

MARY'S ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORD

It's always a very happy occasion for me whenever I am given an opportunity not just to speak, but to express what Mary the Bl. Virgin is for me. Foraying into the religious consecrated life, I wonder at the moral fibre of Mary to say that so much used and less practiced word "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And of course she did stay attentive to the word of God. A very warm good evening dear Fathers, brothers and my dear friends, today let me share with you some of my thoughts and reflections from an interesting book of mine on Mary's attention to God's Word. Although for obvious reasons this characteristic features of Mary is not something that is new us. But at the same time in order to understand Mary's interior disposition and her attitude towards God's Word we need to analyze Mary in the New Testament.

Mary received the message from God and kept it in her heart and pondered over it. The act of pondering over is the best way of attending to God's Word. Scholars have seen this form of prayer in the context of the Wisdom Books of Scripture. Thus, Mary is presented to us as the wise virgin or as a model of a woman of wisdom. Luke has revealed what Mary is pondering over in her heart. The object of her pondering is the savior: "For today is born for you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord in the city of David" (Luke 2: 11).

The word of the Holy Spirit or the power of God moves within the hearts of people. And whenever the Spirit is presented, concrete, real and wondrous events or signs occur. Mary pondered over these concrete signs of the Spirit in her life and in the life of the people of Israel. In a sense, she is the new Israel who, like the first one, wrestled with the Angel of the Lord-and thereby received the name "Israel" (Gen 32: 28). Mary too pondered over the God-events in her life. Mary in prayer, says the Holy Scriptures "kept with great concern all these events in her heart" (Luke 2: 51). Mary is not wondering or amazed but she is pondering,

interpreting and turning over in her heart the meaning of God's salvific action among His people. Mary is calm and joyful in her contemplation of the history of salvation.

What conclusions can we draw from the life of Mary? We do well to imitate her prayer of pondering over the mysteries of God which are in us and which surround us. The Holy Scriptures themselves can be the object of such reflection and pondering. Mary is the one who guided the Apostles after the death of Jesus, and her example can guide us today. "As children of Mary, we must see that the whole purpose of our existence and all religious life is to empty ourselves and be ready for God 'to use as living tools of His grace and love.'

Prayer is necessary for our spiritual growth if we are to grow in maturity, wisdom and grace. We grow in prayer day by day. "From the inarticulate sound and groan of our body we yearn to be free through the spirit" (Rom 8:23). "We too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free" (Rom 8:24). "The Spirit too, comes to help us in our own weakness. For, when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit comes to help us and he expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words. And God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the spirit are according to the mind of God" (Rom 8:26, 27).

Therefore, my dear fathers and brothers let us too emulate and walk in the path that Mary walked. Let each and every moment of our life be an act of acquiescence to the will of God which manifests itself in the divine word. She who bore the word at first wore the word which in turn elevated her to such a realm of sanctity placing her in the altars of the church. As we honor Mary in this month very specially, let us also be attentive to the word and pray that God's grace may abound in us as in Mary so that we may understand God's word.