

HOMILY FOR THE EUCHARIST
SATURDAY MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
Saturday March 1, 2014

According to a beautiful and pious story, every time a child is to be born in the world, the good Lord calls one of his many angels in heaven and sends him to the earth to be born as a boy or a girl.

One day the Lord put forward his request to a little angel who was known for not obeying so easily. When God asked him to go to the earth to be born as a baby, the angel spoke to him of his difficulty: "Look, Lord," he said. "I'm tiny, and on planet earth there are so many persons, all of them so very big; I will definitely get lost." God replied to the objection, saying: "DON'T WORRY. THERE WILL BE SOMEONE TO TAKE CARE OF YOU AND ENSURE THAT YOU WON'T GET LOST." Seeing that his first argument was not strong enough to convince God, the angel raised a second objection: "Lord, you are well aware that over here I do not lack anything because you give us everything; instead, down there, I'll be alone: I won't be able to defend myself and will have nothing to eat." For the second time, the Lord answered him, saying: "DON'T WORRY. THERE WILL BE SOMEONE WHO WILL GIVE YOU NOURISHING FOOD EVERY DAY." The little angel realized that it wasn't easy to defend himself, but he tried again to resist and put forward his objection to the good Lord, saying: "Lord, have you ever given a thought to the fact that on earth I shall be very small and helpless, while the others will be bigger than myself and will hurt me?" Patiently, the Lord answered him again, saying: "DON'T WORRY. THERE WILL BE SOMEONE WHOSE EYES WILL BE ALWAYS ON YOU TO MAKE SURE THAT NO ONE HARMS YOU."

Seeing that there was no way of refusing the Lord's request, the little angel surrendered and told the Lord: "All right, I see that there is no way out for me... But could you at least tell me whom I must approach when I reach the earth?" To which God replied: "DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE NAME. JUST CALL HER **MAMA.**"

This pious story reminds us that the good Lord has always considered us to be in need of someone whom we can simply call MAMA. And we all know what this word stirs up in our hearts. Our study of anthropology tells us that the beatings of our heart are so very deep and strong that when we reach the last years of our life, the one whom we call upon is our mother, even if thirty, forty or more years have elapsed since she went to meet the Lord in the Father's house.

And a Mother has been given to and for all of us, according to our faith in the mystery of salvation: " 'Woman, behold your son'... Then he said to the disciple: 'Here is your mother'"(Jn 19,16-27).

So it is that, along with the tender feeling of having a mother who, according to our faith, accompanies and cares for us believers, each one of us, as Salesians and members of a Congregation and Religious Family with a deep Marian tradition, looks up to Mary, our

Mother, not only with our feelings but with as much depth as we are capable of. To look at Mary of Nazareth, the mother of the Lord, is not only to contemplate the incredible choice God has made of her, but also the example she gives us. To look at Mary means to understand what God asks of those who, like her, embark on his plans and are prepared to say yes.

As the Salesian author, Juan José Bartolomé, says in his book: ***Dichosa tú que has creído*** (Blessed are you who have believed), the gaze that is most respectful of Mary, the piety that venerates her the most, the cult that is due to her, the devotion that she deserves is a copy of the “devotion” that God has for her. If we should discover in Mary what our God has found in her, then our love for Mary our Mother will obviously be more divine and our Marian devotion undoubtedly more evangelical.

Every Marian event, in the context of the simple style of the Gospels, always serves as a manifestation of God: it is a revelation and a promise that, more than telling us what Mary was like, tells us what God is like and how he has chosen to be also with us.

It is for this reason that in two Gospels Mary is presented as blessed for having believed in God and for remaining a faithful believer in him. And these two Gospels, Luke and John, hand on to us not so much a personal biography of Mary as a sketch of her journey of faith. The first Christian generations discovered in Mary the model of every believer and the mother of the faithful disciples, even while her figure and her presence remain always, according to the Gospel tradition, linked to Jesus.

To be aware of this and to meditate on our mother’s journey of faith means to understand that anyone who aspires to experience God must learn to follow a path in which it is always God who takes the initiative, sets goals and establishes the means. An experience of God which is uneventful and becomes routine, which is lived without any moments of emptiness or of God’s silence, offers no guarantee of being the path taken by our Mother.

Mary of the New Testament, the one who was given to us as Mother, the Virgin of Nazareth, was first of all, *a woman of Faith*. And this would be a magnificent gift to us as we end our spiritual retreat and embark on the important task and the challenges we face in the 27th General Chapter to which we have been called. “Experto credite,” was St. Bernard’s advice: trust in the one with experience. Who would be better than she, whom we call and feel as our mother, like the little angel of the story, as a companion on our life’s journey, to help us become faithful believers *in the Lord Jesus and in the God of Life*. And, as he did with the children described in today’s Gospel text, the Lord embraces us and, placing his hands on us, blesses us with His Spirit.

Amen.