

## **Readings for the Masses on October 9 and 10<sup>th</sup> in the Diocese of St. Augustine**

### **– Canonical Coronation of Our Lady of La Leche**

#### **First Reading – Isaiah 61:9-11**

9 Their offspring shall be renowned among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples; All who see them shall acknowledge them: “They are offspring the LORD has blessed.” Thanksgiving for God’s Deliverance 10\* I will rejoice heartily in the LORD, my being exults in my God; For he has clothed me with garments of salvation, and wrapped me in a robe of justice, Like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.<sup>g</sup> 11 As the earth brings forth its shoots, and a garden makes its seeds spring up, So will the Lord GOD make justice spring up, and praise before all the nations.

#### **Responsorial Psalm – Luke 1:46-55 – The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name**

#### **Second Reading – Romans 8:28-30**

28\* We know that all things work for good for those who love God,\* who are called according to his purpose.<sup>u</sup> 29\* For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.<sup>v</sup> 30 And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified.<sup>w</sup>

#### **Gospel Reading – Luke 11:27-28**

27 While he was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, “Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed.”<sup>!</sup> 28 He replied, “Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

#### **Homily – as preached at the Noon Sunday Mass by Fr. Blair** *(prior recorded version preached at the Noon Saturday Mass is also available online)*

Today, in our Diocese we have the canonical crowning of Our Lady of Leche which is the oldest Marian devotion in this country. In the early 1600s, Spanish settlers brought with them to the New World a special devotion to Our Lady of La Leche y Buen Parto. Four hundred years later, the National Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche has kept this devotion alive through countless people of faith. And the Holy Father himself has recognized the importance and sanctity of this devotion by granting a Canonical Coronation for Our Lady of La Leche on today at 2 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine. This once-in-a-lifetime and completely unique event is an incredible blessing for the Diocese of St. Augustine and the oldest Marian shrine in the United States and which, this year, has been named a national Marian Shrine and pilgrimage site.

A canonical coronation is a formal act of the pope to crown an image of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or St. Joseph in the name of the Holy Father. The crowning acknowledges that the specific image, while having local significance, also has universal importance for the Catholic Church as it pertains to the Salvation Christ won for us by the Paschal Mystery of his death and resurrection. The practice began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but became increasingly popular in the late 1800s. Many people are familiar with a May crowning as many parishes and schools annually have one as a sign of their devotion to Mary. A canonical coronation is different in that this will only happen once to this specific image of Our Lady of La Leche. There are only three images of the Blessed Virgin Mary granted with this special honor in the US.

- Our Lady of Prompt Succor, crowned in 1895, in New Orleans, LA;
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 1904, in New York City, N.Y.;
- Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, 2013, in Lake Charles, LA.

**Our Lady of La Leche in St. Augustine will be the fourth!**

Pilgrims have always come to pray at the Chapel of Our Lady of La Leche at the Mission Nombre de Dios if they've been having trouble with fertility, a difficult pregnancy, in thanksgiving for those answered prayers, or just praying for God's grace through the intercession of Our Lady of Leche. Over the centuries and especially in recent decades, such pilgrimages have become increasingly common.

We are incredibly blessed to celebrate, in this way, the faith of our fathers and mothers in history, the saints who came before us, the martyrs of Florida who gave their lives for the faith. Personally, I was very blessed on Christmas Day, a couple of days after my ordination. My family and I gathered at the shrine for a Mass on Christmas Day, and I didn't expect that anyone else would be there. But, the little chapel was packed! There were several people who joined us for Mass. I spoke with some of them after Mass and they shared that they were all there either to pray the gift of a child or to give thanksgiving for such a prayer having been answered. It was amazing.

