

ENCOURAGEMENT

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The Host Apostolate

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Mary Mother of Tenderness and Mother of Sorrow

May is traditionally the month of Mary and a time of special reflection and intercession through her to the Heart of Jesus. It is often a time of First Holy Communions and leading to the great Feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit which liberated the Apostles from fear to an ardent proclamation of the Gospel. Mary was with the Apostles at the time though she was already imbued with the Holy Spirit.

Today we live, especially in the western world at a time when mothers are often torn apart by the seeming distance that children feel toward the church either being non-attenders or at best paying 'lip service' at time of special feasts. There is also strife and family breakup and many other serious concerns for the welfare of children, through marriage breakdown or difficulty, cohabitation, or attitudes which reflect 'culture' rather than the Gospel truths. All these cause much pain and sometimes distance between members of families. Yet we see in Our Lady, Our Mother, how she dealt with perhaps no less. It is easy to simply say, 'ah yes but she was special' and that she did not suffer the many trials that parents undergo today. If we look closely at her life we can see how very far from the truth this is.

She not only had to bring up Jesus often in adverse circumstances, see him abandoned by his followers at his hour of need but then had to love them and instruct them and encourage

them to persevere. (There is much evidence of this in mystical writings). I am sure that St Peter was reminded of the power of forgiveness many times by Our Lady. Yes, she would have seen the many faults and failing of the disciples but would both pray for them and support them maybe quietly in her heart.

The following is a reflection and a cry from the heart of a mother...



'The Catechism states that we, the faithful, are bound to participate in the Sunday Mass. If that obligation is not fulfilled, except in unusual circumstances, we should then go to confession before receiving the Eucharist. The reason for this is so that we are in a state of grace, a pure vessel, when receiving the Body of Christ. This is the ideal, but as always, we fall short or see our families do so.

'As a mother, I am called to love my children, whatever the faults and mistakes. That does not mean that I condone or agree with their actions but my duty is to love. As adults, they are responsible for their own actions and the consequences. So many families have the same dilemma, a daily struggling to live the gospel, to love those close to them even though we do not agree with their decisions.



Mary and some of the saints and holy women have struggled too. Our Lady must have wondered at her son's choice of vocation when she found him in the Temple as a young boy. Saint Monica never ceased to pray for her son



and love him as he made his own mistakes in life. With her prayer and love and perseverance, St Augustine made his way back to God and to the Church. St Jane de Chantal and St Rita of Cascia struggled with their children and their choices in life as also did Servant of God, Catherine de Hueck Doherty with her relationship with her son. They experienced major failings with their children. I think maybe it is a perquisite to the spiritual journey, this learning to detach even from those closest to us.

'My concern is that by being harsh and judgemental, we drive away those in most need of our love. We, as members of the Church, have an obligation, we are required to care for the lost sheep, yet so easily they fall by the wayside. How much of that is our responsibility?

'As a parent, I can only be a witness to the truth, an example of love, surrender, forgiveness and faith. Ultimately the choice is theirs.

'As lay people, we are called to live in the world but our culture is the antithesis of the Christian way. The Church (as Establishment) has been guilty too, of many serious errors and at many levels both nationally and internationally.

'We are struggling, in so much need of healing. I ask you to tread carefully, for we are bruised reeds, easily broken and requiring tender and loving care.

'We need to remember how much God loves us and patiently waits for our return, seeing our beauty and our potential more than our sin.

'My hope for the future is that the lost generations will return but that requires so much love and understanding on our part too.' C.A.B.

Many parents would own these feelings today. How did Mary deal with the problems? Certainly by unconditional love and most certainly prayer. Recently a Priest said in the context of a Penitential Service prior to Confession that we must love our children and not judge them, carry them in our hearts and trust. It is this quality of love and trust that we must adopt to truly sustain our relationship with both God and with our Families. If we entrust them to the care of Our Mother she will lead them to her Son for that is what she does perfectly. We must not worry about the time scale but that all will be well. This is a call to holiness for it is not easy to surrender your children in this way, it is costly but efficacious.

This May we could include all our intentions in a Rosary said with love for all and especially our own children and families who have 'strayed' a little and entrust them to a 'Great Mother's' care.

Mary help of Christians Pray for us.

27th May is the Feast of Pentecost pray that the Holy Spirit enlightens you and by grace you fulfil your mission as evangelisers and servants of each other.

