

Homily 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B (19.8.18)

The rightful place of Mary in Catholic belief & practice.
(Homily preached during the annual crowning of Our Lady's Statue)

You know, next week we'll have the crowd complaining about Jesus' teaching that this is intolerable language. And when you think about it, it's incredible, isn't it? What Jesus taught, that his very life force, his very transformed life, would be given to us in communion. And yet the same could be said about the Virgin Mary - this is intolerable language what the church teaches. This Sunday we sit in-between the Feast of the Assumption last wednesday and the Octave on Wednesday of the Queenship of Mary, and it seems appropriate to say a few words on that 'intolerable language' before we crown our Statue of Our Lady.

And it's very hard to read any official church documents on Mary and to find them, because there's very few of them. Because in reality, anything that the church has taught is always in context of Christ, that she points to Christ, that she illuminates those aspects of Christ and his redemptive plan, that she shows us the mystery of the incarnation, the mystery of the resurrection, the mystery of the coming of the Spirit, praying in vigil in the upper room with the apostles.

And above all things, when you look at the Scriptures with references to Mary and, of course, the allusions elsewhere in the Bible, there is a powerful testimony as to what and why the church teaches what it does about the Assumption and Queenship of Mary. Pope Pius XII in his encyclical said that from the second century onwards, there is reference to Mary and her special position in God's plan of salvation. He points out that from that era the church taught that Mary is the new Eve, that she was special, that she was chosen by God. And you've only to look at John's gospel alone and see the two appearances of Mary. She is a very powerful symbol of the true disciple. She's at the beginning of the ministry with the wedding feast of Cana, the first miracle, and she's an indirect instrument causing that miracle, and then she's at the end of Jesus' earthly ministry at the foot of the Cross. Those are the two times only she appears in John's gospel and at the beginning of the gospel she says, 'do as he tells you' and at the end we are told, 'behold your mother'.

And John's done that on purpose. It's not an accident. John has highlighted these events and preserved them in his gospel to show that Mary is a symbol for the true disciple at the beginning and end of the saving work of Christ. And so it's right that we crown the statue of Mary, because in crowning Mary, we're crowning ourselves. We are anticipating that the glory she received as a true disciple, is promised to us too. Jesus himself even said to

his disciples, you will wear crowns in heaven. And so in honouring Mary, we honour not just our mother, but our sister in the faith.