

Grace Notes in Miniature For

Monday June 1st, 2020

Dear friends:

Although the title, "Mother of the Church" was used to describe the Blessed Virgin Mary by St Ambrose of Milan in the 4th Century, it wasn't until the Second Vatican Council that it was officially given to her, by Pope Paul VI on November 21st 1964. In 2018, Pope Francis decreed that the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church be inserted into the Roman Calendar on the Monday after Pentecost, and so it is that we observe this Memorial today. It is fitting that Pope Francis' announcement was made on February 11th, 2018, the 160th anniversary of the apparition of Mary at Lourdes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x18UfKcNli4>

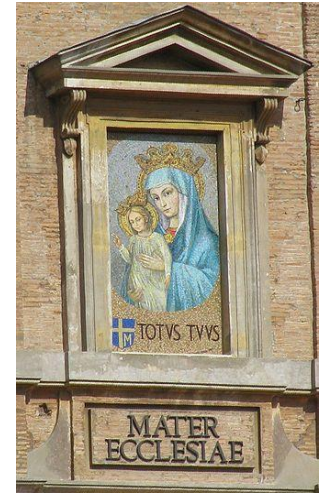
As Catholics we take devotion to Mary pretty much for granted; however, for many non-Catholic Christians our love for her is a mystery. In the 18th and 19th centuries, some Protestant groups began to accuse Catholics of giving Mary too much attention, bordering on idolatry; however, many of the formative Protestant theologians such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Wycliffe acknowledged her importance to varying degrees. Their major objection was that Mary was being afforded worship due only to God and Jesus and that her humility and piety were dishonoured by the way she was honoured, likening it to superstition.

Catholic teaching is very clear that we do not **worship** Mary, we honour her. There are three levels of reverence in our faith practice: **dulia** is the veneration shown to saints, and **hyperdulia** the heightened veneration shown to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Only the Persons of the Trinity are due the **Latria** or adoration which is the highest level of worship. St. Thomas Aquinas writes in *Summa Theologica*: "... dulia, which pays due service to a human lord, is a distinct virtue from latria, which pays due service to the Lordship of God".

Members of several Christian Traditions, Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran in particular, regularly pray or sing the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) – in our case at Vespers. This beautiful song is also known as the Canticle of Mary, her song of praise to God in response to Elizabeth's words to her – which we recognise as the first part of the Hail Mary.

I want to share this short presentation by John Michael Talbot which, although it was recorded in 2016, has a beautiful message for today. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmDwA6mdLlo>

Also, if you can find seven minutes to allow yourself some quiet time, you may enjoy this reflection, and a complete version of the piece. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkOoeyzLlac>



Another favourite “Mary” song is “I Sing a Maid”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63ucA640KKA>
Normally, yesterday (May 31st) would have been observed as the Feast of the Visitation; however, falling on a Sunday – and especially Pentecost which is one of the great Solemnities – it slipped by. Bishop Barron (WordonFire.org) in his homily yesterday spoke of Pentecost as one of the three great observances of the Church, along with Easter and Christmas. We inherit it from the Jewish festival of Shavuot – 50 days after the second day of Passover, originally marking the transition from the harvesting of barley to that of wheat, and still celebrating the remembrance of Moses receiving the Law at Mount Sinai. It is sometimes called the “birthday of the Church”, marking the 50th day after Easter when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles, who were cowering in fear behind locked doors. They were so inflamed by the power of the Spirit that we are told they went out to preach Jesus’ message even in languages they hadn’t previously spoken.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jw_MLNhXQ0E



**All of them were
filled with
the Holy Spirit!**
Acts 2.4

I’ve often spoken with Confirmandi who expressed disappointment that they didn’t immediately feel inflamed with the power of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation: we would talk about how it could be likened to receiving a gift which one has to unwrap and learn to play before appreciating what a wonderful gift it is. We need to be aware also that the seeds of those gifts were sown at our baptism and Confirmation “confirms” – or reaffirms – our intention to put these gifts of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (also translated as “awe and wonder”) to work in our lives.

It is important to remember that even though the Easter season ends with Pentecost, our reason for celebrating doesn’t; every Sunday of the Church Year is intended to be a reflection of Easter with the Mass and Eucharist as the source and summit of all we are and live as Catholic Christians. Each week we take stock of how we have used the gifts we have received from the Spirit in our lives and the treatment of those around us; we ask God’s pardon for those areas where we may have fallen short, and then we are fed to go out – to be sent out – and try again in the following week.

Today I close off with this piece sung by three more of our great liturgical musicians: Haas, Haugen and Joncas. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJnDDDofAyo>

Gillian