

7th Sunday of Easter: Cycle A: 2017; Acts 1: 12-14; Ps. 27; 1 Pet 4: 13-16; Jn 17: 1-11

“The importance of the intercessory role and motherly love of our Blessed Mother Mary who leads us into deeper union with the Trinity”

1. **In the first reading today we hear that the Apostles were all devoting themselves with one accord to prayer together with Mary the Mother of Jesus.** They were prayerfully waiting for the arrival of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, which is the beginning of the Catholic Church, the new Israel, the family of God. We see Mary’s role in prayer in being at the center of **the original novena**: the 9 days between the Ascension of the Lord Jesus into Heaven and the Descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday. To be a Christian is to be a prayerful person, for by prayer we go to the Father with the Son in the Spirit, in company with Mary and the saints. The Blessed Mother also wants to accompany us in our life of prayer, which is our inner life of communing in an ever deeper way with God: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Without prayer we die spiritually. As a saint once said, *without an inner life of devotion and prayer with God we never really come to see the beauty of the Catholic faith, nor accept it wholeheartedly.* We are called to grow, to mature in the life of prayer. **How much time each day do we give to real prayer** - to focus on growing in our relationship with God? Do we ask Mary to accompany us as the Apostles did? Remember: the Church holds Mary up as the model disciple and the spiritual mother of each individual member of the Church and on a larger scale of the human race, even if people don’t realize it. She is in Heaven waiting to help us. Do we ask for her help, for her intercession in our many needs? Jesus gave her this role on the Cross: “*Seeing his mother there with the disciple whom He loved, Jesus said to his Mother, ‘Woman, there is your son’.*” The Church has always understood the disciple, namely St. John the Evangelist, as representing all of us. To St. John, and to us, then, Jesus says on the Cross, “***There is your Mother.***” And it finally says in the Gospel, “*From that hour onward, the disciple took her into his care - to his heart (another translation).*” This is what we are called to embrace: to have **a filial love** for the Blessed Virgin Mary - to allow her to draw us close to her heart, and to invite her to play a special role in leading us to Christ

and helping us to become better disciples of his on a daily basis and to open our hearts and minds to the Holy Spirit. That is her job now in eternity. Do we invite her to help us?

- 2. In addition to showing us how to pray more deeply, Mary also shows us how to suffer the trials of this earthly life in love, as she did, always standing by Christ's side, even to the Cross - look at the powerful artistic representation of that in our Church behind the Altar.** As St. Peter puts it so powerfully today in the 2nd reading, *"Beloved: Rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when His glory is revealed, you may also rejoice exultantly."* Mary helps us to pick up our Crosses (= sufferings united with Christ) daily and follow Christ her Son ever more faithfully. To quote a beautiful little booklet **30 favorite Novenas** *"According to St. Paul, by the reverence of His prayers and His sufferings, Christ brought salvation to the world (see the Letter to the Hebrews). As His followers this is our vocation too: to pray to God and live our lives in conformity with our prayers, enduring suffering and the Cross that comes from being a faithful disciple, so that we may draw down His blessings upon ourselves and the whole world."* (TAN books, 1975, p.4) Mary assists us in this journey of the Cross, which if borne faithfully will lead to the glory of the Resurrection.
- 3. Finally Jesus tells us in the Gospel today:** *"Now this is eternal life, to know You, the only true God, and the one whom You sent, Jesus Christ."* **No one ever knew Christ, outside of our Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit, better than the Blessed Virgin Mary.** In light of that sublime reality, she will help us to get to know Him better- if we turn to her in love. This is why it is so essential to pray her Rosary on a daily basis, as so many of the saints recommend, if we want to make great progress in holiness, preferably with our families - to help them grow in holiness as well, especially our children and grandchildren. The Rosary is marvelous tool to enable us to meditate on the central mysteries of Christ's life in company with Mary, from the moment He was conceived in her womb until He ascended back to Heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to begin the mission of the Church to draw all souls to salvation in Him. Please make a **resolution** if you

don't do so already to start praying a set of the mysteries of the Rosary each day. It will change you life beyond imaging – if you do it in a spirit of faith and love, and persevere, despite distractions and even at times boredom. People sometimes complain about the repetition of the prayers in the Rosary: the repetition is meant to lead us to deeper meditation upon the life of Christ - the vocal prayers are supposed to be like beautiful, reverent background music to our interior mediation - they are not to be the focus. If you have a hard time praying the Rosary, please ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the beauty of it, and read up on it. There are some good books in our Parish Lending Library in the basements and materials on the Internet to help us understand and pray the Rosary more deeply. It is worth the effort - despite any difficulties. Next to the Mass according to the saints, it is the most powerful prayer in the Church's spiritual treasury. Never forget that truth. Also remember as I've said before: that prayer is primarily in the will, not the feelings or imagination: so don't give up because of distractions. Let's lovingly ask our Blessed Mother today, as we continue the novena leading up to Pentecost, to help us pray more, to stay focused in our prayers, and to beseech the Holy Spirit, her Divine Spouse for that gift of **recollection** - the very word means to collect our thoughts and focus on the Lord. May Mary by her loving intercession lead us into ever deeper union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, just as she accompanied the Apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem as they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit some two thousand years ago. God bless you.