

Homily: 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter: Cycle B: 2021: Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48

***“Our Lady of Fatima, the gift of Motherhood, and the call to Holiness”***

This week-end we thank God for the gift of our mothers, our grandmothers and our godmothers. What a gift they are, not only in that God gave us our life through them, but they show us how to love others. Our Lady is the role model for us in this.

1. May 13<sup>th</sup> is the feast of Our Lady of Fatima. If you remember she appeared to 3 shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal starting on May 13<sup>th</sup> 1917 and then continued appearing on the 13<sup>th</sup> of the month for 6 consecutive months, culminating in the miracle of the sun on October 13, 1917. **What was her message?** *To make the 5 first Saturdays which I have noted in the bulletin. A call to conversion of heart, repentance from sin with frequent reception of the Sacrament of Confession, modesty of heart and dress (that is when she said some types of fashion dress would be introduced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that would offend the Lord greatly, and that more people go to Hell for the sins of the flesh than for any other reason), prayer, esp. the daily Rosary as well as wearing the brown scapular. She also asks all of us to offer our daily duties in love as a sacrifice to the Lord in reparation for our sins and those of others. And finally to daily offer acts of sacrifice and penance for the conversion of hardened sinners. It's so easy to get discouraged in daily life and to forget it is in being faithful to daily duties in the Lord that we grow in holiness. **We all need to turn to our Lady more** as our spiritual mother and assist her in this noble mission of saving souls in Jesus.*
2. Jesus tells us today in the Gospel, *“It was not you who choose me, but I who chose you, and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain.”* We all need to remember this truth, but especially mothers – as we honor them this weekend as a nation. I encourage you to root your lives deeper in the Lord’s love and truth made known to us in our Catholic Faith, and to live a life of intimate union with Him in prayer, esp. by praying the Rosary and Divine Mercy chaplet every day. **Every mother has her challenges and crosses to face in life**, be it with her husband, her children, her work, or even with herself. As it is put beautifully in

the great work of spiritual theology *Divine Intimacy* by Fr. Gabriel of Mary Magdalen, O.C.D. (TAN Publishers) (p.380): Often it is easier to deal with the big sacrifices and sufferings of a singular occurrence than the sufferings which occur daily under the same form. **These can take a variety of forms:** *physical ailments caused by poor health, economic restrictions, the fatigue from overwork or anxiety, moral sufferings resulting from differences of opinion with one's spouse or children, clash of temperaments and misunderstandings of various sorts. Some mothers also face the sorrow of a spouse who doesn't practice the Faith, or children who have turned away from the Church or who are living a moral life at odds with God's commandments in the area of sexual morality, or involved in drug or alcohol abuse. You may be caring for an elderly parent, or relative or friend, and then of course all the Covid craziness.* Whatever the challenges you face the Lord Jesus promises today if you root your life more deeply in Him, that you will not only bear fruit, but much fruit! That should be a consoling thought! And it is real! And remember the Blessed Mother is here to always help: listen to her advice to the newly married couple at Cana, "*Do whatever He tells you.*"

3. **But motherhood is not all challenges; it is also a great joy!** To be at the heart of a family! To watch your children grow from infancy to adulthood. To play games with them and interact with them. To teach children and one's spouse the ways of God and our Catholic Faith: what a joy and a privilege. This is shown in so many beautiful ways in **deeds of love** in the life of a mother. **These include** *bringing her children to weekly Mass and hopefully her husband as well, praying for and teaching her children how to pray and praying with them, as well as with your husband (try to do a daily Rosary as a family), bringing her family to the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a frequent basis, and being willing to offer her children to God's service, if He is calling them to become a priest or a religious and also being a good role model in the married life if they are called to that wonderful vocation.* **For Mothers and Fathers what a gift it is to bring a child into the world!** And to be open to that gift in a generous way in a world that often sees children as burdens to be avoided. One of my favorite quotes of our late great

Holy Father St. John Paul II occurred on the Washington Mall in the year 1979 when he was discussing the great gift of human life made in the image of God from the first moment of our conception, and how God uses parents to bring about this reality, and then he pointed out to parents there, “***the greatest gift you can give a child is another brother or sister, if it be God’s will.***” Another brother or sister is better than any amount of toys or material things. And he also challenged parents ***to give children one’s time and love in an ever deeper way.*** All the recent Popes have challenged couples to be generous in their family life and not to buy into the contraceptive mentality of our modern world which puts limits on the gift of human love: to be open to all the children God wants to bless a married couple with, to trust Him! *And if one has failed in this area because of human weakness, to repent, and confess it in humility in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and try to do better with God’s grace in the future. And to learn the Church’s beautiful teaching on natural birth regulation or NFP - if you need to space out your children for serious reasons (be they physical, psychological, social or economic) - which unlike contraception cooperates with God in the beautiful reality of being co-creators of new human life, instead of excluding Him. And for those who have permanently altered this area of life through sterilization, to bring it to Confession and allow the Lord to start the healing process, if you have not done so already. The Church’s teaching in this area is the real path to freedom and spiritual healing.* **Finally dear Mothers, ask Our Lady to be your model in saying Yes (fiat) to the Lord on a daily basis:** *to emulate Mary’s obedience to the Lord in all things, her trust even in the most difficult moments of life (ponder and pray the 7 sorrows/dolors Rosary), her humility as evidenced in her beautiful prayer the **Magnificat**, and her spirit of ongoing interior prayer in which she pondered everything in her heart.* May all mothers, and in fact all of us, say and pray, with devotion, in company with our Blessed Mother Mary daily and often, “***Be it done to me Lord according to thy Holy Word.***” That disposition of spirit is the path to holiness and the narrow path to salvation in the Lord for our soul and for all of those entrusted to our human and spiritual care. God bless you.