

MISSION STATEMENT
OF
THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
OUR LADY OF JOYFUL HOPE
by Rev. Stanley Smolenski

The mission statement of the Shrine of Our Lady of South Carolina, Our Lady of Joyful Hope, follows the directives given by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in its document, *The Shrine – Memory, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God*, especially in its final paragraphs.

In approaching Mary, pilgrims should feel themselves called to experience that ‘paschal dimension’ which gradually transforms their life through the hearing of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and commitment of behalf of their brother and sisters.

From the encounter of communities and individuals with Mary, Star of Evangelization, pilgrims, like the apostles before them, will be impelled to proclaim by word and witness of life ‘the mighty works of God’ (Acts 2.11).

The Shrine – Memory, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God 18

Commentary:

The importance of the *paschal dimension* is evident in the documents of Vatican II, such as in *Optatum Totius* 8: “Priests should so live the paschal mystery themselves that they can initiate into it the flock committed to them.”

The Code of Canon Law, as well, in canon 387, obliges the bishops to point their faithful in that same direction:

Mindful that he is bound to give an example of holiness, charity, humility and simplicity of life, the diocesan Bishop is to seek in every way to promote the holiness of Christ’s faithful according to the special vocation of each. Since he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, he is to strive constantly that Christ’s faithful entrusted to his care may grow in grace through the sacraments, and may know and live the paschal mystery.

CIC, c. 387

The paschal mystery is a recurrent theme in the teaching of the Servant of God Pope John Paul II, and summarized in his general address on the 29th of March 1989, “The whole life of the Christian must be paschal.” Then, in his address on priestly spirituality during his general audience on 12 May 1993, the same Pontiff elaborated that “every priest, at any level, in any area of work, is the servant and minister of the paschal mystery accomplished on the cross and lived anew on the altar for the redemption of mankind.”

This has become a recurring theme in the liturgical prayer of the Church. On the First Sunday of Lent the Church prays: “Father, through our observance of Lent, help us to understand the

meaning of your Son's death and resurrection, and teach us to reflect it in our lives." This perspective continues in the prayer of Tuesday of the fourth week of Lent: "Father, may our Lenten observance prepare us to embrace the paschal mystery and proclaim your salvation with joyful praise." This same desire is expressed in the opening prayer for the Mass on the Thursday of the second week of Easter: "God of mercy may the Easter (Paschal) mystery we celebrate be effective throughout our lives."

This paschal dimension is essentially Eucharistic because, as Pope John Paul II stated in his 2005 *Holy Thursday Letter to Priests*, "Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, the remembrance of Christ in his paschal mystery leads us to the desire for a full and definitive encounter with him." In his Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 5, the same Holy Father teaches that "in the gift (the Eucharist) Jesus Christ entrusted to his Church the perennial making present of the paschal mystery." He repeats the same idea further in the same section, "in the paschal event and the Eucharist which makes it present throughout the centuries..." In his 25 September 2005 Sunday angelus address, Pope Benedict XVI, quoting that encyclical, pointed out the same: "The Eucharist, where the entire Paschal Mystery is concentrated..."

As for the transformation of the Christian life "through hearing of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and a commitment of behalf of their brothers and sisters (*The Shrine* 18), there is an excellent model in the Emmaus episode, where Jesus himself instructs the two disciples as to the meaning of his paschal mystery, then celebrates it with them in the "breaking of the bread", wherein they recognize him and where upon the disciples returned to Jerusalem to inform the other disciples of the paschal mystery of the altar.

As for a Marian approach to the Word, the Rosary is a practical means to help concentrate on the mysteries of our faith. The extended seven-part Rosary following the pattern of salvation history, is a litany of the "mighty works of God" (*The Shrine* 18), from creation to glorification. This is similar to the method our Lord used to prepare the two disciples for the celebration of the Mass at Emmaus, which in turn made them the first Eucharistic evangelizers in the original Church.

As to the proclamation "by work and witness of life (of) 'the mighty works of God'" (*The Shrine* 18), this occurs by evangelization and catechization as well as the imitation of the virtues and the expression of the values meditated upon in the lives of those presented in this chain of mysteries, composing salvation history.

The importance of this spirituality, which is the charism as well as purpose of the Shrine of Our Lady of South Carolina – Our Lady of Joyful Hope is evident in Pope John Paul II's universal statement in *Oriente Lumen*, as quoted in *L'Observatore Romano* 2 March 2005, "The world is destined to be assumed in the Eucharist of the Lord, in his Passover (paschal mystery), present in the sacrifice of the altar." The Marian dimension in this is indicated in the same Holy Father's encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, chapter six, *At the School of Mary – Woman of the Eucharist* 53: "Mary can guide us toward this most holy sacrament (paschal mystery of the altar) because she herself has a profound relationship to it." Further in 62 he emphasizes "Gazing upon Mary, we come to know the transforming power present in the Eucharist." Already in 1996 Pope John Paul II said to the 19th Mariological and Marian Congress "May these days bring you to her who ... is the most perfect teacher of that love which enables us to be united in the deepest way with

Christ in the mystery of his Eucharistic presence. Let Mary lead us to the Eucharist! “ The centrality of this theme was already indicated within the first year of his papacy in his general audience address on the 19th of August 1979: “I wish to place you under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. May she, who for many years could profit from the visible presence of Jesus and who treated her Divine Son with the greatest care and delicacy, accompany you always to the Eucharist. May she give you her own sentiments of adoration and of love.”

The Eucharist as the source and summit of the life and mission of the Church was the subject of the 11th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, 2004. Pope Benedict XVI at the end of his homily at the opening of this Synod of Bishops stressed that it should not be a time just for beautiful speeches on the Eucharist, but above all how to live from its power. He concluded with “Let us invoke this gift through Mary...”

Let us recall that the icon of Our Lady of South Carolina – Our Lady of Joyful Hope, portrays Mary holding the rosary, “the compendium of the gospel” as referred to by Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* 42, and the Christ Child holding the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Paschal Lamb of God.

The presence of the Rosary and the Eucharist in this icon indicate that the message of the South Carolina Shrine is in accord with the desire of the Church and therefore should be received with approval by all.

This Shrine will not only assist the laity to fulfill their paschal/Eucharistic vocations, but will be a method to assure the Bishop that he is fulfilling his obligation to “strive constantly” (*CIC*, c.387) for the paschal/Eucharistic sanctification of his diocese, by priests who are dedicated to such an ecclesial spirituality, to create, in the words of Pope Paul VI, “the Paschal Church” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* 43). That is because, according to *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 3: “The Church was born of the paschal mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, stands at the center of the Church’s life”.