

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Oct 11th 2014

The Memorial date for St. John XXIII was chosen because this is the date on which he delivered his opening address to the Second Vatican Council.

Here is the text of that address.

Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer

Today's very short gospel reading can easily be misunderstood as an indication that Jesus did not support any special devotion to Mary, his mother. In response to a woman in the crowd who calls for blessings on his mother Jesus said, "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Jesus was not denying the blessings on his mother; she was certainly included among all who hear the word of God and observe it. Mary was the epitome of observing God's word especially when she said, "Let it be done unto me according to thy word." Jesus was letting us know that the blessings of God are not reserved just for his mother, but that by imitating her we will receive those blessings also.

During the years of the cold war, we were encouraged to pray the rosary for the intention of world peace. Since Vatican II, there seemed to be a de-emphasis on devotion to Mary by the church and gone was the encouragement to ask Mary to be our intercessor with her son. Now there seems to be a revival of Marian devotions and praying the rosary at least in some areas. Peace is certainly threatened in many parts of the world, and perhaps that is the source of a renewed devotion to the mother of the Prince of Peace and the heavenly mother of us all.

Today is the first Memorial of Saint John XXIII since his canonization. I have always associated him with initiation of Vatican II which certainly was a tremendous gift he gave to the Church, but he also was an advocate of prayers to Mary as intercessor. In his encyclical, *Grata Recordatio*, he urged prayerful recitation of the rosary for the success of the Council and described it beautifully with the following words: "In saying it we weave a mystic garland of Ave Maria's, Pater Noster's, and Gloria Patri's. And as we recite these vocal prayers, we meditate upon the principal mysteries of our religion; the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the Redemption of the human race are proposed, one event after another, for our consideration."

October is dedicated by the church as the month of the Holy Rosary. May we, in the words of St John XXIII, "weave the mystic garland" asking Mary's intercession for peace in the world, our communities, our families and within our own hearts.

