

Sermon: 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – Mother's Day

Text: Acts 1:14: "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

Theme: Mothers join together in the church

Goal: Having Mary as an example of a faithful mother, mothers join together in prayer with their family and with the Christian family.

Dear Friends, Dear Mothers,

Introduction: Do you have a hero in your life? Maybe your mother, your grandfather, a teacher, a pastor, a famous writer... Some people don't like to look to exemplar people as a guide or a goal to reach in their lives. Individualism is a very strong tendency; "*you have to be unique*", is the common rule.

Do you have a hero in your life, to which you try to conform your behaviour and decisions? Good heroes are rare nowadays. Usually bad examples are in the spotlight of the media: Actors and actresses, singers and sportsmen, with strange hair and clothes and questionable habits. Children and youth like to imitate adults, and some of the current "heroes" are bad examples for our families, leading to rebellion, to drugs and other bad consequences. It's difficult to find someone in the political, social or cultural areas that we can look at as a hero...

The Bible presents us several heroes of faith and says: "We do not want you to become lazy, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (Hebrews 6:12); "Consider the outcome of their way and life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7); "Dear friends, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not

seen God!" (3 John 11). – Will *you* be an example for the future generation?

We have several mothers in the Bible who are set as good examples. We could talk about several of them on this Mother's Day as a hero.. But one mother was a very special mother and can teach us a lot: Mary, the mother of Jesus, mentioned in our text for the last time in the Bible record.

### I – Mary's faith and obedience

Mary was an ordinary young woman living in Nazareth when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. There was nothing special in her but her faith in God's promises about a Saviour. She didn't deserve to be the mother of God's Son, but God showed His grace to her as she was chosen. The words of the angel show God's grace: "You are highly favoured. The Lord is with you...You have found favour with God." And after receiving the news that she would be the mother of the Saviour she was waiting for, she answered humbly to the angel: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." And some days later, when she visited Elisabeth, she praised the Lord singing: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour!" (Luke 1:28, 30, 38, 46).

The initiative to give grace and favour is from God. He comes to us through His messengers and offers us Jesus, His beloved Son, as our Saviour. We can reject it... or we can humbly say with Mary: "I am the Lord's Servant. May it be to me as you have said."

### II – Mary's values to bring up her child

Mary knew that her child was a very special child, like our children are very special to us! We don't know about any other concern of Mary to bring up her child but to share with Him God's will. In her

faith, Mary treasured up all the things she had heard about her child from God's messengers, pondering them in her heart (Luke 2:19). She and Joseph took the child to the temple according to God's precepts to present it to the Lord and they did everything with Him that was required by the Law of the Lord. "And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke 2:22, 39, 40). - As they lived in Nazareth, far from Jerusalem, Jesus was taken to the temple only when He was 12 years old, when He was able to walk the long distance. But this doesn't mean that He didn't go to church before this. Nazareth had a synagogue, where the families used to go on Saturday and where the children went to school during the week to learn to read the Bible. The episode of the 12-year-old boy Jesus in the temple only shows us that His parents were faithful followers of God's Word and of God's Law.

What is the best time to begin to bring a child to church? They have to be brought to the Holy Baptism as soon as possible after their birth, and from then on they can come to church. Will they understand anything as babies? Perhaps not; but they will feel the atmosphere, they experience the love of the Christian family, they hear the religious sounds of the hymns and liturgy, and they begin to sing (in their way, of course) when they hear us singing. They become familiar with the church as they grow up and begin to come to the Sunday School. They learn that this is the house of their heavenly Father and that Jesus loves each of them.

### III – Mary's suffering as a mother

The happiness of Mother Mary following her son growing "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men" (Luke 2:52), and becoming a Prophet and Preacher when He was around 30 years old, turned into a deep sadness and suffering as she saw her Son hanging on the

cross. She was there under the cross with the other women. Jesus had a last word of love to His beloved mother, putting her under the care of John, one of His disciples (John 19:25-27). She knew that “a sword would pierce her soul” (Luke 2:35), according to the prophecy of old Simeon, and that the Messiah had to suffer on behalf of all humankind. But it was hard for her, very hard, to see her Son suffering.

#### IV – Mary’s fellowship in the church

Mary’s suffering was turned into joy and hope when Jesus rose again from the dead on Easter Sunday! The Book of Acts shows that she was among the disciples all the time with her other children, Jesus’ brothers: “They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:14).

I got a plaque while in Kenya with the inscription: *The family that prays together stays together*. To join in prayer at home and in the church under the blessing of Jesus is the shield God gives us to protect our family. Prayer is the answer of a child to what our Father says.

Conclusion: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 2:6) is our Watchword for this year. The example of Mary as a Christian mother helps us to carry on with this task. Mothers are not alone in this responsibility. The children have a father, have a family, and have their Christian family, we all. Not all of us are mothers, but the message of Mary’s example of faith and life touches the heart of all of us; not just because of Mary, but because of God’s grace through Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary. In the name of Jesus we also join together constantly in prayer

and worship, as the first Christian Church did it. In His name, Amen=  
*yes, yes, it shall be so* (Small Catechism, The Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer). **Amen.**

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle – Cape Town, 12 May 2013