



# CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF TIKOLOHO E KATHOLIKE EA ISIFUNDABHISHOBHI SASE

# JOHANNESBURG

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## **PASTORAL LETTER 3** **THE SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD OF MARY**

At the Annunciation, Mary generously and joyously agreed to bid God's will, to become the Mother of Jesus, the Son of God (Jn. 1.38). Hers was a magnanimous response to God's invitation, an unconditional yes (fiat) to collaborate with God in His plan to save humankind. Her open willingness to God remains a perennially rich model for us believers to emulate and draw inspiration from. Mary is a constant reminder of what joyful obedience and respect to God's word should really mean for us Christian believers. We are invited, encouraged, spurred on to be like her, to "keep the Word", to ponder it and by our lifestyle, to accomplish it (Mother of the Redeemer, 20.7).

Now in the wedding scene at Cana, Mary, having noticed that there was no more wine, with a mother's confidence she said to the servants: "Do whatever He tells you (Jn. 2.5). The words: "Do whatever He tells you," reveals Mary's maternal care. She intervenes between Jesus and the servants, thereby becoming the mediator. She invites the servants to obedience. She encourages them to keep a "true attitude of the covenant". Israel has entered into a covenant with God: "I will be your God and you will be my people". True disciples take the Word of God to heart. John Paul II says, Mary points out those things which must be done so that the salvific power of the Messiah may be manifested" (Mother of the Redeemer, 21.4). It was Mary who evoked the first "sign" of Jesus as Cana, that is, the change of water into wine. Cana then became the "beginning" of the self-revelation of the Messiah. The "choice wine" hitherto held back, symbolized the Good News of the Gospel.

At the wedding feast at Cana, Jesus addresses Mary, not as mother, but as "Woman"; "Woman why turn to me, my hour has not yet come" (Jn. 2.4). This appellation suggests that there is now a new relationship between Jesus and Mary, a relationship that goes beyond the blood bond of Mother and Son. In this context Jesus reveals Himself as Messiah. Mary's role assumes a universal dimension. She becomes involved in the saving mission of Jesus. She is now a close collaborator of Jesus in the work of redemption.

Her spiritual motherhood embraces all human beings. It is on the basis of this new maternal role of Mary that Christians feel privileged to approach her as their spokesperson, their intercessor when they face daunting challenges and a multitude of needs and wants.

The use of the title "woman" by Jesus when He referred to His Mother at Cana, echoes the Old Testament use of the title of "Woman Zion", "Daughter of Zion", "Mother Zion". It was Zion, the Mother of Israel who "called her children back from exile".

Psalm 86 says:

“And of Mother Zion they shall say:

One and all were born in her”. The Israelites of the Old Testament pinned their hope of salvation on the Messianic Daughter of Zion. This symbolic figure of a woman became embodied in Mary as the Mother of the Messianic people, the Mother of the new people of God.

Another text that speaks to the spiritual Motherhood of Mary is in the Calvary narration where Jesus once again addresses His Mother as Woman. “Woman behold your son!” and, to the disciple: “Behold your mother!” (Jn. 19.25). Mary, the woman at the foot of the cross of Jesus, fulfils the promise of the prophets. She is the “new Zion”. She represents the messianic community. She gives birth to the new People of God. Her spiritual Motherhood comes to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her son” (Rom. 23.2).

The beloved disciple who welcomes Mary as his own mother, is a symbolic representative of the other disciples of Jesus. But he also personifies fidelity to the Lord Jesus. Christians by their profession of faith, have become the disciples of Jesus Christ. He has shown His love for us definitively by His death on the Cross. Discipleship entails an on-going effort on our part to be faithful to the one who has been so nobly generous in His embrace for all humankind. It is effectively this Jesus who has declared His own Mother to be the Spiritual Mother of the disciple John, and by extension, the Mother of the Human Race. Mary’s Motherhood continues in the Church, the New People of God.

As Mother, Mary summons and directs her children in faith towards Jesus Christ the Supreme Mediator. Her maternal instinct makes her protective of her children. She seeks to bring them closer and closer to Christ the Redeemer. She is exceptionally suited for this role by virtue of being the Mother of Jesus and the “generous companion” in His work of salvation. As Christians we “take refuge under her protection” (Lumen Gentium, 66). We seek in her faith – “she who believed”, a strengthening of our own struggling faith that is caught up in the ever-changing circumstances of life.

The Mother of Mercy Shrine in Magaliesburg is a special place, a fine place, a dedicated place where many who go there will seek to meet the Mother of the Lord and solicit her maternal help, or simply, her maternal company.

**+Buti Tlhagale o.m.i.  
March 4th, 2017,  
Magaliesburg.**