



HOMILY

**Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church
Mgr Mariano Crociata, President of COMECE**

St Peter's Basilica, Rome
“Demography” Intergroup of the European Parliament

It is most fitting that you should gather together to celebrate the highest act of Christian worship, namely the Holy Mass, as the “Demography” Intergroup of the European Parliament, here in St Peter’s Basilica on the occasion of your meeting in Rome and your audience with the Holy Father, Leo XIV. The celebration of the Eucharist always calls us to go forth from ourselves and to open our hearts to the higher action of God through Christ the Lord and His Spirit in the proclamation of the Word and in the Eucharistic Mystery.

Today the Church celebrates the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, a title solemnly proclaimed by Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council in order to emphasise the role fulfilled by Mary as Mother of the humanity of Jesus, not only in the physical sense but no less in the spiritual order, and therefore also as Mother of the Body of Christ, which is the Church, through her faith and her participation in the Paschal Mystery of her Son. Indeed, the Gospel presents the scene in which Jesus, from the Cross, entrusts the disciple to His Mother and the Mother to the disciple, thereby conferring a universal dimension upon Mary’s motherhood.

Motherhood and demography are objectively linked, although it would not be appropriate to develop that theme further in the present context. One point, however, deserves to be emphasised: namely, the decisive importance of the spiritual dimension — even beyond an explicit horizon of faith — in welcoming and accompanying new generations. We are increasingly aware that human generation is infinitely more than a merely biological reality, since persons are involved, and as such they require care, tenderness, affection, education and, above all, unconditional love.

This inseparable unity of physical and spiritual dimensions is always present in human generation, and it is manifested in a singular way in Mary, of whom Augustine of Hippo says that she conceived Jesus in faith before she conceived Him in the flesh. In this way, she is shown to participate fully in the entire journey of her Son: unto the Cross, the Resurrection and the birth of the Church. For this reason, we invoke her as

Mother of the Church, which is the continuation and sacramental presence of the Body of Christ formed by all who believe in Him.

Christian tradition has recognised in the passage from the Book of Genesis concerning the first sin and the promise of redemption a prefiguration of Mary. Indeed, through her “yes” to the Angel at the Annunciation, her participation in Christ’s work of redemption becomes complete. Yet I would also wish to emphasise another aspect of the first reading, namely the tendency of Adam and then Eve to shift responsibility for the fault they had committed. Mary, by contrast, is truly the woman who accepted full responsibility for her response to God’s call, indeed for her role within the very history of salvation.

In both the small and the great matters of life, there is need of persons of this kind: persons unafraid of burdens and commitments, and unwilling to place upon others the responsibilities entrusted to them. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church and our Mother, let us ask for the grace to grow ever more deeply in our commitment to contribute to a world that is more humane, more just and more fraternal.