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VATICAN - AVE MARIA - "Mary of Advent" by Rev. Luciano Alimandi -

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - The Season of Advent is close, a liturgical season in which Mary emerges as the centre figure. The Blessed Virgin brings to completion the waiting of the peoples and at last the Messiah, the One so long awaited comes, thanks to the "Be it done as you have said" of the Mother.

Advent is then a privileged time for rediscovering the immense mystery of Mary's divine motherhood and her role as mother of every redeemed person who can only can be spiritually reborn in the same womb from which Jesus was born: the Immaculate womb of Mary.

To enter the wondrous spirit of Advent and fully savour the unique grace of this Season, we are invited to walk the path which leads to the Heart of the Mother of the One awaited, who comes, who has already come and remains with us always: Emmanuel.

With Mary we will go to Nazareth and from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The path paved with simplicity and humility and special attention for small things, where nothing happens by chance, nothing is taken for granted but instead every thing on this path is an occasion for gratitude. Yes, this itinerary is called "littleness" and can only be found by those who leave all tortuous paths of self-sufficiency. We can only the Heart of Mary, in her mystery of grace, if we take this path decisively, determined to become truly little!

"Blessed are the poor in spirit because theirs in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5, 3). Poverty in spirit, proclaimed in the Beatitudes, which leads necessarily to the Kingdom of Heaven, is littleness.

Living Advent with Mary means then, conversion to what the world despises and considers weakness: precisely littleness. In the Gospel Jesus speaks clearly: "'In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven." (Mt 18, 3).

A well known hymn sung in our parishes repeats this Gospel phrase: "unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven."! These words are like those of a tender loving Mother who teaches us to become little, not aspire to greatness, but always prefer humility of heart, which becomes humility in manner and speech and attitude to God and to others. This humility becomes attention for details, and the situation around us, people in distress, people in need of help; the littleness of the Gospel, which, precisely because it cannot remain passive, burns with the fire of charity.

May Mary of Advent help us become authentic expectant children, awaiting everything from Him, not discouraged because of their littleness indeed, boldly throwing themselves in the adventure of friendship and collaboration with Jesus, like Pope Benedict XVI, at the end of the homily last year on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary: « Mary thus stands before us as a sign of comfort, encouragement and hope. She turns to us, saying: "Have the courage to dare with God! Try it! Do not be afraid of him! Have the courage to risk with faith! Have the courage to risk with goodness! Have the courage to risk with a pure heart! Commit yourselves to God, then you will see that it is precisely by doing so that your life will become broad and light, not boring but filled with infinite surprises, for God's infinite goodness is never depleted!"» (8 December 2005)

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