

**The Roman Catholic Diocesan of Aberdeen
St Mary's, Inverness**



Letter for May: The Marian Month

Dear friends,

In his 1965 encyclical, *Mense Maio*, Pope Paul VI wrote about the importance of Mary's intercession for the whole world, explaining that those who encounter her, encounter her Son, Jesus. The Catholic Church, following the Tradition of Devotion, dedicated the month of May in honour of Mary at the time of the Second Vatican Council. Much work had yet to be done to bring the Council to a conclusion, not always easily.

In our own times Catholics, united in prayer with Mary, ask that the reforming agenda of that great Council should be carried forward. The Church is in constant need of reform. That is its nature, an evolving human corporation imbued with Divine grace. The Holy Spirit, which brought about the Birth of the Saviour, through the gracious acceptance of Mary, is poured into the Church to lead us into Truth. So, in such a dynamic movement of grace we continue, as Catholics, to pray for each other and for all ministries and vocations within the Church. We ask that in our shared and 'Royal Priesthood', begun in Baptism, assisted with the prayers of Mary, each of us may be an agent of reform. In that we begin with ourselves. As Mary co-operated with Divine initiatives and was suffused with grace, so we too ask the Spirit to enliven us with the Life of Jesus. This Good News formed in us is drawn from the Life, Teaching and Achievements of Jesus through the Scriptures and the Teaching [Magisterium] of the Church. With all our brothers and sisters it is our common imperative to rejoice with the joyful, and to weep with the sorrowful, to raise up the fallen, and to seek that Peace which flows from authentic Justice, the foundation of the Common Good. This gives us a glimpse of the Kingdom of God for which we pray daily, that the Divine Will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

There was another reason for the Encyclical, *Mens Maio* : the grave perplexities of the world at that time, with real threats to world peace, and the prospects of nuclear war. In his Encyclical Pope Paul VI wrote :

"Our sole desire is to protect those afflicted with misfortune and to promote the true welfare of all peoples.....throughout this month of May, let us offer our pleas to the Mother of God with greater devotion and confidence....do not fail to put repeated emphasis on the recitation of the Rosary."

In our contemporary circumstances there are continuing threats to world peace with unstable regimes possessing powerful weapons of destruction, unstable governments with belligerent leaders sowing discord and mistrust, fundamentalist religious bigotry breeding violence and terrorism, and now a culture of blame as

we face in the Coronavirus a pandemic of global proportions. The sickness, and the malaise of human sinfulness is as destructive as ever. Our May Devotion is as pertinent to our times as Pope Paul's 'Call for Special Prayers' was in his.

Bishop Hugh has written asking that we might study a special Letter from the Holy Father, Pope Francis. The Pope reminds us of the need for prayer in our present afflictions, and to express our devotion to Our Lady in this Month of May. So he invites us to pray the Rosary. Please read this below:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200425_lettera-mesedimaggio.html

I am sometimes asked why Catholics think, talk and sing so much about Mary. Perhaps we might all think about that? The following considerations may be helpful for study, reflection and imaginative prayer particularly as we place ourselves within the Scriptural contexts. Our memories and our imaginations may interplay with Scripture and our hopeful desires to bring us daily nearer to Jesus.

1. Mary is the Mother of Jesus : At the Annunciation when Mary said. '*Let it be*', she made it possible for the Divine Word to become one with us. All the creative, goodness of God became incarnate, becoming human in the person of Jesus, born of Mary : The Mystery of the Incarnation. [Read St Luke Chapter 1, verses 26-38 & St John Chapter 1, verses 1-14]

2. Mary is the First Disciple: Mary was the first to hear the Good News, and the first to follow Christ. Her entire life was devoted to her Son, assisting him with his Mission. As one who was Immaculate in her being, she was able to open herself perfectly to God's will, in initial obedience, but also in her continuing learning, her pondering of insights into the ways of God. She heard the Word of God and she expressed her understanding of this in her attentive life. [Read St Luke Chapter 1, verses 46-56 & St Luke Chapter 11, verses 27-28]

3. Mary is the Mother of God: She is the Mother of Jesus Christ : She is Mother of all Christians. By virtue of our baptism, each of us going through the breaking waters of the font are born into the Church. We become members of the Body of Christ. So we share Our Common Life in the Body of Christ in the Church, which carries through the centuries the Mysteries of the Incarnation and the Resurrection. The Mother of Jesus Christ graces each of us. As she is our Mother in the order of grace so we share in the Divine Life of her Son. {Read St Luke Chapter 2, verses 1-21]

4. Mary understands our Sorrows and our Wounds:

Mary was misunderstood, and even close to rejection. Beginning with the

difficulties of pregnancy and childbirth, then the cruel persecutions that drove Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus to become refugees in Egypt they eventually returned to home life in Nazareth. There Mary had time for reflections on family life, and the growing separation of Jesus as his understanding of his Divine purpose became clear to Him. What mother does not experience similar sorrows, griefs and uncertainties? During the Mission of Jesus, she was not always understood, yet remained faithful. When her Son was still a young man she endured the horror of seeing him tortured, scourged, humiliated, and walking the Way of Sorrows carrying the Cross to Calvary. A witness to the dereliction and the abandonment of the Passion and the Crucifixion, she received her dead Son in her arms, grieving and searing her soul. She who walked with her Son and travelled the Way was given by Him to the Church, and as we honour and love her so she gives herself to us. [Read St Luke Chapter 2, verses 33-40, and also verses 41-52 & St John Chapter 19, verses 25-30]

5. Mary is our Advocate, and Helper, the Mother of all Grace: When the young Mary assented to the Divine initiative in Gabriel's message she conceived Jesus in her womb. So she still co-operates in the unfolding history of our Salvation. Mary brought people to Jesus, she continues in this, and she invites us all to do what He tells us. In this relationship of familiarity we continue through the prayerful tradition of the Church to seek the assistance of Mary in all the difficulties of life, and praying that she will be for us, a praying presence, interceding even at the end of our lives. As the first and most perfect disciple in the sphere of grace she is with us on our journey. When we honour her and pray with her we become especially aware of Motherhood, and in that relationship of prayerful devotion, something is perceived : that her Son, Jesus, is indeed our Brother and our Friend. [Read St John Chapter 2, verses 1-11]

O Virgin most tender, Our Homage we render,

Thy love and protection, Sweet Mother, to win

In danger defend us, in sorrow befriend us,

And shield our hearts from contagion and sin

“Jesus, Mercy : Mary, Pray”

Fr James