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Meditations: September 12, Holy Name of Mary

Some reflections that can assist our prayer on the feast of the sweet name of our Mother Mary.

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- A mother close by, whom we can call by name
- Hope in the midst of difficulties
- Mary always leads us to Jesus

SAINT ELIZABETH'S surprise must have been great when, in the middle of her pregnancy, she received a visit from her cousin. *Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb*, Elizabeth said when greeting Mary. *And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (Lk 1:41-43). Mary's arrival fills the heart of Zechariah's wife with overflowing joy. Several months before she had joyfully received the news that she would give birth; and now God is granting her a new grace, sending her cousin to accompany her during that special time.

Saint Elizabeth's joyful surprise is repeated in the hearts of Christians when they discover Mary's closeness, and therefore that of our Lord, in their own lives. Jesus enters our world not in a strange way, but in the womb of his Mother. And she is the first to come to meet us, as she did

with her cousin. The feast of the Holy Name of Mary reminds us that we have a mother close to us, whom we can call with the certainty of being heard. “We are children who know our Father loves us. Mary tells us about this warmth and security. That’s why her name goes straight to our heart.”^[1] —

Our faith and hope are enkindled when we pronounce the name of the Mother of Jesus. It is so easy to address her; we can call on her with the naturalness of children. Saint Josemaría said: “Our relationship with our own mother may show us how to deal with Mary, the Lady of the Sweet Name. We have to love God with the same heart with which we love our parents, our brothers and sisters, the other members of our family, our friends. And we must love Mary with that same heart, too.”^[2] —

AS SOON AS I HEARD the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy (Lk 1:44). Mary's words stir John to move in his mother's womb. Saint Elizabeth senses in her child's joy the great reality that our Lady is carrying the hope of Israel. And therefore she addresses Mary with astounding words of praise: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. . . blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord (Lk 1:42.45).

Like Saint Elizabeth, we too can praise our Mother because she has allowed God to work in her life, and thus to bring her Son's peace into the world. This can fill us with hope in the midst of our daily struggles. Indeed, many saints have advised turning to Mary amid tribulations to find optimism and serenity. "In

dangers, in worries, in doubts, think of Mary, call upon Mary,” Saint Bernard wrote. “May Mary always be on your lips; may she never be absent from your heart.”^[3] —

If at times our life seems like a sea agitated by our own weaknesses, calling upon Mary fills us with security. “In the Western tradition, the name ‘Mary’ was translated as ‘Star of the Sea.’ The title expresses exactly this experience: how often the environment around us can seem like a dark sea whose waves pound threateningly against the small vessel of our life. At times, the night seems impenetrable. We often glimpse only from afar the great Light, Jesus Christ, who has overcome death and evil. But then the light that is kindled when Mary says: ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord’ helps to illumine our way. We see the bright light of goodness that emanates from her.”^[4] —

OUR LADY receives Saint Elizabeth with great simplicity: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior (Lk 1:46-47)*. True devotion to Mary leads us to turn spontaneously to God, the source of all graces. If she exclaims that *henceforth all generations will call me blessed (Lk 1:48)*, it is because God's power has been so evident in her own life.

Mary "occupies a privileged place in the lives of Christians, and therefore in their prayer as well, because she is the Mother of Jesus. Eastern Churches have often depicted her as the *Odigitria*, the one who 'shows the way'; that is, her Son, Jesus Christ . . . Her presence is everywhere in Christian iconography, sometimes very prominently, but always in relation to her Son and in connection with him. Her hands, her eyes, her

behavior are a living ‘catechesis,’ always pointing to the cornerstone, the center: Jesus. Mary is completely directed towards him (cf. CCC, 2674).”^[5] —

In celebrating the sweet name of Mary, we can ask her to continue showing us the way to her Son. The prayer that we address to her unites us spontaneously to Jesus. In the Hail Mary we acclaim her as “blessed among women.” And we add right away: “blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.” When at times we don’t know how to turn to our Lord, our Mother offers us a safe path to reach Him, because “we go to Jesus – and we ‘return’ to him – through Mary.”^[6] —

^[1] — Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 142.

^[2] — *Ibid.*

[3] Saint Bernard, *On the Excellence of the Virgin Mother*, 2, 17.

[4] Benedict XVI, Homily, 12 September 2009.

[5] Francis, General Audience, 24 March 2021.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 495.

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