



CELEBRATION OF VESPERS WITH THE
CAMALDOLESE BENEDICTINE COMMUNITY

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

TO THE CAMALDOLESE BENEDICTINE NUNS

MONASTERY OF ST ANTHONY THE ABBOT - ROME
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Let us contemplate the one who knew and loved Jesus like no other creature. The Gospel that we heard reveals the fundamental way Mary expressed her love for Jesus: by doing the will of God. "For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt 12:50). With these words Jesus leaves us an important message: the will of God is the supreme law which establishes true belonging to him. That is how Mary established a bond of kinship with Jesus even before giving birth to him. She becomes both disciple and mother to the Son at the moment she receives the words of the Angel and says: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). This "let it be" is not only acceptance, but also a trustful openness to the future. This "let it be" is hope!

Mary is the mother of hope, the icon that most fully expresses Christian hope. The whole of her life is a series of episodes of hope, beginning with her "yes" at the moment of the Annunciation. Mary did not know how she could become a mother, but she entrusted herself totally to the mystery that was about to be fulfilled, and she became the woman of expectation and of hope. Then we see her in Bethlehem, where the One proclaimed to her

as the Saviour of Israel and as the Messiah is born into poverty. Later, while she was in Jerusalem to present him in the Temple amid the joy of the elderly Simeon and Anna, a promise is also made that a sword will pierce her heart and a prophecy foretells that he will be a sign of contradiction. She realizes that the mission and the very identity of this Son surpasses her own motherhood. We then come to the episode of Jesus who is lost in Jerusalem and is then called back: "Son, why have you treated us so?" (Lk 2:48), and to Jesus' reply that takes away her motherly anxiety and turns to the things of the Heavenly Father.

Yet in the face of all these difficulties and surprises in God's plan, the Virgin's hope is never shaken! The woman of hope. This tells us that hope is nourished by listening, contemplation and patience until the time of the Lord is ripe. Again at the wedding in Cana, Mary is the mother of hope, which makes her attentive and solicitous to human affairs. With the start of his public ministry, Jesus becomes the Teacher and the Messiah: Our Lady looks upon the mission of the Son with exultation but also with apprehension, because Jesus becomes ever more that sign of contradiction foretold by the elderly Simeon. At the foot of the Cross, she is at once the woman of sorrow and of watchful expectation of a mystery far greater than sorrow which is about to be fulfilled. It seemed that everything had come to an end; every hope could be said to have been extinguished. She too, at that moment, remembering the promises of the Annunciation could have said: they did not come true, I was deceived. But she did not say this. And so she who was blessed because she believed, sees blossom from her faith a new future and awaits God's tomorrow with expectation. At times I think: do we know how to wait for God's tomorrow? Or do we want it today? For her the tomorrow of God is the dawn of Easter morning, the dawn of the first day of the week. It would do us good to think, in contemplation, of the embrace of mother and son. The single lamp lit at the tomb of Jesus is the hope of the mother, which in that moment is the hope of all humanity. I ask myself and I ask you: is this lamp still alight in monasteries? In your monasteries are you waiting for God's tomorrow?

We owe so much to this Mother! She is present at every moment in the history of salvation, and in her we see a firm witness to hope. She, the mother of hope, sustains us in times of darkness, difficulty, discouragement, of seeming defeat or true human defeat. May Mary, our hope, help us to make of our lives a pleasing offering to the Heavenly Father, and a joyful gift for our brothers and sisters, in an attitude that always looks forward to tomorrow.