mary makes concrete, carries forward, what the Word of God discloses about God. In God originates all that is creative and generative of life, all that nourishes and nurtures, all that overflows with solicitude and sympathy, all we associate with mother-love. I refer you to Pope John Paul I (pope for only 34 days): God is not only Father but “even more so Mother, who... wants only to be good to us.”

A third reason why you should love Mary: I know no one who can lead us more surely to her Son. No statue of Mary is finished, no portrait of her complete, unless she shows us Jesus. Our Mary is pregnant with Jesus, a cross around her neck. To the many mothers in our lives, we say thank you for introducing us to Jesus. Your gifts have shaped us into the people we are today. Happy Mother’s Day!

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Pastor