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"Totus Tuus!"

John Paul II entrusted his life to Mary with these words: "Totus tuus ego sum!" (I am all yours). In this month dedicated to our Lady, we offer some words from the new Saint on God's Mother. With link to "How to pray the Rosary" and "Story of St. Josemaria's first pilgrimage to Sonsoles."

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“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*).

With these words of the Apostle Paul, which the Second Vatican Council takes up at the beginning of its treatment of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I too wish to begin my reflection on the role of Mary in the mystery of Christ and on her active and exemplary presence in the life of the Church. For they are words which celebrate together the love of the Father, the mission of the Son, the gift of the Spirit, the role of the woman from whom the Redeemer was born, and our own divine filiation, in the mystery of the "fullness of time" (*Redemptoris Mater*, 1).

The figure of Mary of Nazareth sheds light on womanhood as such by the

very fact that God, in the sublime event of the Incarnation of his Son, entrusted himself to the ministry, the free and active ministry of a woman. It can thus be said that women, by looking to Mary, find in her the secret of living their femininity with dignity and of achieving their own true advancement. In the light of Mary, the Church sees in the face of women the reflection of a beauty which mirrors the loftiest sentiments of which the human heart is capable: the self-offering totality of love; the strength that is capable of bearing the greatest sorrows; limitless fidelity and tireless devotion to work; the ability to combine penetrating intuition with words of support and encouragement (*Redemptoris Mater*, 46).

The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer. In the sobriety of its elements, it has all the *depth of the*

Gospel message in its entirety , of which it can be said to be a compendium. It is an echo of the prayer of Mary, her perennial *Magnificat* for the work of the redemptive Incarnation which began in her virginal womb. With the Rosary, the Christian people *sits at the school of Mary* and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 1).

The Rosary has accompanied me in moments of joy and in moments of difficulty. To it I have entrusted any number of concerns; in it I have always found comfort. Twenty-four years ago, on 29 October 1978, scarcely two weeks after my election to the See of Peter, I frankly admitted: "The Rosary is my favorite prayer. A marvelous prayer! Marvelous in its simplicity and its depth" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 2).

Christ is the supreme Teacher, the revealer and the one revealed. It is not just a question of learning what he taught but of “ *learning him*. ” In this regard could we have any better teacher than Mary? From the divine standpoint, the Spirit is the interior teacher who leads us to the full truth of Christ (cf. *Jn* 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). But among creatures no one knows Christ better than Mary; no one can introduce us to a profound knowledge of his mystery better than his Mother (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 14).

The history of the Rosary shows how this prayer was used in particular by the Dominicans at a difficult time for the Church due to the spread of heresy. Today we are facing new challenges. Why should we not once more have recourse to the Rosary, with the same faith as those who have gone before us? (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 17).

Hence *Mary* attains *a union with God that exceeds* all the expectations of the human spirit. It even exceeds the expectations of all Israel, in particular the daughters of this Chosen People, who, on the basis of the promise, could hope that one of their number would one day become the mother of the Messiah. Who among them, however, could have imagined that the promised Messiah would be “the Son of the Most High”? On the basis of the Old Testaments monotheistic faith such a thing was difficult to imagine. Only by the power of the Holy Spirit, who “overshadowed” her, was Mary able to accept what is “impossible with men, but not with God” (cf. *Mk* 10: 27) (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 3).

Mary is the full revelation of all that is included in the biblical word “woman”: a revelation commensurate with the mystery of the Redemption. *Mary* means, in a

sense, a going beyond the limit spoken of in the Book of Genesis (3:16) and a return to that "beginning" in which one finds the "woman" as she was intended to be in *creation*, and therefore in the eternal mind of God: in the bosom of the Most Holy Trinity. Mary is "the new beginning" of the *dignity and vocation of women*, of each and every woman.

A particular key for understanding this can be found in the words which the Evangelist puts on Mary's lips after the Annunciation, during her visit to Elizabeth: "He who is mighty has done great things for me" (*Lk* 1:49). These words certainly refer to the conception of her Son, who is the "Son of the Most High" (*Lk* 1:32), the "holy one" of God; but they can also signify *the discovery of her own feminine humanity*. He "has done great things for me": *this is the discovery of all the richness and*

personal resources of femininity, all the eternal originality of the “woman,” just as God wanted her to be, a person for her own sake, who discovers herself “by means of a sincere gift of self” (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 11).

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