

Father Cantalamessa on the Mother of God

"Mary Meditated on All These Things in Her Heart"

ROME, JAN. 1, 2007 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of a commentary by the Pontifical Household preacher, Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, on the liturgical readings for today's solemnity of Holy Mary, Mother of God.

* * *

Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

The council taught us to look upon Mary as a "figure" of the Church, that is, as the Church's perfect exemplar, as the first fruits of the Church. But can Mary be a model of the Church even as "Mother of God," the title with which she is honored this day? Can we become mothers of Christ?

Not only is this possible, but some fathers of the Church have said that, without this imitation, Mary's title is useless to me: "What does it matter," they said, "if Christ was once born to Mary in Bethlehem but is not born by faith in my soul?"

Jesus himself was the first to apply this title, "Mother of Christ," to the Church when he declared: "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice" (Luke 8:21).

Today's liturgy presents Mary to us as the first of those to become mother of Christ through attentive listening to his word. The Church has chosen for this feast the Gospel passage where it is written that "Mary, for her part, treasured all these words, meditating on them in her heart." How one concretely becomes a mother of Christ is explained to us by Jesus himself: hearing the word and putting it into practice.

There are two types of incomplete or interrupted motherhood. One is the old one which we know: early termination of the pregnancy. This happens when a woman conceives a life but does not give birth to it because, in the meantime, either for natural causes or the sin of men, the child dies. Until a short time ago this was the only known form of incomplete motherhood.

Today, however, we know another which consists, on the contrary, in giving birth to a child without having conceived it. This happens when child is first conceived in a test tube and then inserted into the womb of a woman. In some terrible and squalid cases, the womb is borrowed, sometimes rented, to bear a human life conceived elsewhere. In this case, that which the woman gives birth to does not come from her, is not "first conceived in her heart."

Unfortunately, also on the spiritual plane there are these two sad possibilities. There are those who conceive Jesus without giving birth to him. Such are those who welcome the word without putting it into practice, those who have one spiritual abortion after another, formulating plans for conversion which are then systematically forgotten and abandoned at the halfway point; they behave toward the word as hasty observers who see their

ZENIT

faces in a mirror and then go away immediately forgetting what they looked like (cf. James 1:23-24). In sum, these are those who have faith but not works.

On the other hand, there are those who give birth to Christ without having conceived him. Such are those who do many works, perhaps even good ones, which do not come from the heart, from love of God and right intention, but rather from habit, from hypocrisy, from the desire for their own glory or interests, or simply from the satisfaction of doing something, acting. In sum, these are those who have works but not faith.

These are the negative cases of an incomplete maternity. St. Francis of Assisi describes for us the positive case of a complete maternity which makes us resemble Mary: "We are mothers of Christ," he writes, "when we carry him in our hearts and our bodies through divine love and pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through holy works, which should shine as an example before others!"

We -- the saint says -- conceive Christ when we love him with sincerity of heart and with rectitude of conscience, and we give birth to him when we accomplish holy works that manifest him to the world.

| [More](#)

© Innovative Media, Inc.

Reprinting ZENIT's articles requires written permission from the [editor](#).