**SATURDAY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

# QUIA QUEM MERUISTI PORTARE

We know with divine certainty who the Virgin Mary carried in her womb: the Eternal Word of the Father. However, She did not carry Him as we carry things in our hands: a bucket, a jug, a basket, a book, a loaf of bread, a newspaper, a bag, or anything else. The Virgin Mary did not carry Him externally, but internally, as a gift. Mary carried the Word of life by giving Him her own flesh. The flesh of the Word is the flesh of Mary. She carried the Son of God in her virginal womb, in her most pure heart, in her most chaste mind, in her will entirely devoted to her God and Lord for the work to be accomplished. She carried Him because He was conceived in Her by the Holy Spirit. This is what the Divine Scriptures reveal to us: *In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. (Lk 1,26-38).*

*Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.” (Mt 1,18-25). In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.  The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.” (Jn 1,1-18).*

If everything in Mary is by divine election and calling, by eternal choice, in what sense can we speak of merit? We must rightly speak of merit because She put all her will into it, She gave her whole life to the Lord since the beginning, She remained perpetually pure, most holy, immaculate, full of grace, growing in charity, faith and hope every day, guided and sustained by the holy virtues of prudence, righteousness, fortitude and temperance. Just as Christ Jesus merited our eternal redemption by offering his life to the Father, so also did the Virgin Mary. She merited to bear the Word of life because of her total and perfect consecration to the Lord her God. She made her life a sacrifice, a holocaust, a perpetual gift. Not a single moment belonged to Her. Every moment belonged to her God. The Virgin Mary is to be imitated in this gift. In this gift we also deserve to cooperate with Jesus in the salvation of our brothers and sisters. Here is what we wrote about merit years ago:

*O ancient theology of merit:* When error in the truth of faith takes hold of the believing mind, it is as if a poisonous root were planted in the heart, whose tentacles of death corrupt not only the individual nature, but extend their evil effects to the entire social body. Every tree is recognised by its fruit, and many of our fruits are “bad”. Therefore it is necessary to care for the tree if it is simply sick, or to completely transform and modify it if it is in a state of “depravity” or change in its very nature. Pastoral work, in agitation, is useless, since it does not bear fruit. We can think of others spiritually, but only inasmuch as we think of ourselves. Wanting for others what we do not want for ourselves is, in the spiritual realm, a “vain endeavour”: demanding for our brothers and sisters what we do not live ourselves is also chasing the wind. In apostolic work, of whatever order, degree and type, there is a spiritual rule that cannot be ignored, at the risk of of failure. Collaborating with Christ in the salvation of the world, cooperating with God for the conversion of every person, is not a matter of carrying out this or that ministry within the ecclesial community. Working with the Spirit of God means uniting one's merits with the merits of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints, so that from the growth of this treasure much more grace may descend upon exhausted humankind and lift it up to the God of all salvation.

The conversion of the world is God's grace. What has been forgotten, or ignorantly ignored, is that this grace passes through ‘the flesh’: it is given, in Christ, through Christ and in Christ, to man through faith, but also as the fruit of the holiness of the man of faith. The Spirit of holiness generates holiness in hearts, and through this holiness other holiness is born and develops on earth, and other men are brought back to the Lord. To place this principle at the foundation of all pastoral ministry means to set one's mind and heart on one's own sanctification. The more one grows in holiness, the more hearts are converted, the more brothers and sisters are saved. It is no longer a matter of doing, but of becoming, and it is a matter of doing by becoming holy. In this way, abundant fruits of grace are produced. These fruits are personal merit, and this merit strengthens the soul, makes it grow in sanctifying grace, making it almost immune to sin, increases the degree of eternal bliss in the kingdom of heaven, and finally pours out like a copious rain of conversion and salvation upon humanity.

Pastoral care is ascesis, the attainment of one's own holiness, growth in it, permanent dwelling in grace, the acquisition of virtues, the eradication of vices, imperfections, and venial sins, even the slightest ones. The more the soul reflects the light of grace, the more its reflection spreads throughout the world, until it becomes an intense light of conversion for our brothers and sisters, that we must lead to salvation. The holy heart is the dwelling place of the Spirit, and when the Spirit dwells in the soul, the whole person is moved by Him on the paths of truth, on the way to the most perfect fulfilment of the will of the Father in heaven. The grace that sanctifies is the fruit of the grace that has already sanctified. The grace of Christ that saves us is the grace that bore fruit in his humanity, in that obedience to the Father even unto death on the cross. If the fruit of grace sanctifies the world, every moment is a moment dedicated to sanctification, every gesture lived in holiness, offered to God, is “merit” for further grace to the person and to our brothers and sisters. There is therefore an invisible ‘pastoral ministry,’ where apparently there is no history, in the silence of the heart, which saves the world. While the other pastoral ministry, the one that is only efficiency-oriented, made up of exclusive visibility, could only cause damage to hearts and souls. Perfect pastoral ministry is when the visible and the invisible come together and become a single moment of action. Growth in holiness, missionary and apostolic activity must be one in us, as they were in Christ.

It is around the saints that conversion and true and sincere return to God flourish. It is the fruit of Christ's grace in them that gives children to God. Holiness is like the virginal womb of the Mother of Redemption, which generates and gives birth to “blessed fruits”. Holiness is the mother who gives birth to children of grace. Merit lasts forever and spreads its fragrance of holiness and heavenly blessing throughout the world for centuries. The saints are the only teachers of pastoral care. We must turn to them if we want to work in the Lord's vineyard fruitfully. However, they must not be imitated in their work, but in their spirit, in their heart, in their soul. Lord, forgive us! We refuse to understand that you work in holiness! Convert us and sanctify us, for we must save ourselves and help our brothers and sisters in the work of their own conversion. Mother of Heaven, Immaculate, Most Holy, always Full of Grace, obtain for us from on High the wisdom of the Spirit, so that we may be convinced that it is not possible to bring children to the faith without the fruit of grace. You will help us, and we will begin the journey of our sanctification. Help us, Mother! The world needs our fruit of grace for its salvation. This is the responsibility that Your Son Jesus left to His Church, entrusting us with His grace and His truth as a precious seed to be sown in our hearts, to be nurtured and to be sown in the hearts of all humanity. Just as you gave the world not the Word of God, but the ‘Word of God made flesh’ from your flesh, so we must give the world not the grace and truth of God, but the grace and truth of God that have become the life of our lives. Help us to imitate you, O Mother.

Virgin Mary, today You want us to deserve your coming among us so that You may manifest your glory and how great your name is on earth and in heaven. This is what You have asked us and what you ask us: to remain faithful to the command You have given us, faithful not for a day or even for many days, but faithful for all the days of our lives. One is faithful if one dies fulfilling the command received. Now, Holy Mother, we ask You for a great grace: help us not to fall into temptation. The whole world tells us, ‘What's the point?’ The whole world accuses us of having done everything wrong. The whole world tells us that we would do well to devote ourselves to something else. Holy Mother, do not let us fall into this temptation. We would no longer deserve your coming, because we would fall from obedience to your command of love for the salvation of our brothers and sisters. You, Holy Mother, will help us, we will remain faithful, and You will be able to manifest your glory and your great name. Mother of God, let us await your coming in our greatest faithfulness. **10 August 2025**