

"Spiritual Motherhood"

Nathan Cole

*“My mother and my brethren are these,
who hear the Word of God, and do it”*

(Luke 8:21; Matt. 12:49; Mark 3:33-35).

May is the month for Mother's day. While I am generally skeptical of "Hallmark holidays" or non-religious holidays, there is a strong religious argument in favour of celebrating parents and mother's in particular. The Lord's love is a heaven from the human race, and so bearing children and raising them for heaven, is the most important use that anyone can do (CL 183, 387). Of course both father and mother participate in these uses, but the love of children and conjugal love are received primarily by women and secondarily by husbands from their wives (CL 225, 393).

The love of mother's for her children is a beautiful picture of nurturing, feeding, and self sacrifice. On the other hand even natural parents still can love and protect their children, but they do so for selfish reasons and do not raise them to become angels (CL 405). Just technically being a mother does not make somebody worthy of celebration, but truly caring for the spiritual and eternal welfare of children truly is the most noble and important work.

Jesus was touching on this point when he talked about His mother being those who follow the Word of God. He is there addressing the idea of a spiritual mother. This can be the individual mother who is also spiritual but it is also teaching us about our collective spiritual mother which is the Church.

The signification of "mother," as being the church ... and because the spiritual church ...is a church by virtue of the affection of truth, this affection is here signified by "mother." (AC 2717).

The Church should consist of people who have affection for the truth of the Word. The church is not a mother simply from the affection for truth, but by feeding and nurturing people with good and truth. When we think about the warmth and comfort associated with mothers we know, it might be hard to feel that the church is fulfilling that kind of a role spiritually. In part this may be because we are not very aware of what is going on spiritually, but it might also be that the church is not doing all that it could in providing a home for people.

We tend to focus on the church as the external organization and also the obvious church functions like Sunday worship and other instruction by the priesthood. These do make up important parts of the church, especially in relation to the sharing of the truth of the Word, which is the sharing of spiritual drink. There are still the other important functions of providing spiritual food and care. Those functions are not specific to the priesthood. The life of charity is what makes the church a church and a home. That doesn't mean the church has to focus more on visible or publicly noticeable charity, but living according the Commandments. As important as the truth is to the church, it does not make a home unless people are actually living the truth. There may be more things we can proactively do to promote the life of the church, but the first part of charity is to make sure that we do not break the commandments. In the same way a natural home might have many wonderful attributes that contribute to its happiness, but the foundation needs to be love, and safety from harm.

AR 32.2. *By the cross of Jesus stood His mother... (And) Jesus...seeing His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing by, (also) said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" And He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" (Therefore) from that hour the disciple took her into his own [home]. (John 19:25-27)*

The meaning here is that the Lord did not acknowledge Mary, but the church as His mother. That is why He calls her "woman" and names her the mother of the disciple. He named her the mother of this disciple, John, because John represented the church in respect to its good acts of charity. These good acts are the church in actual practice. Therefore it is said that the disciple took Mary into his own [home].