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VATICAN - AVE MARIA rev Luciano Alimandi - Mother of our surrender and capitulation

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Speaking of surrender, capitulation, one immediately thinks of a battle between two sides one of which at a certain point surrenders seeing that the other is too strong and it would be useless to continue when defeat is certain. Perhaps something similar comes about in our life of relationship with the Lord. If on the one hand it is true we must fight the world, our selfishness and the temptations of Satan, on the other it is also true that we appear to be involved in a struggle with God, quite different from the former of course, but which is bound to end with our capitulation. It is clear in fact that in the fight against temptations it would be absurd to surrender, indeed we must live as far as possible what we are told by Saint Paul: “draw your strength from the Lord and from his mighty power. Put on the armour of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil” (Eph 6, 10-11).
However in that other sort of struggle - at least as we see it -, the grace of transformation in Christ comes with the full awareness of the necessity to surrender: to surrender to God and stop resisting him, handing everything over to Him; putting aside once and for all our self-sufficiency, our “knowing better” and letting ourselves be led step by step by Divine Providence. When in the Gospel we hear the Lord say to us “whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it” (cfr. Mk 8, 35), do we not feel that this “losing” entails surrendering to Him?
The Apostles show us the necessity of a surrender, a “handing over”, to live in total self-giving to the Master. For example Peter. At a certain point Jesus asks him “do you love me?”. Precisely after his denial, the leader of the Apostles, as if stunned by the Risen Lord’s inexhaustible love for him and conquered by the divine tenacity with which he is “recovered”, gives a reply which looks just like total capitulation: “Lord you know everything, you know that I love you” (Jn 21, 17). It is as if he were saying: “Yes Lord you know everything better than I and you alone are right; my reasons are worthless and it is absurd for me to compete with yours, all I can do is to learn to lose myself so I may live of You”. The Lord Jesus will confirm to Peter the path of surrender: “Follow me” (Jn 21, 19).
To surrender to the Lord means accepting to walk behind Him not in front of Him! This is true for every genuine Christian who day after day strives to surrender to Jesus and his Gospel; he is led by paths and means which at times seem contorted, unknown and mostly mysterious, but they lead him as the Lord of history wishes. Are not the trials of faith of the Saints to be read in this perspective? On their faces, in their writings and testimony we recognise the taste of this surrender which, like that of Simon Peter, is not bitter, it is made sweet by God’s patient love. However more than anyone else it is Jesus’ Mother who can show us this way.
Mary never needed to surrender to God because, unlike us, she never resisted Him but was always totally His, letting herself by led by Him by the hand. As Vatican II teaches, Mary embraced “God's salvific will with a full heart and impeded by no sin” (LG 56). Always obedient to God she became an expert in His ways and is therefore given by Him to us to guide and sustain us on the path of progressive surrender, the quickest way to Heaven.
A great master of Marian spirituality, Saint Luigi Grignion de Montfort, described Mary’s greatness magnificently: “God the Father could not give the world His only Son except through Mary. Despite all the sighs of the patriarchs, all the supplications of the prophets of the old law in four thousand years, to obtain this treasure, Mary alone was worthy and found grace in the Lord’s eyes with the power of her prayer and the sublimity of her virtues. The world was unworthy - says Saint Augustine - to receive the Son of God directly from the hands of the Father ; He gave him to Mary that from her the world might receive Him.” (Treaty, n. 16). Mother of our surrender help us!
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