

Archbishop Smith: Feeding on What Mary Has to Give Us

On Sunday, I joined with hundreds of pilgrims at a Marian grotto just behind St. Albert church in St. Albert, Alberta. The occasion was the 80th anniversary of a pilgrimage to this site built in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes. As I had at Skaro last Tuesday, I designated this site an official Archdiocesan Marian shrine.



Mimi Belhumeur, 91, attended the very first St. Albert pilgrimage. Her family first moved to the St. Albert area in 1936.

In preparation for this anniversary celebration, Mimi Belhumeur was interviewed by our own Grandin Media. She described the importance of this annual gathering in words that, to my mind, capture its significance: “This is one occasion of coming and feeding yourself on what [Mary] has to give us, and then (to) go out and live whatever we have to live, with her support.”

We are well aware that we live from that with which Christ feeds us. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, we feed on his very Body and Blood, given in the transformed gifts of bread and wine. But what of this idea of being fed by what Mary gives us? There is a profound truth here, and so we need to consider it carefully.



In St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he gives this admonishment: "Brothers and sisters, be careful how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, ... understand what the will of the Lord is." Mary had had proclaimed to her exactly what the will of the Lord was for her, and, indeed, for the whole world, and her response to that will was one of humble, complete and trusting obedience. Obedient listening to God's will is the heart of the Christian life. This is why Mary has from the beginning been held up by the Church as *the* exemplar of the Christian life. She is the perfect disciple.



Mary feeds us with her example. When we look upon the mother of our Lord, we see all that it means to be a Christian. From her we learn that, to be a disciple means accepting that Jesus is, in fact, the One sent from the Father to save the world. We also learn from her example that following Christ is no guarantee of an easy life. She who stood at the Cross of her son knew the pain of suffering to an extraordinary degree. Yet we also learn from her that, even in the midst of intense pain and anguish, we can continue to trust in the fidelity of God. When we allow ourselves to be fed by Mary's example, we see clearly to the truth of things, life finds meaning and direction, and we are strengthened by hope.



We know, too, that we are fed by her maternal love. From the words that Jesus spoke from the Cross to John – “Behold your mother” – the Church has always understood Mary to be not only the mother of Jesus and thus Mother of God, but also our mother. Like every mother, Mary remains close to her children. She is always near us and earnestly wants us to turn to her for the help – the unsurpassable assistance – that she can and wants to give us by the power of her intercession. The love of Mary for her children is the source to which Catholics of all ages and in every generation have turned to be fed with the support that we need to, as Mimi puts it, “live what we have to live” as followers of Christ.



Let us all draw deeply from that with which Mary feeds us: her example of discipleship and her maternal love. With the help of her prayers, may we all grow in fidelity to our baptismal dignity and calling to live as followers of Jesus Christ.

