

HOMILY – 5th Sunday of Easter A – May 14th 2017 ~ Mothers Day

I'd like to begin this Mother's Day homily with one of my favorite topics over the last 11 months; namely, our beloved Father Zachary Callahan.

Last weekend I was on a pilgrimage with over 400 folks in Lourdes, where our Blessed Mother, Mary, appeared to Saint Bernadette in 1858. And just before leaving, Father Zachary told me a little story about his one and only visit to Lourdes. You know of his great devotion to Mary. So, when he arrived at the Shrine, he was eager to see and gaze upon the beautiful, famous, and gigantic mosaic of Mary in the Rosary Basilica above the tabernacle. However, as he walked in through the front door, what did he see first on the altar – surrounded by candles and with the smell of incense? His first image wasn't of Mary – but of the monstrance with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament exposed for Eucharistic Adoration.

And what did Father Zach say to himself: “Oh, gee wiz, I came to see your mother”. (as if to say – “your mother – not you”.) And when he told me that story, he said he shocked himself by that thought. After all, Jesus is Lord and Savior – not Mary. But you know, I don't think Her Son - would be displeased at that beautiful devotion to His Mom because Mary is often the one who brings us closer to her Son. And when I heard that little story, I knew how I was going to begin this Mother's Day Homily.

Because, just as Mary brings us to Jesus, so our mothers bring us to God. And just maybe more people than usual are here in church today because of our mothers and/or grandmothers! Perhaps you're here to be with your mom; or, because you want to feel your mother's presence in a special way in her Son's house.

That's the one and only present that my mother still always wants on Mother's Day from her 10 kids and 25 grandchildren – to come to Mass and thank God for all our blessings (not flowers, candy or anything else) !

One of my mother's favorite lines about family and motherhood is: “There are no ways to be a perfect mother, and a million ways to be a good one”. Mothers hold their children's hands for a short while, but their hearts forever. Our mothers introduce us to God and to church, and bring us to Jesus, “the way, the truth and the life”.

This is my favorite “Mother's Day” Cards of all time. → CARD [Mother Superior & Superior Mother]

Actually, the “most Superior Mother of all, “ is Mary, our Blessed Mother. But every mother's job, is to fill us with one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – the fear, respect, the love and the need – for God. And because of that, hopefully each of us can say in our own rights – “I have, or I had the “most superior” mother of all because she showed me “the way to God the Father” as we hear in the Gospel today. This is a perfect gospel passage for Mother's Day. Jesus is like a mother who reminds us that there are “many dwelling places” of God's presence here on earth and in the Kingdom of Heaven. Mothers tell us all the time – “Don't let your hearts be troubled,” have faith (find faith; live faith) in God and in doing so, you'll find (you'll discover) that God is right now and always “preparing a place” for us not just in the next life, but right now – in this life. In other words – there's a plan. A plan that, yes, interacts with human freedom, but nevertheless, a plan to get us (to bring us, and to lead us) to the right “dwelling place” if and when we cooperate with God's grace and God's constant invitations.

Like St. Thomas, we can often say “how can we know the way”? And Jesus says “No one comes to the Father, except through me”. That's true. We can't get to God – without Jesus. We can't get to heaven – except through Him. However, just as the Father gave the Son his mother, Mary, so, → God sends us mothers and fathers, friends and intermediaries, who enable us – to see Jesus; who help calm our troubled hearts; and who empower us to find our place in His plan.

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Jesus says to Philip in this Gospel: “the words I speak to you, I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing His works. And whoever believes in me will do the works that I do – and will even do greater ones – because I am going to the Father”. How can we possibly do greater works than Jesus? Because we build on Him as our foundation of faith and He gives us His Mother and our mothers to speak His words (his message to us).

When was the last time you offered a word of advice (or consolation or challenge) to someone and wondered where in the world did that thought (that idea, that inspiration) come from? It comes from the Holy Spirit enabling us to do “greater works” today through Jesus’ ongoing interventions and intermediaries. That’s why he doesn’t mind when Father Zach or you or I say – “Gee, I came to see your mother”. She has HIS words – and HIS heart, just as our mothers can have God’s words for us throughout our lives – and even from heaven.

Just yesterday in Fatima, Pope Francis reminded a million people present (for the 100th Anniversary) and all of us about Mary’s role. The Holy Father offered a thought-provoking catechesis on the role of the Virgin. He said: that God isn’t a ruthless judge – who can be restrained by the hand of Mary. He asked the crowd which Mary they invoke in their prayers: A spiritual-life teacher, or, a kind of hero who offers low-cost favors at a low price - a fascinating question indeed. *“What Mary? A teacher of the spiritual life or a ‘plaster statue’ from whom we beg favors at little cost?”* Pope Francis has a wonderful way of concretizing our faith and making practical applications to our lives, just as most mothers do.

Two weeks ago, he criticized the naming of a missile – “the mother of all bombs” because the name (the word) “mother” is laced with giving life – not destroying life.

So today we are here to celebrate our faith passed down to us from our mothers (and father’s). Jesus points us to the Father. Mary points us to her Son. Our mothers point us to Mary and the church with Jesus leading us to the Kingdom of Heaven. And we cooperate with God’s grace – leading us each day towards the dwelling place that’s continually being prepared for us by doing the works of God.

Growing up in the 1960’s, my mother was often fond of quoting (or actually para-phrasing) John F. Kennedy. One of her favorite lines was (and still is): “Ask not what your mother can do for you. Ask what you can do for your mother”.

Today we ask what we can do for our mothers and by extension for Mary, the Mother of God. We come to celebrate our mothers and to be with Mary who draws us to her Son, Jesus, the way, the truth and the life.