

+ Maria

### September 12<sup>th</sup> – The Holy Name of Mary

My dear Sisters in Christ and Our Lady of Mount Carmel – It is a maxim of our spirituality that Carmelites are interested in every feast and every memorial of Mary. As Carmelites, it is part of our spirit to love and honor Mary here on earth in the same way that Jesus loved and honored His Mother here before His ascension and her assumption and now, as the Queen of heaven and earth, to pray to and venerate Mary as continues her role as our advocate, our protector and our Mother in the Church and the Order. The memorial of the Holy Name of Mary is a beautiful feast, and one that we can understand and appreciate instinctively. In many countries, this feast is called the feast of the Sweet Name of Mary, a beautiful title and sentiment.

I think we can appreciate and understand this feast in two senses: in a theological sense, drawing from the sacred scriptures some pointers, and in the affective sense – in sum, from the mind and from the heart. Good theology makes for good devotions, they say, and good devotions touch the soul profoundly, they move the heart often in a wordless way.

Regarding the Holy Name of Mary, we understand the power of her name. Medieval theologians maintained that Mary was the opposite of the devil because, for sure there is only one God, and the devil can't be God's opposite because that would mean, heretically, that there is a good God and a bad god. So, they understood that the devil was the accuser always seeking to steal souls from God and deceive them while Mary was the advocate who brought souls to God through Jesus, Her Son. Hence, Mary's very name could move a person towards God and the good. St. Ephrem, a doctor of the Church, went so far as to say, "That the name of Mary is the key of the gates of heaven," in the hands of those who devoutly invoke it. St. Bonaventure wrote "that Mary is the salvation of all who call upon her." Blessed Henry Suso exclaimed, "O most sweet name! O Mary, what must you yourself be, since your name alone is so amiable and gracious." We can take advantage of the advice of St. Bernard, the Marian doctor, when he wrote: "In dangers, in perplexities, in doubtful cases, think of Mary, call on Mary; let her not leave your lips; let her not depart from your heart." Each day, my Sisters, in the *Memorare* we pray that never has it been known that anyone who turned to Mary has been left unaided. And, forgetting for a moment the doctors of the Church, we need only to recall the conversation at the General Chapter on the use of the title of Venerable for Mother Angeline. The Sisters concluded, basically, that while yes, she is Venerable – a beautiful title and recognition of her virtues by the Church – for you, her daughters, and for others of us, she remains Mother. This is devotion, and as Catholic believers, the Holy Name of Mary has that same deep feeling and power. Our rosaries, our prayers, remind us over and over of the presence and power of Mary in our

lives and she helps us, loves us, and even rescues us, like the best of Mothers, our older Sister, our Queen.

Our devotion to Mary's name rests on scripture and the Church's tradition. The scriptures today present to us Mary's humility and Mary's faithful cooperation with God's plan. Mary's greatness comes, paradoxically, from her humility. We make a joke about some people, who brag and boast about their humility. Well, Mary was truly humble, and she liberally proclaimed that everything she had was a gift from God, who had looked with favor on His lowly handmaid. She found her joy in God her savior, not in her exalted position. Her calling to be the Mother of God humbled her, it didn't puff her up. Humility, of course, is both truth and true self-knowledge. Mary teaches us to know ourselves, to be quick to credit all good things to God's gifts, and to live in truth who we are called to be. When we say, "Mary" we are recalling this woman of profound humility and truth who can help us to be people who are called to be Carmelite religious, women and men deeply holy and yet deeply human.

Mary also gives us forever the example of obedience to God, "May it be done to me according to God's word." God plan became Mary's plans. Let us not think that this is just in the big dramatic things in life, but really in every moment. There are two important moments in life, my Sisters, two: now, and the hour of our death. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners (truly and humbly who we are) now, and at the hour of our death." Invoking the name of Mary is a sure help to keep us on track for doing God's will, for making His plan for us our own plan.

With Mary, may we rejoice in God our Savior now so that at the hour of our death all will go well. Amen.

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