



The Holy See

RECITAL OF THE HOLY ROSARY
FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE MARIAN MONTH OF MAY

ADDRESS OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

*St. Peter's Square
Friday, 31 May 2013*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This evening we have prayed together with the Holy Rosary; we have retraced several events of Jesus' journey, of our salvation, and we have done so with the One who is our Mother, Mary, the One who guides us with a sure hand to her Son Jesus. Mary always guides us to Jesus.

Today we are celebrating the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her kinswoman Elizabeth. I would like to meditate with you on this mystery which shows how Mary faced her life's journey with great realism, humanity and practicality.

Three words sum up Mary's attitude: listening, decision, action. They are words that point out a way for us too as we face what the Lord asks of us in life. Listening, decision, action.

1. Listening. What gave rise to Mary's act of going to visit her relative Elizabeth? A word of God's Angel. "Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son..." (Lk 1:36). Mary knew how to listen to God. Be careful: it was not merely "hearing", a superficial word, but it was "listening", that consists of attention, acceptance and availability to God. It was not in the distracted way with which we sometimes face the Lord or others: we hear their words, but we do not really listen. Mary is attentive to God. She listens to God.

However Mary also listens to the events, that is, she interprets the events of her life, she is attentive to reality itself and does not stop on the surface but goes to the depths to grasp its meaning. Her kinswoman Elizabeth, who is already elderly, is expecting a child: this is the event. But Mary is attentive to the meaning. She can understand it: “with God nothing will be impossible” (Lk 1:37).

This is also true in our life: listening to God who speaks to us, and listening also to daily reality, paying attention to people, to events, because the Lord is at the door of our life and knocks in many ways, he puts signs on our path; he gives us the ability to see them. Mary is the mother of listening, of attentive listening to God and of equally attentive listening to the events of life.

2. The second word: decision. Mary did not live “with haste”, with breathlessness, but, as St Luke emphasizes, she “kept all these things, pondering them in her heart” (cf. Lk 2:19, 51). Moreover, at the crucial moment of the Angel’s Annunciation, she also asks: “how shall this be?” (Lk 1:34). Yet she does not stop at the moment of reflection either. She goes a step further: she decides. She does not live in haste but “goes with haste” only when necessary. Mary does not let herself be dragged along by events; she does not avoid the effort of taking a decision. And this happens both in the fundamental decision that was to change her life: “I am the handmaid of the Lord...” (cf. Lk 1:38), and in her daily decisions, routine but also full of meaning. The episode of the wedding of Cana springs to my mind (cf. Jn 2:1-11): here too one sees the realism, humanity and practicality of Mary who is attentive to events, to problems.

She sees and understands the difficulty of the young married couple at whose wedding feast the wine runs out; she thinks about it, she knows that Jesus can do something and decides to address her Son so that he may intervene: “they have no more wine” (cf. v. 3). She decides.

It is difficult in life to take decisions. We often tend to put them off, to let others decide instead, we frequently prefer to let ourselves be dragged along by events, to follow the current fashion; at times we know what we ought to do, but we do not have the courage to do it or it seems to us too difficult because it means swimming against the tide. In the Annunciation, in the Visitation and at the wedding of Cana Mary goes against the tide. Mary goes against the tide; she listens to God, she reflects and seeks to understand reality and decides to entrust herself totally to God. Although she is with child, she decides to visit her elderly relative and she decides to entrust herself to her Son with insistence so as to preserve the joy of the wedding feast.

3. The third word: action. Mary set out on a journey and “went with haste” (cf. Lk 1:39). Last Sunday I underlined Mary’s way of acting: in spite of the difficulties, the criticism she would have met with because of her decision to go, nothing could stop her. And here she leaves “with haste”. In prayer, before God who speaks, in thinking and meditating on the facts of her life, Mary is not in a hurry, she does not let herself be swept away by the moment, she does not let herself be dragged along by events. However, when she has clearly understood what God is asking of her,

what she has to do, she does not loiter, she does not delay, but goes “with haste”. St Ambrose commented: “There is nothing slow about the Holy Spirit” (*Expos. Evang. sec. Lucam*, II, 19: PL 15,1560). Mary’s action was a consequence of her obedience to the Angel’s words but was combined with charity: she went to Elizabeth to make herself useful; and in going out of her home, of herself, for love, she takes with her the most precious thing she has: Jesus. She takes her Son.

We likewise sometimes stop at listening, at thinking about what we must do, we may even be clear about the decision we have to make, but we do not move on to action. And above all we do not put ourselves at stake by moving towards others “with haste” so as to bring them our help, our understanding, our love; to bring them, like Mary, the most precious thing we have received, Jesus and his Gospel, with words and above all with the tangible witness of what we do.

Mary, the woman of listening, of decision, of action.

Mary, woman of listening, open our ears; grant us to know how to listen to the word of your Son Jesus among the thousands of words of this world; grant that we may listen to the reality in which we live, to every person we encounter, especially those who are poor, in need, in hardship.

Mary, woman of decision, illuminate our mind and our heart, so that we may obey, unhesitating, the word of your Son Jesus; give us the courage to decide, not to let ourselves be dragged along, letting others direct our life.

Mary, woman of action, obtain that our hands and feet move “with haste” toward others, to bring them the charity and love of your Son Jesus, to bring the light of the Gospel to the world, as you did. Amen.

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At the end of the celebration the Holy Father addressed this greeting to the faithful:

I thank you for this Rosary together, for this communion round the Mother. May she bless us all and make us brothers and sisters who are closer to each other. Good night, and have a good rest!