



**12-13
OCT**

MARIAN DAY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

7.45 am **Pilgrimages to the tomb of the Apostle Peter**

9.00 am **Eucharistic Adoration and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation**

1.30 pm **Procession of the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima in vatican**

4.00 pm **The procession of the original Statue of Our Lady of Fatima in St. Peter's Square**

5.00 pm **Pope Francis welcomes the Statue of the Madonna of Fatima. *Via Matris* and Marian catechesis.**

7.00 pm **Recitation of the Holy Rosary united with those in Marian sanctuaries throughout the world at the Sanctuary of Divino Amore;**

10.00 pm **Prayer Vigil**

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13

9.45 am **The entrance procession of the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima and the recitation of the Holy Rosary.**

10.30 am **Holy Mass in St. Peter's Square presided by Pope Francis.**

SABATO 12 OTTOBRE

Pellegrinaggio alla Tomba di Pietro

Procession of the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima in Vatican

Via Matris and Marian catechesis.

ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This event of the Year of Faith is devoted to Mary, the Mother of Christ and the Mother of the Church, our Mother. The statue of Our Lady which has come from Fatima helps us to feel her presence in our midst. It is a fact: Mary always brings us to Jesus. She is a woman of faith, a true believer. But we can ask: What was Mary's faith like?

1. The first aspect of her faith is this: *Mary's faith unties the knot of sin* (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 56). What does that mean? The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council took up a phrase of Saint Irenaeus, who states that "the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by the

obedience of Mary; what the virgin Eve bound by her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith" (*Adversus Haereses*, III, 22, 4).

The "knot" of disobedience, the "knot" of unbelief. When children disobey their parents, we can say that a little "knot" is created. This happens if the child acts with an awareness of what he or she is doing, especially if there is a lie involved. At that moment, they break trust with their parents. You know how frequently this happens! Then the relationship with their parents needs to be purified of this fault; the child has to ask forgiveness so that harmony and trust can be restored. Something of the same sort happens in our relationship with God. When we do not listen to him, when we do not follow his will, we do concrete things that demonstrate our lack of trust in him – for that is what sin is – and a kind of knot is created deep within us. These knots take away our peace and serenity. They are dangerous, since many knots can form a tangle which gets more and more painful and difficult to undo.

But we know one thing: nothing is impossible for God's mercy! Even the most tangled knots are loosened by his grace. And Mary, whose "yes" opened the door for God to undo the knot of the ancient disobedience, is the Mother who patiently and lovingly brings us to God, so that he can untangle the knots of our soul by his fatherly mercy. We all have some of these knots and we can ask in our heart of hearts: What are the knots in my life? "Father, my knots cannot be undone!" It is a mistake to say anything of the sort! All the knots of our heart, every knot of our conscience, can be undone. Do I ask Mary to help me trust in God's mercy, to undo those knots, to change? She, as a woman of faith, will surely tell you: "Get up, go to the Lord: he understands you". And she leads us by the hand as a Mother, our Mother, to the embrace of our Father, the Father of mercies.

2. A second aspect is that *Mary's faith gave human flesh to Jesus*. As the Council says: "Through her faith and obedience, she gave birth on earth to the very Son of the Father, without knowing man but by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit" (*Lumen Gentium*, 63). This was a point on which the Fathers of the Church greatly insisted: Mary first conceived Jesus *in faith* and then *in the flesh*, when she said "yes" to the message God gave her through the angel. What does this mean? It means that God did not want to become man by bypassing our freedom; he wanted to pass through Mary's free assent, through her "yes". He asked her: "Are you prepared to do this?" And she replied: "Yes".

But what took place most singularly in the Virgin Mary also takes place within us, spiritually, when we receive the word of God with a good and sincere heart and put it into practice. It is as if God takes flesh within us; he comes to dwell in us, for he dwells in all who love him and keep his word. It is not easy to understand this, but really, it is easy to feel it in our heart.

Do we think that Jesus' incarnation is simply a past event which has nothing to do with us personally? Believing in Jesus means giving him our flesh with the humility and courage of Mary, so that he can continue to dwell in our midst. It means giving him our hands, to caress the little ones and the poor; our feet, to go forth and meet our brothers and sisters; our arms, to hold up the weak and to work in the Lord's vineyard, our minds, to think and act in the light of the Gospel; and especially to offer our hearts to love and to make choices in accordance with God's will. All this happens thanks to the working of the Holy Spirit. And in this way we become instruments in God's hands, so that Jesus can act in the world through us.

