

AUGUST 22, 2025, FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

The Feast of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It seems to be an oxymoron. Mary describes herself as the handmaid of the Lord. A handmaid obeys the commandments of her master or her mistress. A queen is one who gives the commands and expects the handmaid to observe it. But today in our office of the readings or in our bravery, there was one line that struck me. And it said, "Jesus was the son of the line of David, and David was the king. When Jesus suffered and died, when he was crucified, there was a plaque over his head which said, 'Jesus Nazarenus Rex Eudeorum, Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews.'"

Now, somebody became a king when the father died, but the mother was still alive, and according to the Old Testament tradition, she held a very important position. The queen mother was very special, and if Jesus was the king—not only because he descended from the line of David, but also because the civil authorities titled him so—Pilate said, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." And then the Queen Mother had a very, very important place. But she was not like the queens in other places, namely riding in a palanquin with outriders and with soldiers to guide them. She was very much like her son.

As we heard Ruth say in the first reading today, "Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, so shall I live. Your God will be my God too." And so what did Jesus actually do? When he came down from Bethphage on Palm Sunday, he came riding on a mule, and he came down into Jerusalem. His own mother, when she along with Joseph and the governor had said that everybody should register in the place where they came from—Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth all the way down to Bethlehem. Pictures show us that Mary was riding on a donkey and Joseph was leading it. But my favourite picture is one by Fritz von Uder, where it shows Mary and Joseph could not even buy a donkey or afford one. And you see them coming on foot, and the road is muddy.

Jesus had said, “The Son of Man has no place to lay his head,” and now the Queen Mother has no place to give birth to her child. She is heavily pregnant, leaning on Joseph, and they see an inn in the distance with the light, but there is no room for her at the inn.

And then we fast-forward to Calvary. There she is at the foot of the cross, both as mother because her son was dying, but also as a disciple. Jesus said, “If you want to be my disciples, pick up your cross and follow me.” But Jesus was going to give her a very important task at that moment. As she stood, he said, “Behold your son.” And in doing so, he not only commanded his favourite disciple, or the one who considered himself the beloved disciple, but also all believers, to care for her and carry her tenderly in their hearts even now and until today.

And in doing so, she became the Queen of Heaven and the Queen of Earth. I remember that as a little child, a whole family would kneel together and say the rosary every day, and my father would say the Litany. It’s something that we don’t use today when we pray the rosary. And the thing that, in that Litany, really impacted me was when my father would say, “Queen of patriarchs, queen of prophets, queen of apostles, queen of martyrs, queen of virgins, queen of all saints.” And I said, “Boy, we do have somebody to protect us in heaven. Someone who could take care of us, someone who is totally involved in our life.” So we go to marry—the Queen of the Universe, the Queen of Heaven and Earth.

Now, kings and queens in our days are basically honorific and symbolic titles. We have a governor general in Canada who represents Queen Elizabeth (when she was alive) and now King Charles. And King Charles himself in England—they do have power, but they’re not expected to use it. They’re supposed to be symbolic. They’re supposed to be honorific. But Mary was totally involved in the life of Jesus Christ and in our lives too.

At the Annunciation, she said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to your will.” And then she took care of Jesus. She took care of Him to teach Him how to say, “Abba, Father,” taught Him how to say the praise. She saw Him fall, and she saw Him cry in pain. Now she is there on the road to Calvary, and she sees Him fall again. But this time, He does not cry, but He is in pain. And He gets up again. She had trained Him well as a child, and this training is still held together today. She was totally involved not only in the life of her Son, but in our lives too today.

She conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and today she asks the Holy Spirit to walk with us, to guide us, to instruct us as we go on our way. As a Queen Mother, she is totally involved in your life and mine. Therefore, as Saint Ignatius of Loyola tells us, whenever we want to go to the Father, let us go first to the Mother. Let’s go to Mary and say, “Take me to your Son, Jesus.” You took care of Him during His life; you are taking care of us now. Intercede for us before your Son, who in turn will intercede before the Father.

It is because of these reasons that we come to every Mass and bring the prayers of the faithful. And sometimes a priest will say the Hail Mary at the end, even though that might not be liturgically correct, but we still say it because it comes out of a natural desire to take our prayers through Mary, to Jesus, and to the Father. God bless you all.