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VATICAN - AVE MARIA "Mother of Priests" by don Luciano Alimandi

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - To contemplate the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of Priests means first of all to dwell on the Fruit of her womb: Jesus, the eternal High Priest. Contemplating the Incarnation we discover the fundamental traits of the vocation and priestly life of Christ who shares his life in an exceptional and wonderful way with this creature chosen from all eternity: The Virgin Mary.

In this deep mystery of love two lives are intertwined for ever. From the very beginning the Church understood the place given to Mary: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit assumed her in the central salvific space of the Redemption. The centre is the Lord, who died on the cross and is Risen; Mary, as his Mother, is placed at the side of her Son.

The priest, sacred minister of Redemption, sacramental representative of Jesus, contemplates, as the proper centre of salvation, his Lord and repeats with St Thomas, first doubting and then believing, first overcome with disaffection and then filled with love: "my Lord and my God" (Jn 20, 28).

And when from that Centre, the All of his faith, hope and charity, the priest looks a little to one side, whom does he see, whom does he meet if not the Mother of Jesus? Whom does he recognise beside Him, under Him, close to His cross, if not Mary who remains there always? After confessing in communion with the whole Church his unconditioned love, love which cannot be conditioned to Christ,, the priest turns his mind and heart to the Mother, his Mother since that loving act. Mary, who before all and more than all others offered herself to her Son, received the gift of that Immaculate Heart which from the Annunciation onwards says again and again, with every beat 'My Lord and My God' and also 'My Son!'

The priest, due to his identification and sacramental conformation with the Son of God, Son of Mary, can and must feel he is truly a beloved son of Mary, the highest and most humble of Mothers, and must allow her to say to him "my son!"

Humanity today has a deep need for belonging: for belonging to an eternal Love which becomes the love for which Jesus prayed in the Gospel: "that all may be one" (Jn 17, 21).

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI illuminated us on this matter and told us that we can only belong to Christ "in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become "one body", completely joined in a single existence." (Deus caritas est, n. 14).

Mary, Mother of priests and of all believers, draws us to the centre of Redemption, pulling us away from that diabolical self-centredness which distances God's image. Yes, "Mary, Virgin and Mother, shows us what love is and whence it draws its origin and its constantly renewed power" (Benedict XVI, Deus caritas est, n. 42) also and in a special way to those of us who are priests. (Agenzia Fides 6/9/2006, righe 35, parole 498)

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