

**Mary Mother of the Church**  
**June 1, 2020**  
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Today is a rather new feast, the memorial of Mary, Mother of the Church—made such by Pope Francis in 2018.

Our first reading from Acts after the scene at the Ascension, pictured so well on the cover of *Give Us This Day* in May, has the apostles returning to the upper room where they were staying to “devote themselves to constant prayer.”

And it says: “there were some women in their company, and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers” were there. This was the new Church gathered and the text says who was present: *some women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers!* Mary the mother of this new Church. That she is our mother as well is testified to in the Gospel: as Jesus hung on the cross before he died, he saw his mother and the disciple he loved. He said, “Woman behold your son,” and to the disciple he said: “Behold your Mother.” Jesus gave Mary, his mother to his disciples, his followers, and that means us!

Pope Francis says “in times of need when we are entangled in life’s knots, we rightly lift our gaze to Mary our Mother.” Yes first, he says, we should let ourselves be gazed upon by Mary (because) when she gazes upon us she does not see sinners but children ... and she says, “Take heart, dear children, here I am, your Mother.”

Francis continues: this maternal gaze, which instills confidence and trust, helps us grow in faith ... that gaze helps us to see ourselves as beloved children of God’s faithful people, thus brothers and sisters, and we need to “love one another” despite our limitations.

If there ever is a time when the current situation has us all “entangled in life’s knots” it is NOW, as we experience and have suffered, for two-and-a-half months, the coronavirus and its effects, but now this past week the fallout of the terrible wound of racism so strong in the structures of our society. We see on the news the fires, the looting, the mob protests. It is overwhelming!

Today, June 1, the LCWR has invited more than 40,000 religious women to join 100 national faith leaders: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions who have called for a national day of Mourning and Lamenting for those who have died from Covid-19. “The faith leaders underscore that the healing of the nation must face the brokenness of its democracy as they call for the repair of the injustices this pandemic has revealed.” We are asked to stop at noon today for prayer to remember the more than 100,000 people in this country who have died from this coronavirus pandemic.

But we can use the same call for prayer in light of “mourning and lament” for all the violence and destruction that has occurred in many cities the last few days as a reaction to the repeated deaths of black men at the hands of the police. The anger of the black

community, as well as many others calling attention to the repeated injustice of the system, is calling attention to the terrible wound of racism that needs our prayer.

We need to gather as those early disciples with Mary, Mother of the Church, in constant prayer, in mourning and lament, for the victims of the pandemic, their first responders, and also for all those in the black community who have died and continue to be affected by the ongoing racism, the unhealed systemic injustice found in our society and culture.

We need to ask ourselves how our own racism makes us complicit in all this and pray for our own deep conversion. The black community says through the protests: **It is time to stop this! Can you hear us?**

Mary is the mother of the Church. She is the mother of Jesus and all his disciples, no matter what color. She is the mother of all believers. Let us turn to her, in faith, in confidence and trust that she will hear our prayer, turn to her Son as his mother and our mother. Surely this time of Mourning and Lament calls to each of us for communal prayer. Let us join together with the religious of LCWR, as well as people of many faiths in prayer. Some things can only be overcome by the powerful tool of prayer.