



CATHOLIC NATIONAL SHRINE OF OUR LADY THE BASILICA OF OUR LADY, WALSINGHAM

Walsingham - "England's Nazareth"

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE BASILICA OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM



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MARY, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH: A TIME TO REJOICE

Mary, Mother of God is honoured under many titles. The church has often referred to Mary in this way to stress her personal relationship with each one of us, her children. Pope Francis has recently declared that a new memorial will be celebrated in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It will be devoted to Mary as Mother of the Church and is celebrated today in complementarity with Pentecost, to emphasise the role of Mary with her spouse the Holy Spirit in the continuing formation of the church as Mother.

What is the meaning of this title and why is it important to honor Mary with the title "Mother of the Church"?

The Meaning and History of the Title

This Marian title, "Mother of the Church," is relatively new. It was only officially bestowed on the Blessed Virgin Mary by Blessed Pope Paul VI in 1964 at the Second Vatican Council, who invited the faithful to invoke her help under this title. Since then it has grown in popularity. During the Holy Year of Reconciliation of 1975, the votive Mass of Our Lady, Mother of the Church was proposed and subsequently added to the Roman Missal.

In 1980, Pope Saint John Paul II added the title "Mother of the Church" to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the great Marian prayer which invokes her intercession under various titles and is often recited after the Rosary. In the 1990s, St. John Paul II also founded the Monastery of Mater Ecclesiae (Latin for Mother of the Church) at the Vatican. Pope emeritus Benedict XVI now resides at this very monastery.

Although venerating Mary as Mother of the Church is new, it has ancient roots in Christian tradition. It can be traced back to St. Augustine and St. Leo the Great. This title reflects the



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belief that Mary is not only the mother of the person of Christ but also the mother of the faithful. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

"The Virgin Mary ... is acknowledged and honoured as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer ... She is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ' ... since she by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head."

"Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church." (CCC 963)

This Marian title has been used rarely over the centuries. Recently, there has been a greater focus on the mystery of the Church and the Blessed Mother's relationship to her. It focuses on the unity of Jesus with all the members of the Church as one body, with Christ as its head (Ephesians 1:22-23). Since the Blessed Virgin Mary is Jesus' mother, the faithful who are members of the Church, his own body, also share his mother. This led to Mary being invoked as "Mother of the Church", a title which expresses Our Lady's maternal relationship with the Church and is expressed through her faith, love, hope, and obedience.

Today let us offer our intentions for the church in these times, for unity and for an ever-growing devotion to Mary, Mother of the Church.

Mother, help our faith!

Open our ears to hear God's word and to recognize his voice and call.

Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise.

Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith.

Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature.

Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One.

Remind us that those who believe are never alone.

Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!

Encyclical *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013) on the theme of Mary, Mother of the Church can be found at the following link:

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/prayers/documents/papa-francesco_pregchiere_20130629_maria-lumen-fidei.html