

Easter A 6 May 10, 2026 Mothers' Day and Sunday before Ascension Greenwich

The Church calendar says that this is the Sixth Sunday of Easter season, and the Sunday before Ascension Thursday. But we all know, really, it's Mothers' Day.

Some are here with your moms; others will call or visit mom later today; for lots of us, mom has gone home to God. The day calls to mind for each of us so many memories of our individual moms; and perhaps memories of those other generous women who became maternal figures to us, who made up for us what our biological moms were unable to give us.

But we are not here just as a cross-section of society. We are here as Church. And for us disciples of Jesus, brothers and sisters of the Lord, one woman is mother to us all, Mary.

Briefly, in pondering the Easter season, Mother's Day, and Mary, I offer three images of her: Mary and Jesus, Mary and Easter, Mary and us.

In the earliest years of the Church, disciples proclaimed an "elevator speech,": Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

And they expanded that in the passion narrative, the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry, his Crucifixion and Resurrection.

And then some disciples compiled collections of things Jesus said, like his parables or his disputes with the religious authorities, or the Sermon on the Mount.

Others remembered his miracles and his healings, like feeding the five thousand or walking on the waves. These grew into the first gospel, Mark.

But at some point, those drawn to the Church began to ask, “Where did Jesus come from? How did the story begin?”

So, Matthew and Luke wrote down the infancy narratives, the miraculous story of a young woman, a virgin, found with child by the Holy Spirit.

And ever since then, disciples have pondered that mystery: How did she hear those angelic words, “You shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call him Jesus”? And when she said, “Yes,” where did that courage, that faith come from?

I doubt she received many additional words of assurance through those years she mothered Jesus. When at aged twelve he disappeared for several days, no angel showed up to say, “Chillax, Mary, the kid is at the Temple.” No, she was frantic. She chastised Jesus, “Son why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been terribly worried and have been searching for you.” Scripture says that Jesus then went back to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. It doesn’t record that they grounded him for the next decade! But there was Mary, in the tradition of good Jewish mothers, telling the growing Son of God how to grow up! (Burkhart, *To Christ I Look*, p 56)

And that would not be the last time Mary fretted over her son.

After he had begun his public ministry, then came back to Nazareth, her neighbors rejected him and wanted to throw him over the cliff.

Later, her relatives, his relatives, thought he was crazy, possessed, and wanted to kidnap him and take him home.

And, as far as we know, the angel Gabriel didn't make a return visit during Holy Week to assure her that everything was going to turn out ok; he'll have a difficult Friday, but by Sunday he'll be alive again.

No, Mary had to live her love of Jesus on faith, fidelity, trust that God the Father would see Jesus, and her, through it all to the end. And that's how we must live that love too.

Yet because of her faith and her love, I rather suspect that before Easter, on that Sabbath Saturday, as the other disciples were crushed by sadness and fear, something stirred in Mary's heart, and she remembered "the great things the Lord had done for" her, and her soul again magnified the Lord, even in her unimaginable loss. And she undertook a ministry she's exercised ever since, that of comforting and strengthening the wounded and worried disciples of her Son.

That brings us to Mary and Easter.

St. Ignatius of Loyola says that it may be piously believed that the first person to whom the Risen Jesus appeared was his mother. The first, but not the last.

And that underscores the meaning of the paschal mystery. Easter is not a one-man show.

Jesus did not burst forth from the tomb simply to vindicate his claims to be Messiah and Son of the Father. No, Jesus died for us and he rose for us, so that he might give life to us, the divine life of the Trinity.

And that life has begun to be enfleshed in us, in you and me, as Christ more and more fashions us into God's beloved children, through baptism and confirmation and Eucharist.

Our flesh itself, that is, our personhood, our unique selves, start to bear the very life of the Eternal One, just as Mary's definitively did. The very Word of God begins to dwell in us, as it did in Mary.

This is what we call redemption; this is the salvation Christ's dying and rising has won for us. And the most remarkable example of God's Easter gift, of the human person redeemed, bearing God's own life, is Mary. In her we see to perfection what God's grace, God's self-gift, can bring about in us.

At the moment of her own conception, Mary was kept free from sin—that's the Immaculate Conception—so that she could be free to say yes to God's invitation to bear His Son. And she never said no to God, even though it would involve her own Way of the Cross.

And now Mary lives forever in that presence the way God has destined each of us one day to live, whole and entire, in soul and body, in spirit and flesh, magnifying God.

The gift she received in her Immaculate Conception is the same gift bestowed on each of us by baptism!

So, Mary is Easter in its fullness. Mary is, to perfection, what the Son of God was born to do, lived to do, died to do, rose to do. (Burghardt *ibid* p 57.) That gift of divine life, poured out upon us in baptism and confirmation and especially in each reception of Christ's own Body and Blood in the Eucharist, empowers us to make our own act of faith and fidelity, say our own Yes, again and again, to the Father's invitation.

And that brings me to a final point: Mary and us, you and me.

The Monday after Pentecost is the feast of Mary, the Mother of the Church. That feast means to remind us that our salvation is a communal reality. Our baptism has built us into a community of persons, a communion of saints, in heaven and on earth, linked in love to one another and so to Mary.

When Jesus on the Cross said to Mary, "Behold your son," and to John, "Behold your mother," he was not speaking just to the apostle, but to all who, by believing in Jesus, are reborn in His image. Mary is mother not only of Jesus but of his brothers and sisters as well.

She cares for each of us personally;

she consoles those other mothers who have had to grieve the death of a beloved child;

she tends to those children who far too soon were claimed by a tomb;

she prays for all of us sinners, “now and at the hour of our death.”

In addition to our liturgical feasts, like the Solemnity of Mary on January 1st, the Annunciation on March 25th, her Assumption on August 15th, the Church promotes many devotions and practices meant to foster our appreciation for our Mother Mary:

praying the rosary,

wearing a scapular or a miraculous medal,

keeping the five first Saturdays,

daily reciting the Angelus;

the custom of a May crowning of the statue of Mary which Fr. Richard will lead after the 9:45 mass today.

On the first weekend in October, the whole diocese will be invited to recite a prayer of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

My friend, the late Jesuit theologian Walter Burkhardt, said that one reason Catholics should come to know, appreciate and love Mary was that “no one can lead you more surely to her Son.”

She is forever telling each of us what she said to the waiters at the Feast of Cana: do whatever He tells you.

Let me give Fr. Burkhardt the final word: “Someday—tomorrow perhaps, or 50 years from now, or after a few impatient years in purgatory—you’re going to *meet* your mother. Honest to God! I promise you. It would be so nice if you recognized her. Even nicer if you loved her.” (ibid p 59)

Thanks for listening. Stay wonderful.