

Meditations: 1 January, Holy Mary, Mother of God

Some reflections that can nourish our prayer on the feast of Holy Mary, Mother of God. The topics are: contemplating Mary; Mary's motherhood; receiving Jesus as Mary did.

- Contemplating Mary
- Mary's motherhood
- Receiving Jesus as Mary did

THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY'S FEAST shows us the shepherds coming in haste to seek the Child and

recognising in him what the angels had announced. It is filled with words of admiration and astonishment: to marvel, to glorify, to praise, to ponder. Christmas time provokes these same feelings in us. We too are eager to take advantage of everything that happens at the stable to savour the Love that God wants to pour into our hearts. Today we do so close to the Mother of God, who is also our mother.

“Hail, Holy Mother, who gave birth to the King, who rules heaven and earth forever.”^[1] The salvation of the world has begun. The King of the universe has chosen Mary to be his mother. It is a mystery that doesn’t easily fit in our heads, nor in our poor plans. God wanted to count on the ‘yes’ of a young woman. Our Lady didn’t ask herself why she had been chosen. It was enough for her to know that God wants it, that it is his will. As Saint Josemaría expressed in his prayer:

“Our Lady and Mother, the Lord wanted you yourself to look after God and care for him with your own hands. Teach me, teach us all, how to treat your Son!”^[2]

Mary spreads this attitude of admiration around her, in the cribs of yesterday and today. Everything she sees leads her to give thanks. She never stops to look at herself, at the problems, the difficulties. She enjoys the visit of the shepherds, the affection of her husband, the starry night that has been a spectator to this great mystery. And everyone around her shares in this atmosphere of joy. Mary is the best example of what God does in men and women who let themselves be loved.

“O GOD, WHO THROUGH THE FRUITFUL VIRGINITY of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray that we may experience the

intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life.”^[3] This is the *Collect* from today’s Mass. We can ask ourselves: What does it mean to me that Mary is the Mother of God? How do I experience this personally? Pope Francis said: “The Mother of the Redeemer goes before us and continually strengthens us in faith, in our vocation and in our mission. By her example of humility and openness to God’s will, she helps us to transmit our faith in a joyful proclamation of the Gospel to all, without reservation. In this way our mission will be fruitful, because it is modelled on the motherhood of Mary.”^[4] Our relationship with God is modelled on Mary’s life of prayer. And she is very ready to help us, “for the Blessed Trinity, in choosing Mary as the Mother of Christ, a Man like us, has brought each one of us under the shelter of her maternal cloak. She

is the Mother of God and our Mother.”^[5]

Filled with astonishment, we can ask ourselves how we have merited a holiness like that of the Mother of God: “How are we to love him with all our heart and soul, when our heart can only catch a glimpse of him from afar, when there are so many setbacks in the world that would hide his face from us? He is no longer distant. He is no longer unknown. He is no longer beyond the reach of our heart. He has become a Child for us, and in so doing he has dispelled all doubt ... For us, God has become a gift. He has given himself. Christmas has become the feast of gifts in imitation of God who has given himself.”^[6] If we accept this gift, if we allow our Lord to give us the gift of his life, we too will be a gift for others. We will become a gift to God and to those around us.

THE ANGELS SING joyfully of this wonder. They too are amazed that a woman has given birth to the Son of God. They can't get over their surprise and intone the first carol in history: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased (Lk 2:14)*. Singing this song of joy, they are overcome with wonder when looking at Mary, the Child and God the Father. Our souls grow quiet and we discover in the stable what pleases God, what captures his Heart. We have come running, but we have time now to catch our breath. The singing of the angels is like a lullaby to put Jesus to sleep and to welcome us.

Experience has often taught us that we are not able to do God's will always and in everything. However, with our Lady's help we can keep his Word and ponder it in our hearts. This is within our reach. Thus we can be sure that everything God has said

to us will be fulfilled. His Word will be incarnated in our lives, his Blood will flow in our veins. As Saint Bernard assures us: “The very Person of the Son receives from Mary the substance of human flesh, so that no one will be hidden from his warmth.”^[7]

On this cold night, we want to warm ourselves inside the stable. We would like to prevent the darkness and dampness from entering our soul. We want to receive Jesus with the same purity, humility and devotion as our Mother did; to welcome his Word with the same grace and the same joy so as to spread it, like her, all over the world.

^[1] Solemnity of Our Lady, Mother of God, *Entrance Antiphon*.

^[2] Saint Josemaría, *The Forge*, 84.

^[3] Solemnity of Our Lady, Mother of God, *Collect*.

^[4] Pope Francis, Homily, 1 January 2014.

^[5] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, 275.

^[6] Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 24 December 2006.

^[7] Saint Bernard, Homily on the Octave of the Assumption, 2.

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