

## Session 6 – Keynote: A. Mary, our mentor in Prayer/B. Eucharist makes the Church

Sr Marie Farrell rsm/Mons Paul McPartlan

God uses our senses, heart and minds as 'ways in' to reach us.

A.

Mary was fully graced from the moment of her conception. Past memory of Mary allows us to experience her grace now. Gabriel's announcement to Mary is in the line of decisive Biblical moments eg Abraham & Isaac/Moses & the burning bush. We rejoice in the far reaching consequences of Mary's acceptance. She can be thought of as the 'still point in a turning world' – a point between contemplation and action. Mary treasures the Word and contemplates it. She heard the Word and responded. She spoke on 2 significant occasions 'They have no wine' (Marriage feast of Cana) and also, in John's gospel, at the foot of the Cross.

The greatest gift that we are given when we pray is the **Holy Spirit**, which is given to build up the Body of Christ.

Mary is an intimate pilgrim companion. She challenges but respects our humanity and joins us in both depression and hope. Mary is our model for active co-operation in Jesus' mission.

Mary is *with* (not above) us:

1. Contemporary study of the Holy Spirit has allowed Him to reclaim some of the aspects which for a while had been transferred to Mary. We need to ensure that Mary's role revolves around Jesus.
2. The call of the universal church to holiness – Baptism calls ALL to the fullness of the Christian life.
3. Church's liturgical prayer – emphasizes her motherhood. Naming invokes presence.

Mary is not just an exemplar that we strive to imitate but someone who calls us to servant discipleship. Her example for the church is that of accepting, proclaiming and venerating. The relevance of her discipleship is as an example of journeying/the 'obscurity of pilgrimage'.

B.

At the heart of the New Testament is the idea that there is ALWAYS something to be thankful for.

As the Body of Christ, we should be caught up in His thankfulness and Eucharist is the 'sacrament of sacraments', the supreme way of celebrating and being thankful. Eucharist  $\rightleftharpoons$  Church. As St Augustine taught, we receive the Body of Christ to become the Body of Christ – we are transformed by what we receive. The Church is most herself, a Eucharistic assembly when she celebrates the Eucharist.

We need to remember that the NT Letters were written to be read at Eucharistic assemblies. The celebration of the Eucharist in local gatherings was bigger than what could be seen with the human eye – it could be thought of as 'lifted up' to God/heaven. The Church here on Earth is 'derivative', that is, it points to the Final Gathering/Ekklesia/Church. It is the sacrament of the present that makes the future real. For Christians, the future is not uncertain; it does not disappoint – it will be the fulfillment of God's plan.

The Eucharistic setting makes the certainty of the Creed ('He will come again to judge the quick and the dead') possible. In the Eucharist, the Spirit is invoked so that the people become the Body of Christ as does the bread and wine. Baptism means that our earthly life is 'grafted to' Christ's and will only be truly revealed in heaven (ie as the person God would have us be). This is not just above us but ahead of us. There is a proximity of heaven when we celebrate the Eucharist. The vision shown in the Eucharist must be remembered so as to fortify us. The Mass should be celebrated in a spirit of anticipation 'ready to greet Him when he comes again'. The beginning words of the Book of Revelations makes it clear that it is set within the Eucharistic gathering ('the Lord's Day') and at the end the word 'maranatha' is used ('Come'). Christ's sacrifice for us, on the Cross is not forgotten – it is implicit in looking forward to Heaven. It should not make us comfortable but call us to conversion. Mass has both joy and judgment, yearning and repentance.