

Audio Meditation of the Prelate: “Mother of God and our Hope”

In this month of May we are still in a difficult situation worldwide: a health emergency, with many painful consequences. Our thoughts and prayers turn especially to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is Mother of Mercy and Health of the Sick.

Above all, Mary is the Mother of God. In the fifth century, the Council of Ephesus expressed the Church’s faith in these solemn words, that are both deep and simple: “The Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God, since she begot of her flesh the Word of God made flesh.”

God our Lord, in his plan of salvation, chose to make use of “a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary,” as we read in Saint Luke’s Gospel (*Lk* 1:26-27). And Mary’s reply to the Angel’s announcement was: “Be it done unto me according to your word” (*Lk* 1:38). And the Word was made flesh.

All of Mary’s qualities stem from her divine motherhood, especially that of being “full of grace” as the Angel’s greeting expresses it (*Lk* 1:28); Mary is completely sanctified by God’s grace.

Mary’s fullness of grace unfolded into a fullness of faith, hope and charity. This fullness did not prevent suffering from being present in her life, from Bethlehem to Calvary. “If God exalted his Mother,” Saint Josemaria said, “it is equally true that he did not spare her pain, exhaustion in her work or trials of her faith.”¹ Faith is undoubtedly light, but it is also darkness, because we believe in what we cannot see. We cannot always understand God’s plans, just as Mary and Joseph, on hearing Jesus’ reply after finding Him in the Temple, “did not understand what he said to them” (*Lk* 2:50). May Our Lady obtain for us an increase in our faith that leads us to trust steadfastly in God, to believe firmly in God’s love for us, including when the darkness that faith involves is more apparent.

Today I would like to dwell especially on hope. Mary, Pope Francis writes, “teaches us the virtue of waiting, even when everything seems to lack meaning ... when God seems to be

¹ *Christ is Passing By*, no. 172.

eclipsed due to the evil of the world.” Our Lady supports our steps, and tells us, “‘Arise! Look forward, look to the horizon,’ because she is the Mother of Hope.”²

In Saint Bernard’s prayer, the *Memorare*, we say that Our Lady never abandons anyone who implores her help. “Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary, that *never was it known* that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession was left unaided.” We can say this now, with faith, asking Mary to give us hope during the current health crisis, which is also causing serious financial difficulties to many families, anxiety at work places, and tensions in society.

The Pope has invited us, on the 14th of May, to unite ourselves “to all mankind” in a day of prayer, fasting and works of charity, imploring God that the coronavirus pandemic may be overcome. Besides what each person decides to do individually, let us pray on that day for this intention especially in the Rosary, thinking of all the people who are suffering from the consequences of this health crisis.

We ask Our Lady to help us face the future with supernatural hope, with trust in God’s love for us even though humanly speaking there is much uncertainty, and also to help us spread affection and serenity to others. May Mary teach us to see life as a path of cooperation where we support one another.

Times of trial can turn out to be good opportunities for inner growth, for personal and social improvement, because they force us to come out of ourselves and open up to other people. But it is also true that at such times doubts, worries and anxiety can arise.

With the light of faith, suffering becomes meaningful; it becomes more bearable and can even become an occasion for finding clarity, peace and inner joy. We do not want anyone to suffer, but at the same time, since we know that suffering is part of human life, we learn how to bear it with others, to clothe suffering with love. In Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Spe Salvi* we read: “It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love.”³

² Pope Francis, General audience, 10 May 2017.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, no. 37.

We especially entrust the Church's present and future to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope. Her firm trust in her Son kept the nascent Church united: at Pentecost, throughout those moments of weakness they had experienced when several disciples had fled and one even denied Jesus, others doubted and all of them were fearful (cf. *Acts* 1:14). Our Lady infused them with hope.

Let us renew the spiritual itinerary that Saint Josemaria set forth very early on: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!* All with Peter to Jesus through Mary! Our renewed faith in the Church, which is a gift from God, is shown in the first place by praying for the Church, the Pope and all who are suffering persecution because of the Gospel. We pray for it now through the intercession of Holy Mary, Mother of the Church.

In the closing words of one of the prayers that the Pope has suggested adding on to the Rosary this May, we tell Our Lady, "To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen."⁴

Let us return in our thoughts, in our contemplation of the Gospel, to the time that followed Mary's reply, "Be it done unto me according to your word." For a mother, the time when she is expecting a son or a daughter is a time for human hopes. In Mary's case, that time of waiting must have had resonances of universal salvation, because she knew she was carrying the Redeemer of the world in her womb. When Mary looked to the future, in some way she saw each of us. Starting from the time of her nine months of waiting, Our Lady would have felt the weight of all mankind, the weight of being the "new Eve."

At the foot of the Cross, Mary heard from her Son's lips words that referred to Saint John, and in Saint John, to each of us: "Woman, behold your son" (*Jn* 19:26). Knowing that Mary is "our Mother" leads us to treat her with a child's trust, with firm hope in her motherly mediation. With Saint Josemaria's words, we can say with joyful hope: "All the strength that we need – because of our personal littleness, our weaknesses and faults – we will go to seek continually in God through our filial devotion to Mary."⁵

⁴ Pope Francis, Letter about the Rosary, 25 April 2020.

⁵ *Letter*, 31 May 1954, no. 36.

“Seeking God continually through filial devotion to Mary” was a clear feature in St. Josemaria’s own life. Just now it is exactly 50 years ago that he made a pilgrimage to Guadalupe, Mexico, where he prayed for nine consecutive days for the whole world and for the Church. “I had to come to Mexico,” he said, looking at the image of Our Lady, “to tell you again with my heart filled with trust that we are very sure of you and of everything you have given us ... Our only ambition is to serve your Son and, through Him and with your help, all souls.”

This May is also the centenary of the birth of Saint John Paul II, who placed the whole of his pontificate under the protection of Mary with the motto *Totus Tuus*, “totally yours.” “How many graces I have received from the Blessed Virgin!” he wrote, in his Letter about the Rosary.

May Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, obtain for us from her Son Jesus an increase in our faith and hope, which will lead to a stronger love for God and others.