



The Holy See

CONCLUSION OF THE MARIAN MONTH

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

31 May 1979

"And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord" (Lk 1:45).

1: With this greeting, the elderly Elizabeth exalts her young kinswoman Mary, who has come, humble and modest, to help her. Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, the mother of the Baptist is the first in the history of the Church to begin to proclaim the marvels that God has brought about in the girl from Nazareth, and sees fully realized in Mary *the bliss of faith*, because she has believed there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

At the close of the Marian month, in this splendid Roman evening, at this place which reminds us of the Lourdes grotto, we must reflect, beloved Sisters and. Brothers, on what was the fundamental interior attitude of the Blessed Virgin with regard to God: *her faith*. Mary believed! She believed in the Lord's words, transmitted to her by the Angel Gabriel; at the Annunciation, her pure heart, already given entirely to God from her childhood, dilated in the generous and unconditional "Fiat" with which she agreed to become the Mother of the Messiah and Son of God. From that moment, taking her place more and more deeply in God's plan, she will let herself be led by the hand by mysterious Providence and for her whole life, rooted in faith, she will follow her Son spiritually, becoming his first and perfect "disciple" and carry-out in everyday life the requirements involved in following Jesus according to his own words: "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:27).

Thus Mary will advance throughout her life in her "pilgrimage of faith" (cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 58), while her beloved Son, misunderstood, slandered, condemned, crucified, will mark out for her, day after day, a painful way, the necessary premise for that glorification, sung in

the "Magnificat": "all generations will call me blessed" (Lk 1:48). But first Mary, too, will have to go up to Calvary to be present, in sorrow, at the death of her Jesus.

2. Today's feast of the Visitation presents to us another aspect of Mary's inner life: her attitude of *humble service* and *disinterested love* for those in need. She has just heard from the Angel Gabriel of the state of her kinswoman Elizabeth, and at once she sets out for the hills "in haste" to reach a city of Judah, the present-day "Ain Karem". The meeting of the two Mothers is also the meeting between the Forerunner and the Messiah, who, through his Mother, begins to operate salvation by making John the Baptist leap with joy when still in his mother's womb.

"No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us... And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also" (1 Jn 4:12.21), St John the evangelist will say. But who, better than Mary, had put this message into practice? And who, if not Jesus, whom she bore in her womb, urged her, stimulated her, inspired her to this continual attitude of generous service and disinterested love of others? "The Son of man came not to be served but to serve" (Mt 20:28), Jesus will say to his disciples; but his Mother had already carried out perfectly this attitude of her Son. Let us listen again to the famous comment, full of spiritual unction, that St Ambrose makes on Mary's journey: "Joyful to carry out her desire, delicate in her duty, thoughtful in her joy, she hastened to the hills. Where, if not to the summits, was she, who was already full of God, to aspire with solicitous care? The grace of the Holy Spirit does not know obstacles which delay action" (*Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*. II, 19; CCL 14, p. 39).

And if we reflect with particular attention on the passage of the Letter to the Romans, which we have just listened to, we realize that there emerges from it an effective image of the behaviour of the Blessed Virgin, for our edification: her charity knew no insincerity; she loved others deeply; fervent in spirit, she served the Lord; joyful in hope; strong in tribulation, persevering in prayer; solicitous for the needs of brothers (cf. Rom 12:9-13).

3. "Joyful in hope": the atmosphere that pervades the evangelical episode of the Visitation is *joy*: the mystery of the Visitation is a *mystery of joy*. John the Baptist exults with joy in the womb of St Elizabeth; the latter, rejoicing in the gift of motherhood, bursts out into blessings of the Lord; Mary pours forth the "Magnificat", a hymn overflowing with Messianic joy.

But what is the mysterious, hidden source of this joy? It is Jesus, whom Mary has already conceived thanks to the Holy Spirit, and who is already beginning to defeat what is the root of fear, anguish and sadness: sin, the most humiliating slavery for man.

This evening we are celebrating together the close of the Marian month of 1979. But the month of May cannot end; it must continue in our lives, because veneration, love, devotion to Our Lady cannot disappear from our hearts, on the contrary they must grow and be expressed in a testimony of Christian life, modelled on the example of Mary, "the name of the beautiful flower which I always invoke / morning and evening", as the poet Dante Alighieri sings (Paradise, XXIII, 88).

Oh Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church, look upon us mercifully at this hour!

Virgo Fidelis, Faithful Virgin, pray for us! Teach us to believe as you believed! Make our faith in God, in Christ, in the Church, always be limpid, serene, courageous, strong and generous.

Mater Amabilis, Mother worthy of love! *Mater pulchrae dilectionis*, Mother of fair love, pray for us! Teach us to love God and our brothers, as you loved them: make our love for others always be patient, kindly, respectful.

Causa nostrae laetitiae, Cause of our joy, pray for us! Teach us to be able to grasp, in faith, the paradox of Christian joy, which springs up and blooms from sorrow, renunciation, union with your crucified Son: make our joy always be genuine and full, in order to be able to communicate it to all!

Amen!

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