

HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

My dear friends, in the fullness of time and fulfilling His promise to restore all of humanity, God sent an angel to Mary. Praising her immaculate heart, the angel announced that she was highly favored, full of grace. It was therefore, most appropriate that she should conceive and bear a son, to be called Son of the Most High! And Mary responded to God's call to divine motherhood with her heart full of love, "Be it done to me according to your word."

Then the mighty King of heaven, the Son of the most high God humbled Himself by choosing to be born of this lowly virgin, choosing to be born in abject poverty in a stable fit only for animals, and choosing to be born with only poor shepherds to celebrate his birth. Mary pondered, "What does all of this mean? Would mankind understand that He came to save it in this way?" And she treasured all these things, reflecting on them in her immaculate heart, "Be it done to me according to your word."

Then at the presentation of her infant child to the Lord, Simeon prophesied that her son would be the instrument of Israel's salvation, as well as a sign of contradiction. Turning to Mary he added, "And you, yourself a sword will pierce, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be laid bare." For Mary, much like her divine Son would act as a mirror. People would either accept or reject them, according to the reflection of their own hearts. And she treasured all these things, reflecting on them, "Be it done to me according to your word."

Twelve years later we hear in Luke's Gospel how Mary and Joseph frantically searched for their young son while celebrating Passover in Jerusalem. From His mother's perspective, Jesus was lost, but from Boy's, he was at home with his Father! Their confrontation presents a rather dramatic penetration of hearts between parents and child, especially when Jesus replied, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

This statement definitely created an atmosphere of tension and separation between them. The reverence owed by a child to his earthly parents and the compulsion of an even higher allegiance. And Mary treasured all these things, reflecting on them in her heart, "Be it done to me according to your word."

You see, if her divine Son was commissioned by God to procure mankind's salvation through suffering and sorrow, so was she! If her divine Son willed the cross for Himself, so too He willed a sword of sorrow for her! God's purifying flame can occasionally enter a heart like a two edged sword, and Mary had already felt the cutting edge of separation. But the flame of love displayed above her pierced immaculate heart, depicts a life of faithful perseverance amidst anguish and sorrows, forever trusting in God's loving, providential care. Mary had chosen motherhood, and in doing so, like all mothers, she had put her heart completely on the line! But again and again, even as her heart was breaking, while standing at the foot of the cross, we hear her faithful assent, "Be it done to me according to your word!"

God bless you all