

+ WHITSUNDAY

Pentecost Sunday, June 5th, 2022

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson, Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

All these were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
My very Dear Sons,

It has not escaped the notice of Christians down through the ages that after the Ascension, when the Apostles returned to the Upper Room in Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Ghost, the holy women that had followed the Lord during His public ministry were also present, and among them the Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

Saint Peter is the uncontested leader of the Apostles and followers of Christ, and yet, in many icons and other artistic representations of the scene of the Pentecost, it is the figure of Mary that holds the center position. Thus, she appears as the Queen of this sacred assembly. In some deep sense she is the key figure of the scene. What does this say to us?

First of all, if there is a unique relationship that binds the Mother of God to the Son of God Incarnate, there is likewise a very special link between the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Spirit. Theological reflection and the liturgy have noted how the sanctifying action of the Spirit in the Virgin Mary represents a culminating moment of the Spirit's action in the history of salvation and of the world. Thus, the Fathers of the Church have often attributed to the work of the Spirit the original holiness of Mary, who was, as it were, "fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a kind of new substance and new creature".¹ They further saw in the mysterious relationship between the Spirit and Mary an aspect that reminded them of the bond of marriage, and they called her the "Temple of the Holy Spirit," emphasizing the sacred character of the Virgin, now become the permanent dwelling of the Spirit of God. Delving ever more deeply into this doctrine concerning the Spirit of consolation, they saw that from Him as from a spring there flowed forth the fullness of grace (cf. Lk. 1:28) and the abundance of gifts that adorned the Mother of God.

Finally, they had recourse to the Virgin's intercession in order to obtain from the Holy Ghost the capacity for engendering Christ in their own soul, as is attested to by St. Ildephonsus in a prayer of supplication, amazing for its doctrinal boldness: "I beg you, holy Virgin, that I may have Jesus from the Holy Spirit, by whom you brought Jesus forth. May my soul receive Jesus through the Holy Spirit by whom your flesh conceived Jesus . . . May I love Jesus in the Holy Spirit in whom you adore Jesus as Lord and gaze upon Him as your Son."

Closer to us in time, Saint Maximilian Kolbe, in order to convey the sense of this deep union between Mary and the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, refers to Mary as

¹ Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, n. 56.

the "spouse" of the Holy Spirit, while pointing out that this unique union of Our Lady with the Holy Ghost is of a much more perfect nature than earthly marriage.

Among creatures made in God's image, the union brought about by married love is the most intimate of all. In a much more precise, more interior, more essential manner, the Holy Spirit lives in the soul of the Immaculata, in the depths of her very being. (*Final Sketch*)

Following this unique relationship between Mary and the Holy Ghost, there is a weighty reason why Our Lady presides in this way among the Apostles and Disciples in the Upper Room at the moment of the descent of the Holy Spirit. It is her holiness. Just as there is in the Church a priestly hierarchy of sanctifiers, beginning with the Pope and descending down the ranks through the Cardinals, Bishops, Priests and Deacons, likewise there exists a kind of hierarchy of sanctity at the summit of which, below God Himself in Three Persons, is found the Blessed Virgin Mary. Being by the gift of God Immaculate, full of grace and the Mother of God, Mary is the most holy of creatures—men or angels. She surely does not contend with Saint Peter in any way, being totally submissive to his directives for the Church Militant, but she stands above him in the order of those who have been sanctified.

Can we say more? We know that the gifts of grace are attributed to the Third Person. It is the Holy Spirit we call upon in a special way when the grace of God is wanted and conferred. Now it is from Our Lord, the Word Incarnate that grace emanates as from the Head of the Mystical Body. Christ, as Word Incarnate, is truly the source of grace, the well-spring of living spiritual waters. Our Lady is in no way the source of grace. But she is the first "pool", we might say, the first immaculate basin into which the waters of grace flow by the action of the Holy Spirit, from Christ the Head of the Church.

According to a very serious doctrine that has yet to be defined but which is generally held in the Church, Mary is Mediatrix of all grace. In other words, God, who is free to distribute grace as He chooses, freely chooses to make grace pass by Mary's mediation. She is like this pool of living water that receives from the source in order to distribute it to the entire world. Or again, as St. Bernard like to put it, she is the aqueduct through which the saving and regenerating waters flow. So, here again, there is an essential link between the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, who sends the grace of God to Angels and men, and Mary, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and Mediatrix of grace.

The lesson for us is clear enough. As the world is in desperate need of the grace of God, especially where the very Name of God is blasphemed—or simply forgotten—there is no more powerful way to call down upon the world the saving effects of grace than by praying to the Holy Spirit through the intercession of Our Lady. Thus, by her incomparable mediation, as through the immaculate reserve of spiritual waters flowing through the aqueduct of grace, we may yet live and learn better to love. It is paradoxical but true, the Holy Spirit is fire and yet He gives the living waters, because he is Love, which is both ardent burning and the refreshing source of life. Amen. Alleluia.