3. The third aspect is *Mary's faith as a journey*. The Council says that Mary "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith" (*ibid.*, 58). In this way *she precedes us on this pilgrimage*, she accompanies and sustains us.

How was Mary's faith a journey? In the sense that her entire life was to follow her Son: he – Jesus – is the way, he is the path! To press forward in faith, to advance in the spiritual pilgrimage which is faith, is nothing other than to follow Jesus; to listen to him

and be guided by his words; to see how he acts and to follow in his footsteps; to have his same sentiments. And what are these sentiments of Jesus? Humility, mercy, closeness to others, but also a firm rejection of hypocrisy, duplicity and idolatry. The way of Jesus is the way of a love which is faithful to the end, even unto sacrificing one's life; it is the way of the cross. The journey of faith thus passes through the cross. Mary understood this from the beginning, when Herod sought to kill the newborn Jesus. But then this experience of the cross became deeper when Jesus was rejected. Mary was always with Jesus, she followed Jesus in the midst of the crowds and she heard all the gossip and the nastiness of those who opposed the Lord. And she carried this cross! Mary's faith encountered misunderstanding and contempt. When Jesus' "hour" came, the hour of his passion, when Mary's faith was a little flame burning in the night, a little light flickering in the darkness. Through the night of Holy Saturday, Mary kept watch. Her flame, small but bright, remained burning until the dawn of the resurrection. And when she received word that the tomb was empty, her heart was filled with the joy of faith: Christian faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith always brings us to joy, and Mary is the Mother of joy! May she teach us to take the path of joy, to experience this joy! That was the high point – this joy, this meeting of Jesus and Mary, and we can imagine what it was like. Their meeting was the high point of Mary's journey of faith, and that of the whole Church. What is our faith like? Like Mary, do we keep it burning even at times of difficulty, in moments of darkness? Do I feel the joy of faith?

This evening, Mother, we thank you for our faith, the faith of a strong and humble woman; we renew our entrustment to you, Mother of our faith. Amen.

SUNDAY, 13 OCTOBER

Holy Mass

HOMILY OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS



In the Psalm we said: "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things" (*Ps 98:1*).

Today we consider one of the marvellous things which the Lord has done: Mary! A lowly and weak creature like ourselves, she was chosen to be the Mother of God, the Mother of her Creator.

Considering Mary in the light of the readings we have just heard, I would like to reflect with you on three things: first, *God surprises us*, second, *God asks us to be faithful*, and third, *God is our strength*.

1. First: *God surprises us*. The story of Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Aram, is remarkable. In order to be healed of leprosy, he turns to the prophet of God, Elisha, who does not perform magic or demand anything unusual of him, but asks him simply to trust in God and to wash in the waters of the river. Not, however, in one of the great rivers of Damascus, but in the little stream of the Jordan. Naaman is left surprised, even taken aback. What kind of God is this who asks for something so simple? He wants to turn back, but then he goes ahead, he immerses himself in the Jordan and is immediately healed (cf. *2 Kg 5:1-4*). There it is: God surprises us. It is precisely in poverty, in weakness and in humility that he reveals himself and grants us his love, which saves us, heals us and gives us strength. He asks us only to obey his word and to trust in him.

This was the experience of the Virgin Mary. At the message of the angel, she does not hide her surprise. It is the astonishment of realizing that God, to become man, had chosen her, a simple maid of Nazareth. Not someone who lived in a palace amid power and riches, or one who had done extraordinary things, but simply someone who was open to God and put her trust in him, even without understanding everything: "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (*Lk 1:38*). That was her answer. God constantly surprises us, he bursts our categories, he wreaks havoc with our plans. And he tells us: Trust me, do not be afraid, let yourself be surprised, leave yourself behind and follow me!

Today let us all ask ourselves whether we are afraid of what God might ask, or of what he does ask. Do I let myself be surprised by God, as Mary was, or do I remain caught up in my own safety zone: in forms of material, intellectual or ideological security, taking refuge in my own projects and plans? Do I truly let God into my life? How do I answer him?

