



The Holy See

PRAYER FOR THE MARIAN DAY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE YEAR OF FAITH

ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

Saint Peter's Square
Saturday, 12 October 2013

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This event of the [Year of Faith](#) is devoted to Mary, the Mother of Christ and the Mother of the Church, our Mother. The statue of Our Lady which has come from Fatima helps us to feel her presence in our midst. It is a fact: Mary always brings us to Jesus. She is a woman of faith, a true believer. But we can ask: What was Mary's faith like?

1. The first aspect of her faith is this: *Mary's faith unties the knot of sin* (cf. [Lumen Gentium](#), 56). What does that mean? The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council took up a phrase of Saint Irenaeus, who states that "the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by the obedience of Mary; what the virgin Eve bound by her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith" (*Adversus Haereses*, III, 22, 4).

The "knot" of disobedience, the "knot" of unbelief. When children disobey their parents, we can say that a little "knot" is created. This happens if the child acts with an awareness of what he or she is doing, especially if there is a lie involved. At that moment, they break trust with their parents. You know how frequently this happens! Then the relationship with their parents needs to be purified of this fault; the child has to ask forgiveness so that harmony and trust can be restored. Something of the same sort happens in our relationship with God. When we do not listen to him, when we do not

follow his will, we do concrete things that demonstrate our lack of trust in him – for that is what sin is – and a kind of knot is created deep within us. These knots take away our peace and serenity. They are dangerous, since many knots can form a tangle which gets more and more painful and difficult to undo.

But we know one thing: nothing is impossible for God's mercy! Even the most tangled knots are loosened by his grace. And Mary, whose "yes" opened the door for God to undo the knot of the ancient disobedience, is the Mother who patiently and lovingly brings us to God, so that he can untangle the knots of our soul by his fatherly mercy. We all have some of these knots and we can ask in our heart of hearts: What are the knots in my life? "Father, my knots cannot be undone!" It is a mistake to say anything of the sort! All the knots of our heart, every knot of our conscience, can be undone. Do I ask Mary to help me trust in God's mercy, to undo those knots, to change? She, as a woman of faith, will surely tell you: "Get up, go to the Lord: he understands you". And she leads us by the hand as a Mother, our Mother, to the embrace of our Father, the Father of mercies.

2. A second aspect is that *Mary's faith gave human flesh to Jesus*. As the Council says: "Through her faith and obedience, she gave birth on earth to the very Son of the Father, without knowing man but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit" (*Lumen Gentium*, 63). This was a point on which the Fathers of the Church greatly insisted: Mary first conceived Jesus *in faith* and then *in the flesh*, when she said "yes" to the message God gave her through the angel. What does this mean? It means that God did not want to become man by bypassing our freedom; he wanted to pass through Mary's free assent, through her "yes". He asked her: "Are you prepared to do this?" And she replied: "Yes".

But what took place most singularly in the Virgin Mary also takes place within us, spiritually, when we receive the word of God with a good and sincere heart and put it into practice. It is as if God takes flesh within us; he comes to dwell in us, for he dwells in all who love him and keep his word. It is not easy to understand this, but really, it is easy to feel it in our heart.

Do we think that Jesus' incarnation is simply a past event which has nothing to do with us personally? Believing in Jesus means giving him our flesh with the humility and courage of Mary, so that he can continue to dwell in our midst. It means giving him our hands, to caress the little ones and the poor; our feet, to go forth and meet our brothers and sisters; our arms, to hold up the weak and to work in the Lord's vineyard, our minds, to think and act in the light of the Gospel; and especially to offer our hearts to love and to make choices in accordance with God's will. All this happens thanks to the working of the Holy Spirit. And in this way we become instruments in God's hands, so that Jesus can act in the world through us.

3. The third aspect is *Mary's faith as a journey*. The Council says that Mary "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" (*ibid.*, 58). In this way *she precedes us on this pilgrimage*, she accompanies

and sustains us.

How was Mary's faith a journey? In the sense that her entire life was to follow her Son: he – Jesus – is the way, he is the path! To press forward in faith, to advance in the spiritual pilgrimage which is faith, is nothing other than to follow Jesus; to listen to him and be guided by his words; to see how he acts and to follow in his footsteps; to have his same sentiments. And what are these sentiments of Jesus? Humility, mercy, closeness to others, but also a firm rejection of hypocrisy, duplicity and idolatry. The way of Jesus is the way of a love which is faithful to the end, even unto sacrificing one's life; it is the way of the cross. The journey of faith thus passes through the cross. Mary understood this from the beginning, when Herod sought to kill the newborn Jesus. But then this experience of the cross became deeper when Jesus was rejected. Mary was always with Jesus, she followed Jesus in the midst of the crowds and she heard all the gossip and the nastiness of those who opposed the Lord. And she carried this cross! Mary's faith encountered misunderstanding and contempt. When Jesus' "hour" came, the hour of his passion, when Mary's faith was a little flame burning in the night, a little light flickering in the darkness. Through the night of Holy Saturday, Mary kept watch. Her flame, small but bright, remained burning until the dawn of the resurrection. And when she received word that the tomb was empty, her heart was filled with the joy of faith: Christian faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith always brings us to joy, and Mary is the Mother of joy! May she teach us to take the path of joy, to experience this joy! That was the high point – this joy, this meeting of Jesus and Mary, and we can imagine what it was like. Their meeting was the high point of Mary's journey of faith, and that of the whole Church. What is our faith like? Like Mary, do we keep it burning even at times of difficulty, in moments of darkness? Do I feel the joy of faith?

This evening, Mother, we thank you for our faith, the faith of a strong and humble woman; we renew our entrustment to you, Mother of our faith. Amen.