As we consider all things Marian this weekend and during this month of the Most Holy Rosary, we in this parish are mindful of and thankful for the ways in which we honor the Mother of God, the woman chosen by God, the woman asked to give her yes too becoming the mother of God, to becoming the the Tabernacle of the incarnation of our God in the person of Jesus Christ. We pray for her intercession, and we meditate on the life of Christ through praying the rosary every day at 11:30 and then through the devotion of the Divine Mercy chaplet. We pray the rosary during times of adoration especially on first Fridays and 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays. We are one of the first churches to honor her under the title of the Immaculate Conception, so named right after the declaration of the Pope in 1854. You see images of the life of Christ and Mary, throughout these beautiful windows, where, if you could not read the word of God you could enter into the life of Christ through these windows, they would lead you to the heart of Christ. These windows are like icons which allow us to enter into the depths of the mysteries of the life of Christ.

For some of us, the mystery of the words in today's gospel strike us as odd. In a way that kind of seems like he's putting Mary down. The woman who speaks of the blessedness of Mary, speaks for all the faithful throughout these past 2000 years. Her words are a recognition of the role that Mary has in the life of the faithful. A role through which she is honored by God and entrusted with the life of the Son of God in his humanity, his flesh, so vulnerable in the arms of Mary and Joseph.

If this were to happen to us, if someone honored our mother we would readily respond with a thank you of some sort. This is relevant to me in the moment because we just had my mother's memorial service. Although she passed in January, we weren't allowed to do it then. So many people spoke of the ways in which my mother was honorable, was faithful, her loving ways, the ways she was Christ like. We have all experienced moments like this, which of course makes the us feel awesome and humbled. We say thank you and we might share our own praises with them. That's a normal kind of response when someone expresses such affirmations about our loved ones.

But that's not how Jesus responded. He didn't say you're right; he didn't say thank you on behalf of my family. What does he say? He says, "rather blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Blessed are those who listen and do. And, really, that's at the heart of Mary's life isn't it? She listened to the Angel Gabriel. She listened to God's request and offered her humble, loving desire to do the will of God. "Be it done unto me according to your word" YOUR WORD. And, so it was. She heard the word of God and observed it, not only in that moment, that particular moment when she was asked to do and to be more than she already was, but throughout her life she was an example of a human being who believed, who heard the word of God and who observed it, who listened to God's word and who did what God asked.

And so, when Jesus spoke those words, he wasn't denying the elevation of Mary as an example of this truth that these people are recognizing, but rather lifts everyone up to the possibility of that level. That although Mary is special in her role as the mother of the Son, the second person of the Trinity, God; but that God makes a way for us all to hear the Word, the living Word and to observe it. And in so doing, what does the church teach what does Christ say to those he heals, to those who sins he's forgiven... go and send no more, be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. He might well have said, be like my mother, be full of grace; I have made a way for you; my mother is first among the saved, but she shows the way for all... that we too can be filled with grace. We can be made able to listen and do. Then, as we meditate on the living Word of God, and are moved to listen and do, we become increasingly open vessels for all the graces that God would give. These in turn strengthen us in holiness to live according to the way and the truth and the life of Christ.

To become the Saints we were created to be, holy in his sight, is not like climbing a huge mountain and it's not only the work of those especially chosen. God has made a way for the simplest minded person, for the most physically feeble person, for the most broken person; God has made a way through Mary's yes and Christ's sacrifice, for each and every one of us.

If we are anything less than persons who grow in that holiness overtime by the grace of God, it is not by the fault of God. It is not because God did not choose us. As we heard from Paul, according to the power of God, all are chosen. we like Mary must say yes and then having said yes, let our yes mean yes in the little moments of everyday and the big moments of our lives. As we continue to hear the Word of God and observe it in our lives, we realize our destiny in God. It's not a question of if, according to God it's just a question of when, how long it will take.

We must believe in the possibility of that, otherwise what we do here, who we are here, is of no real consequence... it's just a bunch of people coming together to hear nice thoughts, sing a few songs, give a few bucks and leave feeling good about ourselves. If what we do here, doesn't really change our lives or our person, if that's what coming to church and faith is for us... that is not at all what Jesus Christ intended when he came as one of us experiencing what we all experience except falling to sin. He came that we might have life life to the full and life to the full means a life full of grace and a life full of grace means a life a faithful yes. Mary is awesome for sure. But Christ wants each one of us to know the way in him to be made awesome like her. Isn't that good news right? Amen!