



FEAST OF THE HOLY ROSARY

Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Jean PATEAU
Abbot of Our Lady of Fontgombault
(Fontgombault, October 7th, 2024)

Dominus possedit me.
The Lord possessed me.
(*Prov 8:22*)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
My dearly beloved Sons,

THIS VERSE taken from the Book of Proverbs reminds us in a way of St. Augustine’s first words in his *Confessions*, “*Fecisti nos ad te [Deum] et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.*”

On the Feast of the Holy Rosary, it may be worthwhile to recall this short introductory chapter to the *Confessions*:

Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Thy power, and of Thy wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee, man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that Thou “resistest the proud,”—yet man, this part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee. Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.^a

a. *Confessions*, bk. I,
ch. I.

Today, we contemplate Mary, not in a particular mystery of her life, but through her whole life considered as a single mystery. If the liturgy uses for today’s Mass the praise of Wisdom taken from the Book of Proverbs and applies it to Mary, it is

because Mary is the fairest of all creatures, she who has eminently received in a purely human nature the gift of the grace of God. She is par excellence the creature possessed by God from the very beginning.

“*Cum essem parvula, placui Altissimo.* — Since I was little, I pleased the Lord Most High.” The gospel of the Annunciation was concluded with Mary’s “Yes,” a total abandonment to God’s will, and a total lack of obstacles to the implementation of this will. When man is little before God’s will, he is great: he pleases God. The *Fiat* of Mary at the Annunciation is but the explicit affirmation of the implicit gift of each moment in her life, both in her nature and in the implementation of her will.

In her nature, Mary, who is Immaculate from her very conception, is exempt from all compromising with evil, transmitted by the original sin that marks each human being from his conception. The Virgin of Nazareth was born in the peace of God, fully disposed to receive God’s gifts. The silent *Fiat* to her Creator’s will in the first moments of her life resounds as an echo of that of the creature in the first days of creation. Perhaps God, seeing what He had done in Mary, then repeated the words He had formerly pronounced, “It was very good.”^a

a. *Gn* 1:31.

Mary’s conscious life will be but the unfolding of the Annunciation *Fiat*. Thus may we understand the Lord’s answer, at first sight shocking, to the woman who had cried, “Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the breast which Thou hast sucked.”^b

b. *Lk* 11:27.

A woman can but rejoice at having given birth to a child. Even though the vocation of women is often to bear a cross due to their children, this cross is allied with a deep and unshakable hope which brings them consolation. Such has been the case for Mary, and certainly more for her than for any other mother. Blessed therefore is she who gave birth to a son Who does so great miracles. She may glory in the works of her Son.

But Jesus answers the woman, “Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.”^c

c. *Lk* 11:28.

The viewpoint then changes radically. It is no longer a question of motherhood. For Jesus, it is another generation that should give rise to joy in the heart of man: receiving the word

of God and keeping it in one's heart. Generation according to the flesh is ordered to the generation according to the spirit, to the entry into everlasting life.

Naturally, Mary is she who has most fully received the word of God, she who during the months of her pregnancy protected in her bosom Him who is the incarnate Word of the Father. But Mary is also she who has heard and received the word of God, both on the day of the Annunciation, from the lips of the Angel Gabriel, as well as every day of her life, and especially at the foot of the Cross, in the words of Jesus Himself: "Woman, behold thy son."^a

a. *Jn* 19:26.

At this moment, Mary received from Jesus' hands as a son not only the Apostle John, who was standing near her, but each member of mankind.

Mary, faithful to her vocation of mother, is the lead climber on the steep path leading mankind towards holiness, and she works at begetting us to everlasting life, at leading us on a safe path towards her Son. That was what St. Paul VI expressed during a pilgrimage in a Marian sanctuary of Italy:

If we want to be Christian, we have to be Marian, namely, we have to acknowledge the essential, vital, providential link that unites the Blessed Virgin with Jesus, and opens for us the way leading towards Him.¹

The Holy Rosary is a digest of Marian theology. From the Annunciation to the crowning of Mary in heaven, let us unite ourselves to Mary's "Yes" and contemplate the *magnalia Dei* — the wonderful works of God — in her and through her.

Pope Francis has testified that everyday since he met John Paul II in 1979, he has recited the Rosary with its fifteen mysteries. Fr. Bergolio was 42 at that time. He said:

On an afternoon, I went and prayed the holy Rosary under the guidance of the Holy Father. He was just in front of us, kneeling...

During the prayer I lost my concentration, and I looked at the Pope. Time was fleeing. I began to imagine the young

1. St. PAUL VI, Homily during Mass at the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Bonaria, Cagliari, April 24th, 1970.

priest, the seminarist, the poet, the worker, the child in Wadowice, kneeling exactly as he was now kneeling, saying *Ave Maria* after *Ave Maria*. I was struck by his witness. I felt that this man, chosen to guide the Church, was the sum total of a path on which he had been walking with his heavenly Mother, a path that had begun in his childhood. And I suddenly realised the weight of the words Our Lady of Guadalupe told San Juan Diego: “Fear nothing. Am I not your Mother?” I understood the presence of Mary in the Pope’s life.

In the school of Mary and the Holy Rosary, a path of faith, hope, and charity, let us therefore enter into the peace of God, in peace with God, and let us learn to rest in Him.

Amen.

