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VATICAN - "AVE MARIA" by Mgr Luciano Alimandi - The Heart of Mary

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - On Saturday 31 May, the feast of the Visitation which this year coincided with the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pope Benedict XVI underlined the importance of the Rosary prayer in the family and in the parish and commenting the Gospel of the Visitation, he made us a gift of a few intense words: "In the liturgy of today's feast of the Visitation we hear once again the passage of the Gospel of St Luke who narrates the journey of Mary of Nazareth to the house of her elderly cousin Elisabeth (…) When she reaches Elisabeth's house something happens which no artist could ever render with due beauty and profundity. The inward light of the Holy Spirit envelops the two of them. And Elisabeth, illuminated from Heaven exclaims: ''Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. 43Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk 1,42-45). These words might appear out of all proportion for the actual context. Elisabeth is one of many elderly woman in Israel and Mary is an ordinary girl living in a remote village of Galilee. What can they be and what can they do in a world where other persons and other powers count? Nevertheless, Mary amazes us once again; her heart is pure, totally open to the light of God; her soul is sinless, free of the burden of pride and selfishness. At the words of Elisabeth her spirit bursts forth in a song of praise, which is an authentic and profound 'theological' reading of history: a reading which we must continue to learn from Our Lady whose faith is without shadow or fault. 'My soul magnifies the Lord. Mary acknowledges God's greatness. This is the fist indispensable sentiment of faith; the sentiment which reassures human creatures, freeing them from fear, even in the midst of the storms of history. Looking with the eyes of faith deeper than the surface, Mary 'sees' God's work in history (…) her Magnificat, centuries and millennia later, is still the truest and most profound interpretation of history, whereas the readings of many wise men of this world have been contradicted down through the centuries by the events..." (Benedict XVI, 31 May 2008).

Marian devotion, when it is authentic, leads necessarily to a desire to imitate Mary's virtues, her inwards attitudes, which shine through first of all in the Word of God. The Church, each one of us, wishes to learn from Mary, precisely because the Mother of the Incarnate Word is the best person to teach us how to be true disciples of Jesus. This is the ultimate purpose of every "pious exercise" dedicated to the Holy Mother of God.

When our love for Our Lady is true, then we feel impelled to follow Jesus following Mary's 'way'. This " Marian style" is marked by two fundamental virtues of the Heart of Christ and the Immaculate Heart of Mary perfectly united with Him: humility and meekness (cfr. Mt 11, 29). Some have written that while the Lord proclaimed the Beatitudes, he was thinking of His Mother who lived them all to perfection. The first beatitude is about humility and littleness. As Jesus says "poor in spirit" introduces to the riches of the Kingdom of God (cfr. Mt 5, 3).

Our Lady in the song of the Magnificat, speaks of her poverty, her humility in the sense of nothingness, to explain that "the Lord chose her": precisely because she was so humble, God looked on Her (cfr. Lk 1, 48).

What pleases God most in his creatures is when they feel not "great" but "little" in front of Him and in front of one another. As the Pope teaches "Mary acknowledges God's greatness. This is the first indispensable sentiment of the faith "!

So we could say that the first sign of authentic faith is a heart which is humble, similar to the heart of Mary, always aware of one's nothingness and of God's infinite greatness and power. This heart will not be led astray by pride and therefore by the devil who, as Jesus says, " was a murderer from the start; he was never grounded in the truth; there is no truth in him at all. When he lies he is speaking true to his nature, because he is a liar, and the father of lies" (Jn 8, 44). A proud person "speaks about himself", he can never be "objective" because he is so full of himself, closed in his own "subjectivism", whereas the humble person opens to the truth, which he receives from the One who possesses. To the humble the Lord reveals the truth about himself because they are ready to

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accept it (cfr. Mt 11, 25). Our Lady is perfectly humble, because “her soul is sinless, free of the burden of pride and selfishness”, so God can give Himself to her to such an extent that enables her to conceive in the flesh His only Son, the incarnate Word.
Therefore the smaller we make ourselves, entrusting ourselves to Mary, the more the Lord will enable us to welcome Him: the light of God's love will increase and gradually chase away the shadows of our selfishness. A humble heart is filled with authentic charity which “never seeks its own interests” (1Cor 13, 5). A humble heart does not act according to the self-centred logic of the world, instead it “flies" to meet God and neighbour, like Mary who went, with the Lord "under her heart" as a sweet German hymn says, 'in haste', to visit her elderly cousin Elisabeth. The “Visitation” is “Christ's charity in action” in Mary, revealed to us in all its beauty so we too may “hasten” to carry Jesus to those around us. (Agenzia Fides 4/6/2008)

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