

6th Sunday Easter (C)

25th May 2025

'May — month of Maia and of Mary'

Acts 15: Council of Jerusalem Ps 66: *let your face shed its light upon us*

Apoc 21: *holy city ... did not need the sun or moon for light ...*

Jn 14: 23–29: *if anyone loves me ... we will make our home with him*

Before May is over, I want to speak about this *month of Mary*. May would typically include some if not all of: Ascension Day, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, *Corpus Christi* ... I happen to think that the overlap of the Marian month and the feasts related to Eastertide is beautifully providential — given the deep significance of Mary's presence in Jerusalem, both at the foot of the Cross, and then nurturing the apostolic community as it awaited the Descent of the Holy Spirit. In university circles like our own, it's also the exam season, so we can draw both on the joy and grace of Our Lord's Resurrection, and Our Lady's prayers, to help us through this time of testing.

I was wondering about the name of this month. The words "May" and "Mary" are so close as to provide a lovely connection — as in the hymn I recall singing at Primary School, "May is the month of Mary" — but in fact like all our months' names in English, "May" is of Roman

(pre-Christian, and pagan) origin. "May" refers to "Maia," a mythical Roman goddess of spring-time growth and greenness, given the typical lushness of nature at this time of year. Maia was thought of as a *nurturer*, ... so this isn't so opposed, is it, to loose association with the Mother of Our Saviour? Our Blessed Lady is the ideal nurturer: no myth, however, but the flesh-and-blood kin of the Son of God, and His most ardent disciple. We do well to honour her in this month, and to draw deeply on the wellsprings of her faith and fervour. How much thought have we given Our Lady this month, so far? Have we tried to honour her in some way, through prayer and devotion, and to call on her to lead us from the Cross to Pentecost?

The Rosary, an ideal expression of Marian prayer, sets the tone for our being united with Mary in faith: it sets her life in the context of Our Lord's: the Incarnation is the framework for all that we pray about and contemplate in Rosary. As Our Lady's life and mission is interwoven into Jesus's in the Mysteries of the Holy Rosary, so we can be drawn in to walk with Jesus just as she did. Mary teaches

us, in other words, to insert ourselves into those sacred mysteries of Jesus's Life, Death & Resurrection, and so have a real chance of being taken, like her, to heaven.

Can't we have Christianity without Mary? Can't we leave her aside as an unnecessary extra, a distraction? No, I believe not. *God Himself chose her*; and we cannot (may not!) un-choose her — how could we have the arrogance to do that? More than that, it is she who has allowed the Incarnation to occur, by her 'yes' — her "be it done unto me according to thy word" — so that the Word could be made flesh and dwell amongst us. No Mary of Nazareth, no Jesus of Nazareth! No 'yes' from this God-loving teenager, and no salvation! Hers is not the divine plan, but hers is the free choice, born of love, to co-operate fully with that divine plan. How can we think of not honouring her, from whom we receive the Saviour of the World? Put it more graphically: did Jesus spend His 30yrs at Nazareth ignoring His Mother? Did He say, "I don't need you"? Did He say that He was able to manage His ministry perfectly well on His own? No, I imagine not! Of course

He is the Son of God, He could do anything by the Will of His Mind, but He approaches His ministry in this world in accordance with the law of love, lived in the human context of a family, a people, a time and place: *the Holy Family, the Chosen People, the 1st c., the Holy Land of Israel*, the Roman province of Judaea. And that meant living with a Mother who deeply loved Him, and whom He deeply loved. We cannot be followers of Christ and not honour and love the Mother who raised Him, and who was with Him His whole earthly life, right up to the Ascension.

I'm sure that many of you have seen the film, 'The Passion of the Christ' — some of you have no doubt seen it, as I have, multiple times. We watched it, here, some of us, in Holy Week. One of the key motifs of the film is the interaction between Jesus and Mary, and how she supports His ministry. Subtly, the film displays the human strength He draws from her presence: when she is near, He can stand and carry on the Passion; He can stand to receive again the bitter scourging at the pillar; He can struggle to His feet again after falling under the crushing weight of the

Cross on the *Via Dolorosa*. Not because she is any more than a human woman, but because *she is a fully human being*, whose immaculate heart gives her all to the God who made her. And in the midst of a world of sin and violent anti-God rebellion, a heart that loves Jesus is transformative; yes, it even gives Jesus the impetus to get up and complete His sacrifice. From the Cross, in the closing moments of His mortal life, He does not forget her; He turns to her, and gives her into the care of the beloved disciple, John, and thereby to us, the whole Church, as our Spiritual Mother.

Mary, therefore, is indispensable to our Christian faith: love the Son, and therefore love the Mother; love the King of all Creation, and therefore love the Queen Mother whom He has crowned. She can only lead us towards, and never away from, the Saviour whom she served with her whole earthly life, and whom she serves in heaven as our great intercessor. Never doubt that prayer to our Mother Mary is superfluous; she desires nothing other than that we are drawn into the sort of relationship with Jesus that she

has, and knows to be life-giving. Think of her role in Jerusalem with the Apostles in those Easter days after the Resurrection, as key to our appreciation of her. Was the Apostolic Church neglectful of her? Did they sideline her, or treat her as secondary to their mission? No, of course not; they honoured her in accordance with the Lord's own instruction to John, "Behold, your Mother." The Acts of the Apostles records that she joined in continuous prayer with those apostles as they awaited the promised Spirit from on high. She acted then, in 33AD, as the Mother of the Apostles, the Mother of the early Church, *the great nurturer of faith* — she was central to the Christian community as it sought to do the Lord's will on the brink of Pentecost. Every one of those Apostles would have known Mary as a Mother, in her maternal support for them: her mission different to their priestly one, yet higher, and feminine, and, yes, *indispensable*.

The Church ever since its birthday at Pentecost, therefore, has clung to Mary and implored her help as Mother of the Church, Mother of every Christian. We

should each do the same; she is the feminine complement for us to priestly hierarchy — each a fixed part of God’s plan and Christ’s Church. How happily we turn to her; how lovingly, and sometimes desperately, does an *Ave Maria* trip off our tongue, or a *Memorare*, or a *Salve Regina*, in whatever language? “*Pray for us, sinners, now and at the hour of our death*” ... “*To thee do we send up our sighs*” ... “*Remember that never was it known that anyone who ... sought thine intercession was left unaided.*” I know that for many of you, Marian prayer and the Rosary are part and parcel of your Catholic life. Maybe for others of you these have never been, or have dropped off. Be willing, indeed confident, to take up (again) these devotions alongside all your other forms of prayer. Do not be reluctant to take Mary as your heavenly Mother — she is a great weapon in our spiritual armoury; she wants to help us and pray for us; she is always on our side, pleading for the graces we need to be better Christians, better able to cope with the vagaries of human life. Ask her to accompany you in your daily Christian life; you will never

regret having her as your daily accompanier, nurturer, Mother in your spiritual life.

We hear in the Gospel today of Jesus’s great promise of the Holy Spirit: *The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.* Our Blessed Lady, who experienced first-hand that outpouring from the Father and the Son, can pray for each of us to be worthy recipients of the graces of the Spirit. She herself knows that the Holy Spirit is infallible and all-powerful, and that through His influence we can be courageous, filled with joy and faith, and achieve many great things in the name of the Lord. Jesus says: *Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give to you; a peace that the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not be troubled or afraid.* In this her blessed month of May let’s implore Mary — daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, Temple of the Holy Spirit — to pray for that Spirit and peace to come upon us, that like her and with her we may be known as Jesus’s disciples by our way of loving.