

# Three Daily "Pauses" with Mary

*from Circular Letter 695 of October 24, 1987 by Mother Marinella Castagno*

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It is important for us to know how to use the "ordinary means" of self-formation, of which prayer is, without doubt, the first and most important.... We often run the risk of "reciting formulae" without giving ourselves time to understand its meaning. Consequently, we derive no profit for our spiritual growth from the brief moments of prayer scattered throughout the day. We often feel the need for more time for colloquy with the Lord, while we do not know how to really dialogue with Him each time we turn to Him. This is, without a doubt, the result of activism and of its consequent, most dangerous, spiritual superficiality. We will never be true daughters of our Founders if we do not know how to use to our advantage the value of these brief, yet deep and heartfelt contacts with the Lord, the God among us in whose presence we want to live and to work.

The *Angelus*, a brief prayer, yet rich in theological and spiritual meaning, is a help to learn from Mary how to pray. At the same time, it offers us the chance to pause for three moments of contemplation on the Mystery of the Incarnation, which sets the pace for our day.... The exhortation to a more frequent and profound meditation on this Mystery is geared to make the presence of God incarnate in Mary, through the action of the Holy Spirit, ever present to us.

Let us commit ourselves, dear Sisters, to a more attentive recitation of the *Angelus* three times a day. Let us first of all learn from Mary how *to pray*. The *Angelus* prayer reminds us of the most beautiful dialogue between God and His creature. A question and an answer that make possible the one great event of humanity's salvation: the Incarnation of the Son of God. From Mary, we learn *to place ourselves in a listening attitude to God's requests*, to answer them, welcoming in faith His invitation and lovingly repeating our total availability. It is the Lord who wants to come; it is Mary who welcomes Him; it is humanity that receives salvation. To us, the Lord, in that moment of prayer with Mary, repeats the question: it is up to us to respond "yes" so as to receive, with the power of the Holy Spirit, the ability to become instruments of salvation.

This brief prayer will give us new light and new fervor even in times of weariness if we but transform it into a moment of contemplation. Let us not shorten it for the sake of being in a hurry or because of superficiality in prayer. Two minutes are nothing, but it can be a powerful recharging element if during the recitation of the Hail Mary we know how to meditate on what those few lines proclaim. We will feel the *power of obedience* in repeating the *Fiat* with Mary, *the total openness of an undivided heart* in welcoming the Holy Spirit and the ability to live with Mary the poverty of the Lord and *our poverty*, by contemplating the annihilation of the God-made-Man.

## **For reflection and prayer:**

- How am I maturing in the integration of contemplation and action in my life as an FMA?
- What and how many contemplative "pauses" set the rhythm of my day?
- Spiritual exercise: I will prepare for the *Angelus* with the help of my imagination. I will enter into the scene and concentrate on one particular of the clothing or of the face of the Virgin Mary. I will ask the grace to share her sentiments. I will take up the habit of reciting the *Angelus* with thoughtful awareness since now I am the Virgin from whom the Father awaits a "yes."

Mary Help of Christians, teach us to pray as you pray and to love as you love. Intercede for us so that our little "yes" might be, like yours, pleasing to the Father, and thus may we welcome within us the living presence of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.