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The Woman of the Spirit (Acts 1:12-14)

The Faces of Mary in Sacred Scripture

The last bit of news that the Evangelists give us of Mary concerns the scene of Calvary. On that tragic evening, Mary descended from that hill in Jerusalem with the other women and the Disciple whom Jesus loved after having placed the dead body of her Son in the sepulcher. From this point on, the Gospels are silent about her. Nothing is said about her after the Resurrection. This notwithstanding, many saints along the history of the Church, in the wake of the apocryphal Gospels, have imagined that the risen Jesus had appeared first of all to His Mother, in secret, to console her heart, which had been pierced by the sword at the foot of the Cross. Beyond these hypotheses, the relationship between Mary and the Risen One takes place, more than elsewhere, within the Apostolic Community. She is its Mother, so willed by Jesus Himself on the Cross. From the scene described in the *Acts of the Apostles* 1:12-14, which has the house and the "Upper Room" of the Cenacle as backdrop, is born the invocation "Queen of the apostles" in the Litany of Mary, or that other one, found in an anonymous hymn of the fourth century, "Joy of the Apostles".

In the little room at Nazareth, on the day of the Annunciation, Mary had already lived her personal Pentecost. She knew personally and not by hearsay, like the other Apostles who had only heard Jesus speak of it, the power of the Holy Spirit. She knew how that "finger of God's right-hand" could profoundly transform the life of anyone who would welcome Him with complete openness and availability. It is probably for this reason that Jesus made her the Mother of the Infant Church. The fundamental element that Luke wishes to underline in his *Acts of the Apostles* is prayer. This is a topic very dear to him – so much is this true, that Mary, in Luke's Gospel, with her capacity to keep the Word of God in her heart and to await its fulfillment patiently, is a model of perfect prayer in the midst of the first ecclesial assembly. Mary is present with this distinction in the Cenacle: it is her experience of the Holy Spirit and of assiduous prayer that renders her the Teacher of the Apostles.

The Cenacle, beyond being the seat of the gift of the Holy Spirit, of Sacramental Confession (John 20:22-23), and of the Ministerial Priesthood is, above all, the symbol of the Eucharist and the place of the Last Supper. There is, therefore, a strong link between Marian devotion and the Eucharist, of which Don Bosco was profoundly aware. It is enough for one to recall his "Dream of the Two Columns" to see this. Even if the Evangelists do not know of Mary's presence at the Last Supper, we have the witness of her presence among the Apostles in the Cenacle. In this light, Mary presents to us Her Son in the Eucharist, the permanent sign of His "being with us."

Praying with the Word (Acts 1:12-14)

1. I become aware of God's presence. I imagine that I am in the scene, with Mary and the Apostles in the Cenacle and I ask the Father for the grace to learn from Mary to wait for and to welcome the gift of the Holy Spirit.
2. I invoke the help of the Holy Spirit by slowly repeating this (or another) prayer:

“Holy Spirit, Love of the Father and the Son, come into my heart and let free in me all the strength and sweetness of your Love. You who transformed the Disciples into Apostles, instill in me their same missionary ardor, their ability for fraternal communion, and their same docility to your inspiration. I ask you this through Mary's intercession. Amen.”

3. I read Acts 1:12-14 slowly and reflect a while on these three points:
 - **The Cenacle** (v. 13): Here is where the Risen Lord makes Himself present in the gift of the Holy Spirit and in the Breaking of the Bread. To enter into this place, one must "climb". I, too, am invited to climb: Is there anything in me keeping me from "going up" to the Cenacle?
 - **Prayer** (v. 14): The Apostles persevere in and are of one heart in prayer, awaiting the manifestation of the Lord. What are we waiting or asking for in our community prayer?
 - **Mary's company**(v. 14): Mary is always present in the Community. I look for the signs of her presence in my Community and I renew my Act of Entrustment to her.
4. I finish this prayer with a heart-to-heart conversation with Mary: I share with her my experience of prayer and I ask her to help me take part in hers.

5. Our Father

After having concluded this prayer, I sit still and reflect a little: What has the Holy Spirit said to me through this prayer? Has He encouraged me? Has He invited me to conversion? How do I think I may correspond to the gift received in this prayer?