



“Making Memory of His Legacy to Strengthen Our Identity”

Parish: IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

November 4th, 2013

Theme: “Behold your Mother!”

ENCYCLICAL MOTHER OF THE REDEEMER

JOYFUL MYSTERIES

I. The Annunciation

“The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her he said: “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.” Mary said: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:26-33, 38).

13. As the Council teaches, “The obedience of faith’ (Rom. 16:26; cf. Rom. 1:5; 2 Cor. 10:5-6) must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God.” This description of faith found perfect realization in Mary. The “decisive” moment was the Annunciation, and the very words of Elizabeth: “And blessed is she who believed” refer primarily to that very moment. Indeed, at the Annunciation Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the “full submission of intellect and will,” manifesting “the obedience of faith” to him who spoke to her through his messenger. She responded, therefore, with all her human and feminine “I,” and this response of faith included both perfect cooperation with “the grace of God that precedes and assists” and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit, who “constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts.”

The word of the living God, announced to Mary by the angel, referred to her: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son” (Lk. 1:31). By accepting this announcement, Mary was to become the “Mother of the Lord,” and the divine mystery of the Incarnation was to be accomplished in her: “The Father of mercies willed that the consent of the predestined Mother should precede the Incarnation.” And Mary gives this consent, after she has heard everything the messenger has to say. She says: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Lk. 1:38). This fiat of Mary-“let it be to me”-was decisive, on the human level, for the accomplishment of the divine mystery. The mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished when Mary uttered her fiat: “Let it be to me according to your word,” which made possible, as far as it depended upon her in the divine plan, the granting of her Son’s desire. Mary uttered this fiat in faith. In faith she entrusted herself to God without reserve and “devoted herself totally as the handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son.

Mother of the Redeemer, pray for us!

II. The Visitation

“During those days Mary set out and traveled to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” (Luke 1: 39-45)

12. Immediately after the narration of the Annunciation, the Evangelist Luke guides us in the footsteps of the Virgin of Nazareth towards “a city of Judah” (Lk. 1:39). Mary arrived there “in haste,” to visit Elizabeth her kinswoman. Moved by charity, therefore, Mary goes to the house of her kinswoman. When Mary enters, Elizabeth replies to her greeting and feels the child leap in her womb, and being “filled with the Holy Spirit” she greets Mary with a loud cry: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (cf. Lk. 1:40-42) Elizabeth's exclamation or acclamation was subsequently to become part of the Hail Mary, as a continuation of the angel's greeting, thus becoming one of the Church's most frequently used prayers. But still more significant are the words of Elizabeth in the question which follows: “And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Lk. 1:43) Elizabeth bears witness to Mary: she recognizes and proclaims that before her stands the Mother of the Lord, the Mother of the Messiah. The son whom Elizabeth is carrying in her womb also shares in this witness: “The babe in my womb leaped for joy” (Lk. 1:44). This child is the future John the Baptist, who at the Jordan will point out Jesus as the Messiah.

While every word of Elizabeth's greeting is filled with meaning, her final words would seem to have fundamental importance: “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (Lk. 1:45). These words can be linked with the little “full of grace” of the angel's greeting. Both of these texts reveal an essential Mariological content, namely the truth about Mary, who has become really present in the mystery of Christ precisely because she “has believed.” The fullness of grace announced by the angel means the gift of God himself. Mary's faith, proclaimed by Elizabeth at the Visitation, indicates how the Virgin of Nazareth responded to this gift.

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III. The Birth of Our Lord

“The time came for Mary to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.’” (Luke 2:6-12)

1. The Mother of the Redeemer has a precise place in the plan of salvation, for “when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal. 4:4-6)

This "fullness" indicates the moment fixed from all eternity when the Father sent his Son "that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). It denotes the blessed moment when the Word that "was with God...became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:1, 14), and made himself our brother. It marks the moment when the Holy Spirit, who had already infused the fullness of grace into Mary of Nazareth, formed in her virginal womb the human nature of Christ. This "fullness" marks the moment when, with the entrance of the eternal into time, time itself is redeemed, and being filled with the mystery of Christ becomes definitively "salvation time." Finally, this "fullness" designates the hidden beginning of the Church's journey. In the liturgy the Church salutes Mary of Nazareth as the Church's own beginning, for in the event of the Immaculate Conception the Church sees projected, and anticipated in her most noble member, the saving grace of Easter. And above all, in the Incarnation she encounters Christ and Mary indissolubly joined: he who is the Church's Lord and Head and she who, uttering the first fiat of the New Covenant, prefigures the Church's condition as spouse and mother.

