



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

HOLY MASS AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. MATTHEW

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Washington

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Mary says to us today: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (*Lk 1:38*).

And with those words, she expresses what was the fundamental attitude of her life: her faith! Mary believed! She trusted in God's promises and was faithful to his will. When the angel Gabriel announced that she was chosen to be the Mother of the Most High, she gave her "Fiat" humbly and with full freedom: "Let it be done to me as you say". Perhaps the best description of Mary and, at the same time the greatest tribute to her, was the greeting of her cousin Elizabeth: "Blessed is she who trusted that God's words to her would be fulfilled" (*Lk 1:45*). For it was that continual trust in the providence of God which most characterized her faith.

All her earthly life was a "pilgrimage of faith" (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 58). For like us she walked in shadows and hoped for things unseen. She knew the contradictions of our earthly life. She was promised that her son would be given David's throne, but at his birth, there was no room even at the inn. Mary still believed. The angel said her child would be called the Son of God; but she would see him slandered, betrayed and condemned, and left to die as a thief on the Cross. Even yet, Mary "trusted that God's words to her would be fulfilled" (*Lk 1:45*), and that "nothing was impossible with God" (*Lk 1:37*).

This woman of faith, Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of God, has been given to us as a model in our pilgrimage of faith. From Mary we learn to surrender to God's will in all things. From Mary, we learn to trust even when all hope seems gone. From Mary, we learn to love Christ, her Son and

the Son of God. For Mary is not only the Mother of God, she is Mother of the Church as well. In every stage of the march through history, the Church has benefited from the prayer and protection of the Virgin Mary. Holy Scripture and the experience of the faithful see the Mother of God as the one who in a very special way is united with the Church at the most difficult moments in her history, when attacks on the Church become most threatening. Precisely in periods when Christ, and therefore his Church, provokes premeditated contradiction, Mary appears particularly close to the Church, because for her the Church is always her beloved Christ.

I therefore exhort you in Christ Jesus, to continue to look to Mary as the model of the Church, as the best example of the discipleship of Christ. Learn from her to be always faithful, to trust that God's word to you will be fulfilled, and that nothing is impossible with God. Turn to Mary frequently in your prayer "for never was it known that anyone who fled to her protection, implored her help or sought her intercession was left unaided".

As a great sign that has appeared in the heavens, Mary guides and sustains us on our pilgrim way, urging us on to "the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jn 5 :5).

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