

Rev. Derek Fairman

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time B (Lord's helper, intercession)

In the Gospel, we hear about the time that the Mother of God came with the Lord's relatives. They thought that the Lord Jesus was out of His mind. They apparently came to Him, to intercede with Him. They found a certain faith in her intercession, even though they were probably trying to convince Him to not continue His present course.

In the first reading, we hear about Adam and Eve's sin, and how the serpent was cursed for tricking Eve into eating the fruit that God had told them not to eat. Another way that the Virgin Mary is the New Eve has to do with her helping the Lord Jesus. Whenever the Lord created Adam, Adam needed a helper. Adam could not fulfill his task alone, and so the Lord created Eve. The New Adam, the Lord Jesus, who began a New Creation, had help in this task from His own Mother. His Mother is the one who dedicated herself to being the Lord's handmaid, and thanks to her obedience, the Lord Jesus came down from Heaven.

The Virgin Mary's cooperation in God's plan extended far beyond her agreement to be the Mother of God at the Annunciation, as great as that was. Motherhood encompasses all the physical and spiritual development of the child. For the Virgin Mary, she was obedient to the Father's plan in all that she did for her Son during His Infancy and all the time that she spent at home. Mother and Son were both involved in the preparation for the Public Ministry. For the Virgin Mary, her motherhood was intertwined with her faith, since her Son was also her God. She was her Son's Mother, but also His handmaid.

In terms of the Lord's Public Ministry, she modeled what it means to be a disciple for the others. The Lord Jesus called others to have faith, and she was a model of faith. The Lord Jesus called His Apostles to live an angelic life while they were with Him, and while they went forth to preach, heal, and exorcise demons. The Virgin Mary is the Virgin of Virgins, and she modeled what it means to give up everything for the Kingdom.

There was a special way in which her intercession was important. At the Wedding Feast at Cana, she asked her Son to intervene whenever the bride and groom ran out of wine, and the Lord Jesus changed water into wine. She also appeared with the Lord's relatives, as we heard in the Gospel reading. This is whenever the Lord taught that it is not a physical family bond that matters, but putting faith in Him. The Virgin Mary was not excluded from those who do the will of God. She was first among those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus.

Her assistance then found itself at the foot of the Cross. There, as the Lord Jesus was offering His Sacrifice to the Father, she was there with Him. The Virgin Mary suffered with the Lord Jesus, in her heart. She did not die that day, but she endured suffering with Him. Whatever she suffered could not take away sin, but that does not mean that her suffering was pointless. She did not suffer for her own sins, but she could offer her sufferings for us. Her heart was a kind of altar on which she united her sufferings with her Son's Death.

After the Resurrection, she had a role to play in the early Church. The Apostles had received all their instructions from the Lord Jesus. The Church began to grow and take shape by the working of the Holy Spirit. Yet the Virgin Mary was there at the beginning, in the days leading up to Pentecost. Whenever the Apostles came back from Galilee, where they watched the Lord Jesus ascend into Heaven, they came "home," back to Jerusalem and back to the Upper Room, where the Virgin was there in prayer.

She prayed for the Church, she modeled what the Lord Jesus had taught, she reminded everyone of the Lord Jesus, since she bore a resemblance to Him. She cooperated with the Holy Spirit in the early Church, to ensure that her Son's work would continue. Even after He had ascended into Heaven, she was still the Lord's handmaid, and her Son's faithful servant.

Now that she has been taken into Heaven, body and soul, she is still interceding for the needs of the Church, and for each of us. As she had interceded so many times for the disciples, so she does for us. St. Irenaeus called the Virgin Mary the advocate of Eve, meaning that as Eve disobeyed the Lord's command, so the Virgin Mary obeyed the Lord command and thus reversed Eve's disobedience. Mary is the New Eve who fulfills the role which Eve could not.

The Virgin Mary brings us to her Son. Eve gave Adam the fruit to eat that the Lord forbade them to eat, thus bringing Adam into her sin. The Virgin Mary in contrast brings us closer to her Son, closer to God, rather than away from Him. She leads us away from sin rather than towards it. The Virgin's help comes to us to fight temptation rather than give in to temptation. She is not only an advocate for Eve, but for all of us.

As we approach the altar, we thank the Lord for all that He does for us. We ask Him to continue to show us the way to Him. We ask Him to continue to provide us with guidance from the Mother of His Son. The Virgin Mary helped the Lord's relatives that day, and eventually at least some of them believed in the Lord Jesus. The Virgin Mary was and is a helpmate to the Lord Jesus, and she helps us in our own faith journeys.

