



Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church



Date: Monday, June 9, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Acts 1:12-14 (Proper)

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 87:1-2, 3 & 5, 5-7 (Proper) | **Response:** Psalm 87:3a

Gospel Acclamation: Happy are you, holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise for from you arose the sun of justice, Christ our God.

Gospel Reading: John 19:25-34 (Proper)

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
There she stands.

Not dressed in royal robes. Not lifted up in glory. But standing, silent and strong, at the foot of the Cross (John 19:25). Mary, the Mother of Sorrows. Mary, the Mother of the Church. Today, the Church gives us this Memorial not as a moment to look back in pity, but as a moment to enter into her love. A love that does not run away. A love that stays. A love that receives the broken body of her Son—and still believes.

This Memorial, placed right after Pentecost, is no accident. Pope Francis declared this day to remind us that Mary's role did not end with Jesus' earthly life. She is Mother of the Church because she was there at the beginning: at the Annunciation (Luke 1:38), at the Cross (John 19:26-27), and at Pentecost (Acts 1:14). Pope Paul VI wished that the Second Vatican Council would proclaim her with this title, and in his document *Signum Magnum*, he confirmed it. In that apostolic exhortation, he called all the faithful to honour Mary as their spiritual mother and to live in such a way that reflects her example. It reminds us that Mary's role in the Church is not only historical but ongoing—as mother, intercessor, and guide.

We are leaving behind the great feasts of Easter and stepping into Ordinary Time. But there is nothing ordinary about this moment. Mary stands here as a bridge between the fire of the Holy Spirit and the quiet road of everyday disci-

pleship. She shows us how to carry resurrection hope into daily life. She shows us how to keep saying yes, even when the road is long and unclear. Her life was lived entirely in the Spirit. She teaches us how to be open to the Spirit's gifts: wisdom, courage, patience, and love. She models a life of prayer, attentiveness, and obedience—a life shaped by grace.

Mary is not a silent figure in the Gospels. She listens, yes—but she also speaks. And what she says changes everything. When the angel greets her in Nazareth, she answers with words that reshape history: “Let it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). She didn't have a map. She didn't have all the answers. But she trusted God enough to say yes. And in that yes, God took flesh.

When she visits Elizabeth, Mary brings more than just her presence. She brings joy. She brings a song. The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) is not just a hymn of praise. It is a cry for justice. “He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.” Even before Jesus is born, Mary is already speaking the heart of the Gospel. She is the voice of the poor. The voice of the small and the forgotten. Her song still echoes in the lives of the humble in Zambia: the widow in Choma who shares her last meal, the youth in Chipata who volunteers at the parish clinic, the teacher in Kitwe who tutors struggling students for free. Mary's spirit lives in them.

And then—Golgotha. The Cross. The place where dreams die and hopes are buried. Mary stands there, not by chance, but by choice. She could have stayed away. She could have hidden. But she stayed. She stayed with her Son, and in doing so, she stayed with all who suffer. Her presence at the Cross is not only sorrowful; it is faithful. It is her yes becoming flesh again—a yes that stands with the broken, that believes in God's plan even when all seems lost. In that moment, she suffers with her Son—not as equal Redeemer, but as one whose heart is pierced (Luke 2:35), united with His in love and pain. When Jesus says, “Woman, behold your son” and to the disciple, “Behold your mother” (John 19:26-27), He is giving her to us. Not just to John, but to all of us. She becomes the mother of all who follow Jesus, especially when the path leads through pain.

We see her again in the Upper Room. The disciples are afraid. They don't know what comes next. But Mary is there, praying with them (Acts 1:14). Pentecost is not only the birth of the Church through fire and wind—it is also a moment of motherhood. Mary is there as midwife to the mission. Her presence holds them

together. Her prayer welcomes the Spirit. In this moment, we see clearly why she is Mother of the Church. She who once carried Christ in her womb now carries the infant Church in her heart. She does not lead by command, but by compassion, by quiet strength, by prayer.

Her story doesn't stop there. It continues with us. In heaven, Mary still prays for her children. She has not forgotten us. She intercedes. She listens. She draws near. The Assumption and the Immaculate Conception are not distant doctrines. They are signs of what God wants to do in all of us. To make us whole. To lift us up. To bring us home.

The Second Vatican Council says that Mary “cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning love in the work of the Saviour” (*Lumen Gentium 61*). That is why she is called Mother of the Church. Her care reaches across time. Across oceans. She walks beside the grandmother in Mongu who prays the Rosary before dawn. Beside the student in Ndola wrestling with doubt. Beside the catechist in Choma teaching children the name of Jesus. She is near.

And let us be clear—Mary never takes us away from Jesus. She brings us closer. As Saint John Paul II taught, her whole life is a yes to God and a signpost to Christ. She does not take His place. She prepares the way to Him. We call Mary “Mediatrice” not because she replaces Christ, our sole mediator with the Father (1 Timothy 2:5), but because she, more than anyone, shows us how to get closer to Him. Joining her prayers to ours, she intercedes on our behalf, presenting our needs to her Son, so that we might more fully receive the grace He offers.

So what can we do?

We can learn from her. To trust God when we don't understand. To love even when it hurts. To stand with others in their pain. And when we fall short, we can turn to her. Because she knows. She understands. She is our mother.

She doesn't draw us away from Jesus. She draws us closer. Her life points us to Him. Always.

So here, in Zambia, in this land of deep prayer and strong mothers, let us turn to Mary. Let us ask her to walk with us. When we are tired. When we are afraid. When we don't have the words.

Let her teach us how to say yes.
Let her show us how to stand firm.
Let her lead us to the Spirit.
Let her carry our hopes to heaven.

Let us ask ourselves:

- Where is God asking me to say yes, even when I don't have all the answers?
- Who needs me to stay with them in their time of pain?
- How can I bring the joy of the Gospel, like Mary, into someone's life this week?

And now, let us entrust ourselves to her care:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession, was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.

Mary, Mother of the Church—pray for us.

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