



VATICAN - AVE MARIA - Mary, Queen of the Beatitudes **Rev. Luciano Alimandi**

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - "They came to Capernaum, and when he got into the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the road?' They said nothing, because on the road they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.' He then took a little child whom he set among them and embraced, and he said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes a little child such as this in my name, welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.' (Mk 9, 33-37)". In this Gospel passage it is clear that as they returned from an apostolic pilgrimage with the Lord the disciples were clearly thinking of their own interests with an attitude which had little to do with authentic discipleship. However, in His infinite goodness Jesus does not rebuke them as they perhaps deserved, on the contrary like a true friend he draws near and gently helps them examine their conscience and reflect on their behaviour: "What were you arguing about on the road?" There was no reply because it would have been embarrassing to admit that they were arguing about "which of them was the greatest", while the Master had just told them about His passion. But Jesus uses this weakness of the apostles - who, like us, slipped up on pride - to teach them about an antidote to all desire for greatness: "be the least of all, the servants of all and you will be the first"! For Christianity there is only one priority: to become children in spirit! To imprint on the memory of the fledgling Church the Lord chose a child, whom he set among them and embraced, as if to tell them that the world of "grownups", must bow to the world of "little ones" and give the innocence of children so often despised by the powerful, all the respect it deserves. The world of 'children in spirit' is a world of simplicity not arrogance, humility not social-climbing; a world where no one thinks of crushing others because we all have the same model, Jesus of the Beatitudes. The world of 'children in spirit' attracts the simple but puzzles those who think they have "made it". The adult world instead is a world of argument, ambition, more or less hidden, standard smiles shown whenever it is convenient, not the spontaneous smile to acknowledge one another as children of the One God. The world of the poor in spirit is the world of Mary: here Jesus was born in a stable, welcomed by the love of the poor in spirit. This is the world promoted by the Mother of God who often asks the help of children, like Blessed Francisco and Jacinta, in Fatima. The shepherd children met Our Lady who gave them one of the most surprising messages of history. To little ones God reveals the mysteries of His Kingdom. If we become little like Francisco and Jacinta, God will strengthen us with His power and His glory. With their prayers and little sacrifices these two children who trusted implicitly the Immaculate Heart of Mary, helped to save many souls and also to console the Pope in his sufferings. We remember them for their holiness of life, holiness which everyone can attain, the holiness of the beatitudes of which the Mother of Jesus is our Teacher and Guide. With Pope Benedict XVI let us invoke the Blessed Virgin: "Mary, you said Yes to the Father, you listened to Jesus, you recognise the tone of his voice and the beat of his heart. O Morning Star, tell us about Him and teach us your way of following Him on the path of the faith. O Mary, you lived with Jesus in Nazareth, teach us to live your same sentiments, your docility, your silent listening where the Word is free to prompt decisions of authentic freedom. Mary, tell us about Jesus so that the newness of our faith may shine in our eyes and warm the hearts of those we encounter, as you did when you visited Elizabeth who in her old age rejoiced with you for the gift of life. Mary, Our Lady of the Magnificat, help us to bring joy to the world and you did at Cana teach young people to be committed to helping others and to do whatever Jesus tells them. Mary, watch over the Agorà of Young Italians that it may bear fruit for the Church in Italy. Pray that Jesus who died and rose again may be born in us and transform us like a night flooded with light, flooded with Him. Mary, Our Lady of Loreto, gate of heaven, help us to raise our eyes heavenwards. We want to see Jesus, to speak with Him, to tell everyone about His Love." (Prayer for the Mediterranean Youth Agorà Benedict XVI, 14 February 2007 Wednesday audience for Italian visitors in St Peter's). (Agenzia Fides 21/2/2007, righe 51, parole

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