

Homily.Assumption.8.15.21
Saint Bernard Church
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One of the main themes in the Bible is that coming to believe in God is like starting a new life. So it is often said that when someone develops a deep, genuine belief in God or Jesus they are “born again.” Our sacrament of Baptism is understood as a rebirth.

Well, for someone to be born again, it makes sense that they might have to have a spiritual mother, and so motherhood is also a main theme in the Bible. And, when it comes to faith, we’re going to see that motherhood is for everyone, regardless of gender.

The Bible portrays Judaism, sometimes referred to simply as Jerusalem or Zion, as a mother. The Jewish religion brings people to an awareness of God, and then nurtures that faith once it takes hold in a person.

In the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, then, we have this beautiful description of Judaism as Mother Zion in these words:

“Yet Zion is scarcely in labor before she gives birth to her children...Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her, all you who love her...Oh, that you may suck fully of the milk of her comfort, that you may nurse with delight at her abundant breasts...As nurslings, you shall be carried in her arms and fondled in her lap; as a mother comforts her son...in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort.”

With the coming of Jesus, we have a new mother, Mary, described in our first reading.

In addition to Mary’s immaculate conception and a life free from sin, there are three major events in Mary’s motherhood.

First of all, she is overshadowed, or filled, with the Holy Spirit.

Second, she becomes pregnant with Jesus. With Jesus present in her body, she becomes the first tabernacle.

Third, she gives, she takes Jesus to the world, starting with Elizabeth.

Like Mother Zion in Judaism, Mary gives birth to a child, nurses and comforts that child, and then shares that child with others.

The Catholic Church, then, succeeds Mary in her motherhood. The Church gives birth to Jesus in the sense of communicating to the world the existence of Jesus and the saving grace that He makes available to all of humanity.

The Church nurtures faith in Jesus by passing on His teachings. Through the sacraments, the Church makes it possible for every human being to receive the same love, the same mercy, the same healing, the same power that Jesus shared with His followers when He walked this earth.

What does this mean for each of us?

We all share in the motherhood of Mary which was passed on to the Church as the Body of Christ.

Like Mary, each of us who received the sacrament of Confirmation has been overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. This overshadowing is renewed and strengthened in each Mass when our lives, represented by the bread and wine, are placed on the altar, and the priest asks the Holy Spirit to come upon our lives and unite them with the life of Jesus Christ.

Like Mary, we receive Jesus in our bodies when we participate in the Eucharist. Each of us becomes a tabernacle.

Like Mary, with the grace that comes from having Jesus living in us, we take Jesus to our world.

How exactly do we live this out?

Every one of us is chosen by God for a specific mission and purpose that no else can have. Every situation we are in, every day of our lives, is created just so we can bring Christ into that situation.

So in every situation we are in, whether at home, at work, at school, at play, it doesn't matter, we should be thinking and praying, "Holy Spirit, what do You want me to do or say in this situation? How do you want me to bring Jesus to this person, or these people?"

Mary was a Christ-bearer. The Church is a Christ-bearer. And now each of us is a Christ-bearer.

It should be clear to all of us that our world is starving for Jesus. Our world is desperate for His love, His truth, His mercy, His healing and His guidance. Our world is desperate for meaning, for a sense of purpose, that only Jesus can give.

Each of us has to play the role of a spiritual mother, and imitate Mary. May each of us accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior. May we make Him the center of our lives. May each of us be a temple of the Holy Spirit and a tabernacle for the living Jesus, and bring Jesus into every place, every place, that the Holy Spirit takes us.