



Nudged by the Spirit

I remember giving a parish mission, during which one of the Sundays fell on Mother's Day. For the homily, I compared the miracle and wonder of conception, pregnancy, birth, and motherhood to the spiritual journey. After Mass, I went outside to meet the people, and there, waiting for me, was a woman who was extremely upset and angry as she felt I had restricted motherhood to birthmothers. There were many different ways of motherhood she insisted. I apologized profusely and totally agreed with her. It was a lesson I never forgot.

This month, we not only celebrate Mother's Day, but May has traditionally been dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus, the God-bearer. Also tucked away, among the month's Sundays, is the wonderful feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, who often seems to have been neglected or forgotten. The Spirit who is the presence of the risen Christ in our midst and hearts.

Reflecting on the gifts and fruits of the Spirit – which we find in Scripture and tradition, gifts like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – I wonder if we could say the Holy Spirit could be called the “mothering of God,” as so many of the Paraclete's attributes seem to be those of a mother?

There is also an interesting connection between the Holy Spirit and Mary, who, by her “fiat” to the angel, was overshadowed by the Spirit becoming both the temple and the spouse of the Holy Spirit. Once Mary enters into a liaison with the Spirit, she is moved, almost immediately, to service, mothering her aged cousin Elizabeth, who has also unexpectedly fallen pregnant, (Lk. 1:39-45). In addition, Mary seems to have received the gifts of prophecy and praise, (both charismatic gifts of the Spirit), in her exuberant prayer-song of the Magnificat, which bursts from her when greeting her cousin. All through her life she shows us how to be Spirit-*led*, or spirit-*ual*.

It seems the Spirit nudges us into mothering, a quality not exclusive to women! Two little stories and an example come to mind. The first is that of a woman who came from a dysfunctional family, escaping, not without

wounding and trauma, into an equally dysfunctional relationship. And yet, in the midst of this, she takes in a little boy, neglected by his mother, and brings him up to be a wonderful human being, now with a family of his own. And the second, a middle-aged man – with a love-hate relationship with the Church, also coming from a broken, wounded family – who, twice a month, phones his mentally-challenged brother, to recite the Rosary with him. Or a local couple, who through husbandry, (a form of mothering), nurture seeds, bulbs, and plants, transforming their garden into an Eden of color and fruitfulness.

So, in this Mary/Mother month, how are we being prompted and coaxed by the Spirit? That woman, after Sunday Mass, was so right, there are myriad forms of motherhood.

Blessings,

Michael

Reflection

A little tradition for the feast of Pentecost, 12 May – Make a list of the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit. Cut out and fold each word and place it in a hat or bowl. Say a little prayer to the Holy Spirit, and, perhaps, a Hail Mary. Then pass the hat around and let each person take a piece of paper. Open them together and discover the gift or fruit of the Spirit you're invited to live, celebrate, and share this month.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God.

The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, (Gal 5:22-23).

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'Reflections' a new feature in Audio Subscriptions

Beginning this month we have added a new feature in Michael's audio retreat recordings library. In his *Reflections*, Michael discusses his favorite poetry, encounters with others, and spiritual thoughts.

Reflections was born from Michael's frequent walks, which he uses for contemplation. There is no set schedule for when his recordings will appear, so check back periodically to have a listen. The newest recordings will be added at the top of the list.

Michael's entire audio retreat library is available online 24/7, via subscription. For information visit:

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'Levanté' retreats now \$95

We've lowered the cost of all *Levanté* online retreats to \$95, and doubled participants' access to the videos and study guide PDFs to 14 days.

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Michael's latest, *Levanté 4*, has debuted. Themes include, *Arrivals and Departures, The Sanctity of Nature, Resilience Along the Way, Learning to Rest, and Making Your Own Camino*.

For *Levanté 4* information visit:

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