

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, 2008

“Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”
(Luke 1:28))

Those words of Sacred Scripture are familiar to us all; we say them, or pray them so often. But let us impress upon our minds what the Gospel says: “The angel Gabriel was sent from God ... to a virgin ... whose name was Mary... and the Angel being come in said to her—” (notice, the Angel was *sent* from God and therefore carried a greeting and a message from God) “—Hail, full of grace!”



Now this was thirty years before the Sacrament of Baptism was instituted — and she was declared by God to be full of grace; and “blessed among women”. And the angel tells her how this came about: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee” — we then are to esteem Mary just as her cousin Elizabeth did after being filled with the Holy Ghost: “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” The same mother of the Lord has been given to us as our mother!

Remember the whole of mankind had been waiting for thousands of years to hear those words that told of the fulfilment of the promise that followed on the fall of Adam, when God said to the serpent, Satan: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between her seed and thy seed ... she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel.”¹

How often have we prayed the Hail Mary and how much thought did we ever give to those words, *full of grace*? God had prepared a worthy tabernacle for His Son, a tabernacle upon which the shadow of sin had never rested. On this day, July 13th, in 1917 the message of the Blessed Virgin was stark in its simplicity and brevity: “Jesus wants ... to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.” Note the word *establish* — to build a powerful devotion; one that will never fail. Has it yet been done? The vast crowds of pilgrims that visit Fatima is a sign that there is some devotion; indeed some firm devotion; but it does not signify the fulfilment of that request of Mary’s Son, Jesus. This will not be until the faithful truly establish a firm devotion in their hearts. We may each ask ourselves, “How deep? How strong is my

¹ Genesis 3:15

devotion to the Immaculate Heart? Have we listened to her message? Do we really know her message?"

Let us see what Sister Lucia writes of it:

*"To establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means to bring people to a full consecration through conversion (from sin), self-dedication, intimate esteem, veneration and love. Thus it is in this spirit of consecration and conversion that God wishes to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We all know that a mother's heart represents love in the bosom of the family; it is love which makes the mother bend over her baby's cradle, sacrifice herself for it, give herself, rush to the defence of her child. All children trust in the heart of their mother, and we all know that we have in her a place of special affection. The same applies to the Virgin Mary. Thus the message says: My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God. Hence, the Heart of Mary is the way to God for all His children. Mary is the Mother of the new generation, as if she were a new tree of life, planted by God in the garden of the world so that all of her children can partake of her fruit. It is from the heart of their mother that children receive their natural life, their first breath, their life-giving blood, the beating of their heart, as if the mother were the spring of a clock impelling movement to two pendulums. When we see how dependent the child is on its mother in those early months of its formation ... we could almost say that the heart of the mother is the heart of the child. And we can say the same of Mary when she carried the Son of the eternal Father in her womb. Hence it follows that the heart of Mary is, in some sense, the heart of all that other generation, the first fruit of which is Christ, the Word of God."*²

The late beloved Pope John Paul II, addressing World Youth, told them: "Mary lived with her eyes fixed on Christ ... the memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the 'rosary' which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life." And he left us these prayers:

"Hail Mary, lowly handmaid of the Lord, Glorious Mother of Christ! Faithful Virgin, holy dwelling place of the Word, Teach us to persevere in listening to the Word, and to be docile to the voice of the Spirit, attentive to His promptings in the depth of our conscience and to His manifestations in the events of history.

*Hail Mary, woman of faith, first of the disciples!
Virgin Mother of the Church, help us always
To account for the hope that is in us,
With trust in human goodness and the Father's love.
Teach us to build up the world beginning from within
In the depth of silence and prayer,
In the joy of fraternal love,
In the unique faithfulness of the Cross."*

² Sr Lucia, *Calls from the Message of Fatima*

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