

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Mass of Pope St. Paul VI)
Third Sunday After Pentecost (Latin Mass)
June 18, 2023
Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant

“Salve, Regina, Mater Misericordiae — Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy.” (Prayer)

Most Catholics have prayed the Rosary at some point in their lives. Some of us here today may have attended the ordination of a priest in the Archdiocese of Mobile. In both instances, we have either prayed the prayer “Hail, Holy Queen” in English (conclusion of the Rosary) or chanted “Salve, Regina” in Latin (conclusion of the ordination). As we have taken the time to dedicate our year to and reflect upon the Blessed Mother, I would like to conclude by examining this prayer with you. We shall take small parts of this prayer, in the subsequent months, and concentrate our efforts into understanding what this prayer means and what we are professing each time we pray this prayer.

We begin by addressing Mary as Queen. As Catholics, we profess that Mary is the Queen of Heaven and earth due to her giving birth to Jesus, the King of Heaven and earth. To understand Mary’s role as Queen, we must first begin by offering a basic examination into the role of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, through our knowledge of earthly monarchs. An earthly king, as an image of our Heavenly King, has the responsibility of placing the needs of his subjects as his first duty. A king is required to defend the lives and/or rights of all of his subjects. In fulfilling this obligation, he is considered to be a “Just” king, giving to each subject their just due (reward or punishment). The laws and regulations he establishes helps to provide this order and security. Conversely, a ruler who does not seek to fulfill this obligation may be considered a tyrant. Unlike an earthly king, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, fulfills this obligation perfectly. Only Jesus can establish perfectly just laws and rules which best guide His subjects toward true peace and lasting happiness. Only He can judge the measure of our lives by those same laws He has established.

For her part, Mary is understood to be Queen. This is first established by her being the mother of the King. Saint Alphonsus Liguori, in his book *The Blessed Virgin Mary*, records a remark from Abbot Arnold of Chartres who questioned: “*Since the flesh of Mary was not different from that of Jesus, how can the royal dignity of the Son be denied the Mother.*” (p. 9-10). We honor Jesus our King when we acknowledge His Mother Mary as our Queen. One may ask what does Mary, our Queen, do in Heaven? What are her royal duties? To answer that we immediately go to the next words in the prayer – Mother and Mercy. Let us take each word separately and reflect upon their meaning.

We begin by seeking to understand the duty of Mary our Queen as also our Mother. Mary is considered to be our Mother through a “spiritual” maternity. As we discussed previously, Jesus gave His Mother to all of us as He was dying upon His Cross (John 19:26-27). Saint Alphonsus Liguori would explain this spiritual motherhood born at her Son’s Cross in this fashion: “*Seeing the ardent desire of Mary to aid in the salvation of man, He disposed it so that she, by the sacrifice and offering of the life of her Jesus, should cooperate in our salvation, and thus become the Mother of our souls.*” (p. 22). The greatness of her spiritual mother over all souls is found firstly in her profound love of God. By her love, she desires His Will over all other things, including the motherly desire to protect her child. Her love for God impels her to live perfectly His command to love Him and our neighbor. For this reason, aside from

so many others, all Christians must love and honor Mary because she loved God and did nothing to impede His Redemptive act completed upon the Cross. Using our own mothers as a measurement for Mary, we can assume that for love of her Son, she herself would have wanted to be crucified with Him on that blessed Good Friday. However, if God had consented to this normal, heart-felt desire, then He would not have presented her to His children as our Mother to now love.

Mary's duty as our Heavenly Queen, secondly, finds its meaning as our Mother and, because she is our Mother, she now becomes a means to our receiving the mercy of God. We can point to the person of Esther, from the Old Testament, as a figure of Mary's Queenship. One can read where Queen Esther intercedes for her people, the Jewish people, when a law is promulgated which could lead to their destruction. Her concern is not for herself, her comfort, her life, but for her people since she herself was Jewish and would have to obey this law. In the end, Queen Esther's request is granted by the King and the Jewish people are spared. How much more, therefore, will Jesus, the King, listen to the request of "Mercy" asked for by His Mother and our Mother, Mary, Queen of Mercy. Convince me that as Mary approaches her Son and prays aloud, "My God and my King, if I find favor with You, would You grant my request to show Mercy upon my child (insert your name)," that He her Son, her King, will deny her. When Mary our Queen approaches her Son with this request for Mercy, He opens wide the doors of Mercy to whomever she desires to receive it. Why does He do this? Because He knows her great love for Him and us, and will never consent to or ask anything contrary to His Eternal Will. When Mary views one of us who has fallen away from her Son and found themselves trapped in a life of sin, she does everything in her power to reconcile us back with her Son. No sinner, however great, can implore her help, the help of our Queen and our Mother, and not come away unaided by her Son's Mercy. As Jesus once said, I now remind us all: "*Ask and you shall receive.*" (Matthew 7:7).