2. Strengthened by the presence of Christ (cf. Mt. 28:20), the Church journeys through time towards the consummation of the ages and goes to meet the Lord who comes. But on this journey- and I wish to make this point straightaway-she proceeds along the path already trodden by the Virgin Mary, who "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross."

Mother of the Redeemer, pray for us!

IV. The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple

"There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon... When the parents brought in the child Jesus, Simeon took him into his arms and said: 'Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation' Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother: 'Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and you, a sword shall pierce your heart that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.'" (Luke 2:25-35)

23. The Gospels present Mary's caring motherhood at the beginning of Christ's messianic activity, another passage from the same Gospel confirms this motherhood in the salvific economy of grace at its crowning moment, namely when Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, his Paschal Mystery, is accomplished. John's description is concise: "Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother: 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:25-27).

Undoubtedly, we find here an expression of the Son's particular solicitude for his Mother, whom he is leaving in such great sorrow. And yet the "testament of Christ's Cross" says more. Jesus highlights a new relationship between Mother and Son, the whole truth and reality of which he solemnly confirms. One can say that if Mary's motherhood of the human race had already been outlined, now it is clearly stated and established. It emerges from the definitive accomplishment of the Redeemer's Paschal Mystery. The Mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery-a mystery which embraces each individual and all humanity-is given as mother to every single individual and all mankind. The man at the foot of the Cross is John, "the disciple whom he loved." But it is not he alone. Following tradition, the Council does not hesitate to call Mary "the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind": since she "belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all human beings.... Indeed she is 'clearly the mother of the

members of Christ...since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful."

And so this "new motherhood of Mary," generated by faith, is the fruit of the "new" love which came to definitive maturity in her at the foot of the Cross, through her sharing in the redemptive love of her Son. 24. And so, in the redemptive economy of grace, brought about through the action of the Holy Spirit, there is a unique correspondence between the moment of the Incarnation of the Word and the moment of the birth of the Church. The person who links these two moments is Mary: Mary at Nazareth and Mary in the Upper Room at Jerusalem. In both cases her discreet yet essential presence indicates the path of "birth from the Holy Spirit." Thus she who is present in the mystery of Christ as Mother becomes-by the will of the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit-present in the mystery of the Church. In the Church too she continues to be a maternal presence, as is shown by the words spoken from the Cross: "Woman, behold your son!"; "Behold, your mother."

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V. The Child Jesus Lost and Found in the Temple

"Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover...As they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it...Not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers." (Luke 2:41-47)

45. in Christ's testament on Golgotha his Mother's new motherhood is expressed in the singular, in reference to one man: "Behold your son." It can also be said that these same words fully show the reason for the Marian dimension of the life of Christ's disciples. This is true not only of John, who at that hour stood at the foot of the Cross together with his Master's Mother, but it is also true of every disciple of Christ, of every Christian.

The Redeemer entrusts his mother to the disciple, and at the same time he gives her to him as his mother. Mary's motherhood, which becomes man's inheritance, is a gift: a gift which Christ himself makes personally to every individual. The Redeemer entrusts Mary to John because he entrusts John to Mary. At the foot of the Cross there begins that special entrusting of humanity to the Mother of Christ, which in the history of the Church has been practiced and expressed in different ways. The same Apostle and Evangelist, after reporting the words addressed by Jesus on the Cross to his Mother and to himself, adds: "And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn. 19:27). This statement certainly means that the role of son was attributed to the disciple and that he assumed responsibility for the Mother of his beloved Master. And since Mary was given as a mother to him personally, the statement indicates, even though indirectly, everything expressed by the intimate relationship of a child with its mother. And all of this can be included in the word "entrusting." Such entrusting is the response to a person's love, and in particular to the love of a mother.

The Marian dimension of the life of a disciple of Christ is expressed in a special way precisely through this filial entrusting to the Mother of Christ, which began with the testament of the Redeemer on Golgotha. Entrusting himself to Mary in a filial manner, the Christian, like the Apostle John, "welcomes" the Mother of Christ "into his own home" and brings her into everything that makes up his inner life, that is to say

into his human and Christian "I": he "took her to his own home." Thus the Christian seeks to be taken into that "maternal charity" with which the Redeemer's Mother "cares for the brethren of her Son," "in whose birth and development she cooperates" in the measure of the gift proper to each one through the power of Christ's Spirit. Thus also is exercised that motherhood in the Spirit which became Mary's role at the foot of the Cross and in the Upper Room.

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Totus Tuus!