



VATICAN - AVE MARIA by Mgr. Luciano Alimandi - Wherever Mary "is" there peace reigns

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - This year 2008, the Marian Shrine of Lourdes is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In these 150 years pilgrims have continued to flock to this place of grace, to honour the Mother of God. All the many places "visited" by Our Lady have a special mysterious touch of her presence in our midst. Our Lady seems to make a continual visitation to peoples and nations and now and then she stays a while, just as she went to her cousin Elisabeth and remained with her for three months (cfr. Lk 1, 56).

The places in which Our Lady "stays", are places of miracles: at Cana, Lourdes, Fatima... Mary tells her Son about our needs, her words have the power to obtain the impossible. "Nothing is impossible for God" (Lk 1, 37) the Archangel Gabriel told Our Lady on the day of the great Announcement, and the humble maiden of Nazareth never doubted.

Wherever Our Lady "stops", a presence of peace and serenity is felt and we are enveloped in a climate of eternity, as if time had stopped and everything gives way to this presence of Heaven, the presence of Our Lady. The "visit" of the Lord's grace is always new.

Our Lady has been given a unique task. No other saint visits peoples and nations and "stays" for a while in places where people are in special need. Mary's visit gives her Son a chance to work miracles: to heal body and soul, to convert and sanctify, to bless and forgive, to transform our misery and superficiality into the wine of his Divine mercy and patience. What a great privilege it is to visit Mary who has visited us and has come to stay for a while, whispering to every heart "you are my child"!

Mary's universal motherhood becomes "visible" in places such as Lourdes, where people from all over the world come seeking protection and help in Mary chosen by the Lord to be His Mother and our Mother. The grotto of Lourdes, where Our Lady appeared to Bernadette for the first time 11 February and for the last time on 16 July, 1858, draws an unceasing flow of pilgrims. The flow of people is similar to the nearby River Gave, flowing gently only a few metres away. At the grotto pilgrims seem to hear a call to let themselves be carried on the "current" of grace towards what gives the heart true happiness, the sweet peace of God's house.

Immaculate Mary of Lourdes tells us to make our life here on earth a continual welcoming of God into our heart, through a life of prayer, nourished by the sacraments, a life spent loving God and neighbour. If we listen to Her we will have no regrets. If we do "whatever He tells us" (cfr. Jn 2, 5), we will "see" the miracle of a change in our life. This is greatest miracle and God desires to work it, he never refuses especially when it is requested by His most Holy Mother. Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us! (Agenzia Fides 16/7/2008)