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THE MONTH OF MARY

Spiritual Motherhood

The biblical exemplar of the "woman" finds its culmination *in the motherhood of the Mother of God*.

The words of the Proto-evangelium - "I will put enmity between you and the woman" - find here a fresh confirmation.

We see that through Mary - through her maternal "fiat", ("Let it be done to me") - God *begins a New Covenant with humanity*. This is the eternal and definitive Covenant in Christ, in his body and blood, in his Cross and Resurrection.

Precisely because this Covenant is to be fulfilled "in flesh and blood" its beginning is in the Mother. Thanks solely to her and to her virginal and maternal "fiat", the "Son of the Most High" can say to the Father: "A body you have prepared for me. Lo, I have come to do your will, O God" (*Heb 10:5, 7*).

Motherhood has been introduced into the order of the Covenant that God made with humanity in Jesus Christ.

Each and every time that *motherhood* is repeated in human history, it is always *related to the Covenant* which God established with the human race through the motherhood of the Mother of God.

(On the dignity and vocation of women, §19, John-Paul II, 1988)

These beautiful words of reflection can be an excellent accompaniment for us during this month of May, which is dedicated to the Mother of God.

Let us turn to her with confidence and trust and with the certainty that we shall find in her person tenderness, compassion, understanding, affection and good counsel.

To him be the glory

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

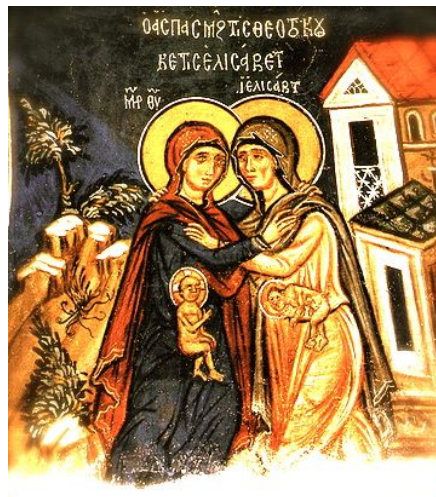
Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.

If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter, 4, 1-11)



Expressions of Faith



Our European culture, imbued with the spirit of Christianity, has produced throughout the centuries exquisite works of art, be it in architecture, in literature, in sculpture and in painting as well as in music and in singing.

All these forms of artistic expression have been encouraged by the Church, since **faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God gives value and respect to the human person and points to the ennoblement of his nature.**

Indeed, God did not disdain human nature, but He assumed it in order to sanctify it. Not only that, but He gave it immortal status through Christ's resurrection and Ascension into Heaven.

When we affirm in the Creed: "...He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right-hand of the Father...." we mean exactly that: that Jesus is in Heaven with his human nature too; He is not there just with His divine nature, but also with the nature he got from us (through the Immaculate Virgin Mary).

Our very own human nature has been now saved and is forever part of the eternity with God.

This truth of faith is at the same time a promise and a challenge: a promise of salvation for those who follow Christ, and a challenge for each one of us to really live our faith in order to have part in the promises of God.

Christian art is an affirmation of this faith and, at the same time, an inspiration for the whole of humankind to strive forever forward towards its fulfilment in the Love of God.

Did you know...

The prominent Italian composer **G. P. da Palestrina** (1525-1594), as well as the Spanish **T. L. de Victoria** (1548-1611), were ardent followers of **Saint Philip Neri** and composed numerous exquisite works for the services at the Oratory.



The Oratory was a novel congregation of priests, seminarians and lay men founded by Philip Neri with permission from the Pope in 1575.

The members live in community, and each pays his own expenses, of his private means—a startling innovation on the monastic vow of poverty. Nothing is provided by the society except the bare lodging, and the fees of a visiting physician. Everything else—clothing, books, furniture, medicines—must be paid by each member. There are no vows, and every member of the society is at liberty to withdraw when he pleases, and to take his property with him.

This freedom and lack of strict rules it was a welcome adaptation to the rapidly changing world of the 16th century and a proof that the Church is always the same and always new in her solicitude and care for the People of God at all times and in all places under the sun.

The Message of Fatima



“Be aware of the existence of Hell, consecrate the nations to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and do penance for the salvation of souls.”

Our faith must be informed. We must discern and distinguish good from evil and be aware of the consequences of sin.

We, also, have the mission to bring all nations to Christ, and the Church’s prayer and consecration of all peoples to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God is a powerful means to this end.

In order to be God’s messengers we have to be well prepared. Our preparation entails reparation by **allowing God’s grace to work in us and through us.**

One hundred years ago, the little shepherds of Fatima made known to the world the Virgin’s message: do penance so that peace will come into the hearts of men and the world will be spared devastation by wars and injustice.

This message is imperative to be heard today as well. This is the amazing mystery of the Incarnation: the transformation of the world, which leads to its salvation, passes through the heart of man; this happens, though, only when man’s heart is full of the love of God, i.e. when he is led by the Spirit.

Consecration to our Lady



Above all creatures, may you be blessed, you, the Handmaid of the Lord, who in the fullest way obeyed the divine call Hail to you, who are wholly united to the redeeming consecration of your Son! Mother of the Church! Enlighten the People of God along the paths of faith, hope, and love! Enlighten especially the peoples whose consecration and entrustment by us you are awaiting.

Help us to live in the truth of the consecration of Christ for the entire human family of the modern world In entrusting to you,

O Mother, the world, all individuals and peoples, we also entrust to you this very consecration of the world, placing it in your motherly Heart. Immaculate Heart! Help us to conquer the menace of evil, which so easily takes root in the hearts of the people of today, and whose immeasurable effects already weigh down upon

our modern world and seem to block the paths towards the future!

From famine and war, deliver us .

From nuclear war, from incalculable self-destruction, from every kind of war, deliver us.

From sins against the life of man from its very beginning, deliver us.

From hatred and from the demeaning of the dignity of the children of God, deliver us.

From every kind of injustice in the life of society, both national and international, deliver us.

From readiness to trample on the commandments of God, deliver us.

From attempts to stifle in human hearts the very truth of God, deliver us. From the loss of awareness of good and evil, deliver us.

From sins against the Holy Spirit, deliver us, deliver us.

Accept, O Mother of Christ, this cry laden with the sufferings of all individual human beings, laden with the sufferings of whole societies.

Help us with the power of the Holy Spirit to conquer all sin: individual sin and the 'sin of the world', sin in all its manifestations.

Let there be revealed, once more, in the history of the world the infinite saving power of the Redemption: the power of merciful Love! May it put a stop to evil! May it transform consciences!

May your Immaculate Heart reveal for all the light of Hope!"

Pope Saint John-Paul II, 1984

A joyful heart is more easily made perfect than a downcast one



This is what he used to say the **“Third apostle of Rome”** after Saints Peter and Paul, namely **Saint Philip Neri**(1515-1595).

A Florentine by birth, he decided to live in Rome and to work as an apostle of Christ among the sick and the poor. He worked like this for seventeen years, before he felt the call to the priesthood in 1551.

His joyful heart, combined with healthy commonsense, and his ability to be always approachable gained him great popularity among the Romans, and many conversions took place through his work and mission.

In 1575 he founded the Oratory, a congregation of secular priests (i.e. priests not belonging to a specific religious order) with emphasis on prayer, Bible study and regular discussions on spiritual matters, often including beautiful hymns and music; the musical selections (settings of scenes from sacred history) were called oratorios, hence the name of the congregation.