

Week Two/Day Four: *Prayer*

1. Place yourself in God's presence

2. Ask Him for the grace you seek: *to acquire knowledge of yourself, especially regarding your life of prayer.*

3. Today's Meditation:

Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (Lk 2:19).

In the Gospels, Our Blessed Mother does not say much, but she prays much. In a certain sense we can say that her vocal silence is on account of her continual dialogue with God in prayer.

The Evangelists especially relate that Mary was a woman of prayer at moments when reality seemed difficult to understand.

Mary's heart first ponders in prayer at St. Gabriel's announcement of her virgin motherhood of God's only Son. Again, we see it turn to prayer before the many words spoken by wise men from the East who come bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to her new born son. It marvels in prayer again before the mixed emotions produced by Simeon's words in the Temple: her son is to the light of salvation and the same time a "sign of contradiction". Her heart certainly must have ached in prayer as she pondered the unfortunate situation at Cana. The wedding party is without wine and providentially her Son is present, but any miraculous work will usher Him to His death. And let us not forget her silence at the Last Supper, in the praetorium, and on Calvary. She could not suffer in place of her Son as a true mother would have so desired, but her heart could be rent in prayer.

What is the response that Mary gives after each of these moments of prayer? *Fiat*. No matter the circumstance, whether it be a moment of joy at the Nativity, a moment of mixed emotions at the Presentation or a moment of utter sorrow at the Crucifixion, Mary's prayer always produces the same response, *Fiat*. This shows that her prayer is true prayer. It is prayer focused on God and fulfilling His will.

How often we pray seeking to convince God of what we need! How often we pray asking God to give us what we think we need! How often we pray hoping that our act of piety will change God's heart to give us what we think serves us best!

This was not how Mary prayed, and it shows in the way she responds, "May your will be done Lord"...*Fiat*.

True prayer, as Mary shows us, must be centered on God. It must praise Him, thank Him, beg Him for mercy, and be a self-offering to Him. As St. John Paul II says,

"When you pray, you must realize that prayer is not just asking God for something or seeking special help, even though prayers of petition are true ways of praying. But prayer should also be characterized by thanksgiving and praise, by adoration and attentive listening, by asking God's pardon and forgiveness."

We have said that Mary's silence is on the condition of her contemplative heart, but if we seek the moment in Scripture when she speaks the most we will recognize that her words themselves are a

prayer—a prayer in the very spirit of what St. John Paul II speaks of. Her *Magnificat* praises and thanks the Lord for His mercy in her life and for her people Israel. It adores the Lord for the work of salvation, exalting His work and not her cooperation. The “canticle” (prayer in song) of praise only comes after she attentively listens to the words of God’s messenger concerning His Divine will for her life. And finally, it speaks of God’s mercy, without which nothing good can come to humanity.

For Mary prayer came so perfectly and naturally for one reason: she prayed without ceasing. Repetition always forms a habit, and things done out of habit are always done with ease. If she who was “full of grace” saw the need to constantly give herself to prayer, how much more must we poor sinners turn to the Lord in prayer?

Questions to guide your meditation: Mary never spoke before having recourse to prayer. Do I place prayer at the beginning of my daily tasks, the little as much as the great? In my prayer do I speak more than I listen? In my ignorance or pride do I think prayer is about how much I have to say, rather than how much I have to be open to God’s will?

Mary fulfilled St. Paul’s command, *Pray without ceasing*. Do I have the habit of daily prayer? If so, do I seek it only for what I need or for discovering God’s will? Am I growing in the life of prayer?

Mary’s prayer was centered on God. Is my prayer life self-centered or God-centered? Am I seeking God’s will or my own? In my moments of prayer do I recognize Who it is I am speaking to? Do I adore God’s presence? Do I thank Him? Do I praise Him? Do I offer Him my life and my will? Do I beg Him for mercy?

- Today’s Prayer -

*HAIL, O Star of the ocean,
God's own Mother blest,
ever sinless Virgin,
gate of heav'nly rest.*

*Taking that sweet Ave,
which from Gabriel came,
peace confirm within us,
changing Eve's name.*

*Break the sinners' fetters,
make our blindness day,
Chase all evils from us,
for all blessings pray.*

*Show thyself a Mother,
may the Word divine*

*born for us thine Infant
hear our prayers through thine.*

*Virgin all excelling,
mildest of the mild,
free from guilt preserve us
meek and undefiled.*

*Keep our life all spotless,
make our way secure
till we find in Jesus,
joy for evermore.*

*Praise to God the Father,
honor to the Son,
in the Holy Spirit,
be the glory one. Amen.*