



## **5<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter 18th May 2025**

### **Reflection by Mgr Daniel McHugh**

*Mothers in the life of the Church*

*"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21:4)*

I found it very interesting to see Pope Leo XIV going to visit the Shrine of Our Lady Mother of Good Counsel for his first visit outside Rome on Saturday last 10 May. He said to the people there in Genazzano *"I wanted to come here in these first days of the new ministry the Church has entrusted to me, to carry out this mission as successor of St Peter."* The Pope told the community that the Shrine was *"such a great gift"* to them. *"As a mother never abandons her children, you must also be faithful to the Mother"* he said. On the same day he visited the Basilica of the St Mary Major to pray at the tomb of Pope Francis close to the Shrine of Our Lady Salus Populi Romani. Mother of Good Counsel is an ancient shrine that meant a lot to his predecessor Pope Leo XIII who placed this title of Our Lady in the Litany of Loreto. The Scriptural origins of the title are to be found in the Miracle of the Wedding Feast of Cana where Mary says to those anxious that the wine had run out at the celebration: *"Do whatever He tells you"* referring to her Son Jesus who responded to the needs of the young couple. On the Sunday 11 May the Pope wished a Happy Feast Day to all mothers including those who are now in heaven. Mothers' Day is marked during May in Italy, the United States and other parts of the world, whereas we in the UK mark it in March, close to the Feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady.

Pope Leo XIV is conscious, as all priests are, of the importance of the Mother in the life of the Church, in the growth in Faith of their children. How many we see lighting candles and praying before Mary's image for their children. How many are having masses offered in these days of examinations that their children will come through successfully. In the month of May especially we turn to Mary Mother of the Church, Mother of Hope, in this Jubilee Year, asking her prayers, recalling that Jesus on the Cross gave Mary to us when He said to John *"Behold your Mother"*.

On the day after he was chosen to be Pope, Leo XIV celebrated Mass with the Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel. It was the occasion to point out as the priorities for the Church. He reminded them *"we are to bear witness to our joyful faith in Christ"* while warning that where faith is lacking life loses meaning. The new Pope sees what we all see that there are contexts *"where it is not easy to preach the Gospel and bear witness to its truth, where believers are mocked, opposed, despised or at best tolerated and pitied."* *"Yet for this reason"* he said, *"they are the places where our missionary outreach is desperately needed."* He said *"Jesus showed us a model of human holiness that we can all imitate, together with the promise of an eternal destiny that transcends all our limits and abilities."*

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These are the truths entrusted to the Church to be proclaimed for the good of the human race.

Referring especially to his own role as successor of St Peter and the Cardinals as leaders of the Church he spoke of a commitment *“To move aside so that Christ may remain, to make oneself small so that he may be known and glorified, to spend oneself to the utmost so that all may have the opportunity to know and love him.”*

This coming week we have an optional memorial of St Bernadine of Siena, who is an example of one who spent his life in communication of the Faith, often called the people’s preacher. For years he journeyed on foot preaching up and down Italy in churches and in the open to crowded assemblies. He made use of the name of Jesus as a symbol of the Lord IHS (Jesus Hominum Salvator) A symbol still to be seen in/on Church buildings, especially Jesuit. It is an early example of imagery being used as well as words to create a memorable logo. Also, his focus was on the central message of our Faith, Jesus Saviour of Humankind. St Bernadine was a model of one who *“stood aside so that Christ may remain”*; a mission we are all called to. Pope Leo XIV concluded his Homily praying *“May God grant me this grace, today and always, through the loving intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church.”*

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