2. In the passage from Saint Paul which we have heard, the Apostle tells his disciple Timothy: Remember Jesus Christ; if we persevere with him, we will also reign with him (cf. *2 Tim 2:8-13*). This is the second thing: to remember Christ always – to be mindful of Jesus Christ – and thus to persevere in faith. *God surprises us with his love, but he demands that we be faithful in following him*. We can be unfaithful, but he cannot: he is "the faithful one" and he demands of us that same fidelity. Think of all the times when we were excited about something or other, some initiative, some task, but afterwards, at the first sign of difficulty, we threw in the towel. Sadly, this also happens in the case of fundamental decisions, such as marriage. It is the difficulty of remaining steadfast, faithful to decisions we have made and to commitments we have made. Often it is easy enough to say "yes", but then we fail to repeat this "yes" each and every day. We fail to be faithful.

Mary said her "yes" to God: a "yes" which threw her simple life in Nazareth into turmoil, and not only once. Any number of times she had to utter a heartfelt "yes" at moments of joy and sorrow, culminating in the "yes" she spoke at the foot of the Cross. Here today there are many mothers present; think of the full extent of Mary's faithfulness to God: seeing her only Son hanging on the Cross. The faithful woman, still standing, utterly heartbroken, yet faithful and strong.

And I ask myself: Am I a Christian by fits and starts, or am I a Christian full-time? Our culture of the ephemeral, the relative, also takes it toll on the way we live our faith. God

asks us to be faithful to him, daily, in our everyday life. He goes on to say that, even if we are sometimes unfaithful to him, he remains faithful. In his mercy, he never tires of stretching out his hand to lift us up, to encourage us to continue our journey, to come back and tell him of our weakness, so that he can grant us his strength. This is the real journey: to walk with the Lord always, even at moments of weakness, even in our sins. Never to prefer a makeshift path of our own. That kills us. Faith is ultimate fidelity, like that of Mary.

3. The last thing: *God is our strength*. I think of the ten lepers in the Gospel who were healed by Jesus. They approach him and, keeping their distance, they call out: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" (Lk 17:13). They are sick, they need love and strength, and they are looking for someone to heal them. Jesus responds by freeing them from their disease. Strikingly, however, only one of them comes back, praising God and thanking him in a loud voice. Jesus notes this: ten asked to be healed and only one returned to praise God in a loud voice and to acknowledge that he is our strength. Knowing how to give thanks, to give praise for everything that the Lord has done for us.

Take Mary. After the Annunciation, her first act is one of charity towards her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth. Her first words are: "My soul magnifies the Lord", in other words, a song of praise and thanksgiving to God not only for what he did for her, but for what he had done throughout the history of salvation. Everything is his gift. If we can realize that everything is God's gift, how happy will our hearts be! Everything is his gift. He is our strength! Saying "thank you" is such an easy thing, and yet so hard! How often do we say "thank you" to one another in our families? These are essential words for our life in common. "Sorry", "excuse me", "thank you". If families can say these three things, they will be fine. "Sorry", "excuse me", "thank you". How often do we say "thank you" in our families? How often do we say "thank you" to those who help us, those close to us, those at our side throughout life? All too often we take everything for granted! This happens with God too. It is easy to approach the Lord to ask for something, but to go and thank him: "Well, I don't need to".

As we continue our celebration of the Eucharist, let us invoke Mary's intercession. May she help us to be open to God's surprises, to be faithful to him each and every day, and to praise and thank him, for he is our strength. Amen.

* * *

ACT OF ENTRUSTMENT TO MARY

Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima,

with renewed gratitude for your motherly presence

we join in the voice of all generations that call you blessed.

We celebrate in you the great works of God,

who never tires of lowering himself in mercy over humanity,

afflicted by evil and wounded by sin,

to heal and to save it.

Accept with the benevolence of a Mother

this act of entrustment that we make in faith today,
before this your image, beloved to us.

We are certain that each one of us is precious in your eyes
and that nothing in our hearts has estranged you.

May that we allow your sweet gaze
to reach us and the perpetual warmth of your smile.

Guard our life with your embrace:
bless and strengthen every desire for good;
give new life and nourishment to faith;
sustain and enlighten hope;
awaken and animate charity;
guide us all on the path to holiness.

Teach us your own special love for the little and the poor,
for the excluded and the suffering,
for sinners and the wounded of heart:
gather all people under your protection
and give us all to your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus.

Amen.