

May 20, 2024: Memory of Mary Mother of the Church.

Gen. 3, 9-15.20 or Acts 1, 12-14; John 19, 25-34

Homily

During the Second Vatican Council, some of the Council Fathers would have liked a document devoted specifically to the Virgin Mary to be proclaimed, no doubt attributing to her new titles in addition to all those that Tradition and popular piety have conferred on her. The Council opted instead to speak of Mary in chapter 8 of the dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, on the Church, placing her at the heart of the Mystery of Christ and the Church.

On 21 November 1964, when Paul VI gave his speech approving the Constitution *Lumen gentium*, he proclaimed Mary 'Mother of the Church'. The new Catechism of the Universal Church incorporated this new title for Mary, which places her at the heart of the mystery of her Son; and Pope Francis, on 11 February 2018, the 160th anniversary of the first apparition of Mary at Lourdes, decided that the memory of Mary Mother of the Church would be celebrated every year on Whit Monday. This is what we do today.

The lectionary of the Roman Church assigns specific readings to this memory. The Gospel reading, taken from the Gospel according to Saint John, relates the moment when Jesus, on the cross, entrusts Mary to his disciple John with these words: '*Behold your mother*'. Tradition has always understood that it was to the whole Church, in the person of John, that Jesus entrusted his mother. Mary was therefore present at the foot of Jesus' cross.

There are two texts to choose from for the first reading. The first is from Genesis, where God tells the devil, who has taken the form of a snake, that the woman (i.e. 'THE woman par excellence') will crush his head. The other choice is the account in the Acts of the Apostles where we find Mary, on Ascension Day, 'in the upper room' with the Apostles, a few other women and Jesus' brothers, in other words members of his extended family.

In all likelihood, this 'upper room' was where Jesus celebrated his last Passover with his disciples.

We can also relate this 'upper room' to the highly symbolic account of the birth of Jesus at the beginning of Luke's Gospel, where it is said that Mary laid her son in a manger because there was no room in the upper room (the Greek word used by Luke, which is usually translated as 'inn', actually means 'upper room'. It's a rare word

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

that only appears once more in the Gospel, in the passage where Jesus sends his disciples into the city to tell someone that the Master is asking where the 'upper room' is where he can celebrate the Passover with his disciples. What Luke is trying to say, in this symbolic language, is that Mary, by laying her son in a manger, is giving him to us as food, until he can give himself to us in the 'upper room' of the Last Supper.

So let us celebrate this Eucharist by thanking Jesus for having given us his Mother, and also by thanking Mary for having given us her Son.

Armand Veilleux