



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

Mary, Mother of God (1st January)

The Motherhood of Mary

Readings: Numbers 6: 22-27, Ps 66, Galatians 4: 4-7, Luke 2: 16-21

My text for this great feast of Mary, Mother of God, comes, not from Holy Scripture – as Catholics we might be suffering from a surfeit of the Good Book over Advent and Christmas – but from that new treasury of wisdom, The Ladybird Books for Grown-ups series. I can see that some of you will be eagerly anticipating a quote from the Ladybird Book of Mindfulness and I am sorry to disappoint you. (I have given copies of that particular volume to several clergy friends to help them add that element of the utterly bogus to their preaching which is so popular in modern spirituality.)

Today's text comes, appropriately, from the opening page of the Ladybird Book of the Mum. It reads: 'Mums only have two jobs. One is to look after the children. The other is to do everything else.'

Fifty years after the resurgent Marxist materialist doctrine of Feminism I doubt whether much has changed to alter this simple biological summary that most of us would recognise. Motherhood is an all-consuming fundamental and you can't buck biology.

So today we celebrate the Motherhood of Mary. It is not just any motherhood. This is the human motherhood, in its immaculacy, into which the Lord of Lords, the God of gods, the King of kings, entrusted Himself absolutely in the incarnation of His Son, Jesus the Christ.

It is the motherhood that embraces not just the little and the local but the supra-cosmic and the eternal. It is the motherhood that becomes the ikon of the Church's ministry to her children and it is the motherhood that is offered to all God's disciple children at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. That motherhood is a gift to Mary – a gift of vocation. But it is, through her, a gift to the world. Mary is the Word bearer, the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred vessel of the supreme revelation of God. Mary is the tabernacle of the Divine Presence, the revered Holy of Holies where the All Holy has chosen to be known. Mary is the one who holds salvation in her arms and presents Him to the world and for our response.

We, as Christians, turn often to Mary, not because we are sentimentalists but because we are realists. We know that no-one has been more intimately involved with God in the whole history of the human race. Mary has both re-ordered and superseded Eve in her relationship with the Creator. She has known Jesus longer and more profoundly than any other human being. She has loved Him more deeply, cared for Him more profoundly, nurtured His humanity most exquisitely and pondered His mystery most closely in the echoing chambers of her heart.

Mary understands us. Mary knows God's highest hope for Man. If we are to gratefully accept this precious gift we will become little brothers and sisters of Jesus, sons and daughters of the Father and loving children of Our Lady.

In Mary the Motherhood of God and the Motherhood of Man coalesce and co-inhere. In Mary the mystery of the Church is revealed. Obedient to her call. Open to the Holy Spirit. Risking all for her faithfulness. Conceiving the Eternal in time. Welcoming the divine into her humanity. Presenting the Christ to the world. Pondering His Being. Standing by the Sacrifice. Resonating the wounded heart of God. Taking on the family of Faith. Encouraging us always and everywhere to 'Do whatever He tells you.'

Wherever the Church truly is, there Mary is honoured because she shares her vocation with us to nurture, defend, present and love the Body of Christ.

Devotion to Mary is a hallmark of the true Church. There are many good people who love Jesus but do not understand this mystery. It is why they inevitably belong to the constantly splintering shards of the broken family of Protestantism and why, incidentally, they get so confused about the feminine.

If we truly want to honour Mary we will love her Son, Jesus. If we truly love Mary we will want to reunite the Christian family in one Church in obedience to her Son's prayer. If we truly want to be the Church then we will follow her example and not rest until every one of her children has come home. Her prayer will be ours and we will share with her forever a heart of love for Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.