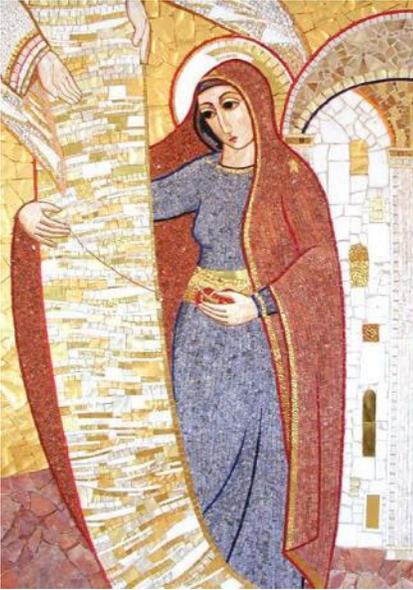


November 24. The FMA pray with Mary and like Mary (*Constitutions Articles 37 and 39*)



With and like Mary, the listening Virgin

Through Baptism we were made daughters of God by being grafted into the life of communion that exists within the Trinity. “The Holy Spirit prays in us, intercedes with insistence for us, and invites us to make space for Him...” (*Constitutions Art. 37*) The Holy Spirit is the love that flows between the Father and the Son and which flows within us also. All fecundity in our life depends on this life-giving fluid. Working in her family's vineyard, young Mary Mazzarello saw the truth of this Word realized each year: "Remain in Me and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself if it does not remain on the vine, neither can you if you do not remain in Me." (Jn. 15:4) Yet, the perfect mirror in which to contemplate this truth is Mary, the young woman of Nazareth. We imagine

her busy at many household tasks and weaving relationships in her family and in her town. Certainly, She knew the Scriptures; yet, her greatest beauty was in her ability to give God permission to fulfill His Plan in her. Mary was capable of an interior discernment which permitted her to recognize the voice of God in the midst of the many voices which She heard around her and to entrust herself to Him completely.

We too are invited "In the silence of our entire being, like Mary, the listening Virgin" to allow ourselves to be permeated by the strength of the Holy Spirit and to allow God to render our life truly fecund. Each day we are invited to enter into this interior dialogue with the Lord lest the branch become detached from the Vine and not produce grapes in Autumn preventing the making of wine – or, rather, the gift of communion. This life-giving fluid which flows through the vintage and the love which flows between the Father and the Son are that very same life that penetrated Mary of Nazareth and so many of our Sisters, rendering them fruitful women. Right from the start, Mary lived in union with God, putting her relationship with Him at the center, not seeking to affirm herself or carry forward her own plans. Her "YES" to the Lord is total and trusting welcome and acceptance. Let us continue to turn to her so that She might obtain for us the gift of being able to find our place trustingly in God. If we make her attitude ours, the Word upon which we meditate daily will be able to take on a "Face" in our lives, too. Then we will also be weavers of the Body of Christ just like Mary, who has been pictured in some mosaics listening to the Word (the Scroll behind her) and holding in her hands a ball of red wool (the Flesh of the Son of God knit together in her womb).

Mary was made fruitful by the Holy Spirit who was dwelling within her. It was not She who "did something for God." She simply listened with all her being to the voice of God and welcomed and accepted His plan. Mary is virgin before, during, and after the birth of Her Son. God's intervention did not wound her, but exalted her, rendering her a mother.

If we wish to hear the voice of God, which respects our freedom in an absolute way and never forces us to listen, it is indispensable that we become ever more capable of living moments of silence and solitude. Only in this way will we be able to enter into interior dialogue with the Lord. When meditating on the Word, it is important to remember that the Word is not a book but a Person; therefore, the most important thing is not "what the Word says" but, rather, "Who the Word is for me." The Word is filled with the Holy Spirit who gives life. The Holy Spirit makes me a daughter of the Father. The Word is the Face of the Father because He is the Son. The Fathers of the Church used to say that the Word opens itself up to the person who prays, just as a friend opens him or herself to his or her friend: if we are afraid of God, or if we are seeking Him only for our own interests, such sentiments will be an obstacle to our encounter. Instead, when love flows between me and the

Word, as between a Groom and a Bride, the Word opens up, discloses itself, and leads me into the intimacy of the Father. Holy Mass brings us close to the Word and also to the Body: the Lectionary is raised on high, kissed, and then placed down. In the same way, during meditation it is good to give some sign of veneration to the Word, to ask questions, and to express gratitude. As we enter into trusting dialogue, little-by-little the Word begins to disclose itself to us. An authentic, affectionate, and profound encounter with the Word brings us to advance gradually along our journey of configuration to Christ, strengthens fraternal communion, and gives new life to our apostolic passion.

Spiritual Exercises:

1. With Mary I renew my consecration to the Lord, in total trust, knowing that in Baptism the Father made me His daughter, freely giving me the greatest “task” to which a human being can aspire! With humility I welcome the mediations that help me understand the plan that God has for me.

2. I preserve a place within me for intimacy with My Spouse in my daily prayers. I open myself up to His desire to make me ever more virgin and mother. This process is one in which what count most – more than any personal effort – are trust and welcoming the new life given me by the Holy Spirit.

3. In my Community and apostolic life, I seek to give priority to those choices through which I can, as a virgin, “generate children of God”. With great respect for every person entrusted to my care, I seek simply to be an “obstetrician” who helps her brothers and sisters meet the Lord.