SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO
HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 201118a

Wednesday 18.11.2020

General Audience

This morning's general audience took place at 9.15 in the library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace.

In his address in Italian the Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on prayer, focusing on the theme "The Virgin Mary, prayerful woman" (Bible reading: *Lk* 2: 39-40, 51).

After summarising his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful.

The general audience concluded with the recitation of the Pater Noster and the apostolic blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

Good morning!

In our course of catecheses on prayer, today we meet *the Virgin Mary* as *the prayerful woman*. Our Lady prayed. When the world still knew nothing of her, when she was a simple girl engaged to a man of the house of David, Mary prayed. We can imagine the young girl of Nazareth wrapped in silence, in continuous dialogue with God who would soon entrust her with a mission. She is already full of grace and immaculate from the moment she was conceived; but she knows nothing yet of her surprising and extraordinary vocation and the stormy sea she will have to cross. One thing is certain: Mary belongs to a great host of the humble of heart whom the official historians never include in their books, but with whom God prepared the coming of his son.

Mary did not autonomously conduct her life: she waited for God to take the reins of her path and guide her where he wanted. She was docile, and with her availability she prepared the grand events in which God takes

part in the world. The *Catechism* recalls her constant and caring presence in the benevolent design of the Father throughout the course of Jesus' life (cf. *CCC*, 2617-2618).

Mary was praying when the Archangel Gabriel came to bring his message to her in Nazareth. Her small yet immense "Here I am", which made all of creation jump for joy in that moment, had been preceded throughout salvation history by many other "Here I ams", by many trusting obediences, by many who were open to God's will. There is no better way to pray than to place oneself like Mary in an attitude of openness, with a heart open to God: "Lord, what you want, when you want, and how you want". That is, a heart open to God's will. And God always responds. How many believers live their prayer like this! Those who are more humble of heart pray like this: with essential humility, let's put it that way; with simple humility: "Lord, what you want, when you want, and how you want". And they pray like this and do not get upset when problems fill their days, but rather they face reality, knowing that in humble love, in love offered in each situation, we become instruments of God's grace. "Lord, what you want, when you want, and how you want". A simple prayer, but one in which we place ourselves in the Lord's hands so that he may guide us. We can all pray like this, almost without words.

Prayer knows how to calm restlessness. But we are restless, we always want things before asking for them, and we want them right away. This restlessness harms us. And prayer knows how to calm restlessness, knows how to transform it into availability. When we are restless, I pray and prayer opens my heart and makes me open to God's will. In those few moments of the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary knew how to reject fear, even while sensing that her "yes" would bring her tremendously difficult trials. If in prayer we understand that each day given by God is a call, our hearts will then widen and we will accept everything. We will learn how to say: "What you want, Lord. Promise me only that you will be present every step of my way". This is what's important: to ask the Lord to be present in every step of our way: that he not leave us alone, that he not abandon us in temptation, that he not abandon us in the bad moments. The end of the Our Father is like this: the grace that Jesus himself taught us to ask of the Lord.

Mary accompanied Jesus' entire life in prayer, right up to his death and resurrection; and in the end, she continued and she accompanied the first steps of the nascent Church (cf. Acts 1:14). Mary prayed with the disciples who had witnessed the scandal of the cross. She prayed with Peter who had succumbed to fear and cried in remorse. Mary was there, with the disciples, in the midst of the men and women whom her son had called to form his Community. Mary did not act like a priest among them, no! She is Jesus' Mother who prayed with them, in the community, as a member of the community. She prayed with them and prayed for them. And, once again, her prayer preceded the future that was about to be fulfilled: by the work of the Holy Spirit she became the Mother of God, and by the work of the Holy Spirit she became the Mother of the Church. Praying with the nascent Church, she became the Mother of the Church, accompanying the disciples in the first steps of the Church in prayer, awaiting the Holy Spirit. In silence, always silently. Mary's prayer was silent. The Gospels recount only one of Mary's prayers at Cana, when she asked her son for those poor people who were about to make a terrible impression during the banquet. So, let us imagine: having a wedding banquet and ending it up with milk because there is no wine! What a bad impression! And she prayed and asked her son to resolve that problem. In and of itself, Mary's presence was prayer, and her presence among the disciples in the Upper Room, awaiting the Holy Spirit, was prayer. Thus Mary gave birth to the Church, she is the Mother of the Church. The *Catechism* explains: "In the faith of his humble handmaid, the Gift of God", that is, the Holy Spirit, "found the acceptance he had awaited from the beginning of time" (*CCC,* 2617).

In the Virgin Mary, natural feminine intuition is exalted by her most singular union with God in prayer. This is why, reading the Gospel, we note that she seems to disappear at times, only to reappear in crucial moments: Mary was open to God's voice that guided her heart, that guided her steps where her presence was needed. Her silent presence as mother and as disciple. Mary was present because she was Mother, but she was also present because she was the first disciple, the one who best learned Jesus' ways. Mary never said: "Come, I will take care of things". Instead she said: "Do whatever he will tell you", always pointing her finger at Jesus. This behaviour was typical of the disciples, and she was the first disciple: she prayed as Mother and she prayed as a disciple.

"Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). This is how the evangelist Luke depicts the Mother of the Lord in the infancy Gospel. Everything that happened around her ended up being reflected on in

the depths of her heart: the days filled with joy, as well as the darkest moments when she too struggled to understand by which roads Redemption must pass. Everything ended up in her heart so that it might pass through the sieve of prayer and be transfigured by it: whether it be the gifts of the Magi, or the flight into Egypt, until that terrible passion Friday. The Mother kept everything and brought it to her dialogue with God. Someone has compared Mary's heart to a pearl of incomparable splendour, formed and smoothed by patient acceptance of God's will through the mysteries of Jesus meditated in prayer. How beautiful it would be if we too could be a bit like our Mother! With a heart open to God's Word, with a silent heart, with an obedient heart, with a heart that knows how to receive God's Word and allows it to grow with the seed of good for the Church.

Greeting in English

I cordially greet the English-speaking faithful. In this month of November, let us continue to pray for our deceased loved ones, and for all who have died, that the Lord in his mercy will welcome them into the Kingdom of heaven. Upon you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!