**MARY’S HUMILITY IN GREATNESS**

AN OUTSTANDING MODEL FOR SALESIAN PASTORAL MINISTRY.

"This is the field of your work. Make yourself ***humble*,** strong, and energetic. And what you will see happening to these animals in a moment is what you must do for my children" (Bosco, 1815 -1855). Jesus had given to Johnny Bosco, the best teacher of humility, the one who had identified herself as the ***“humble servant****”* of the Lord (Luke, 1:48-49).

The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God, became the Mother of the Redeemer; Mary is endowed with the dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God, by which account she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of sublime grace, she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth. (Vatican, 1964) Hence, Mary’shumility and unassuming total collaboration in the salvation history of humanity is an outstanding model for all Pastoral Ministry in the Church.

The greatness of Mary is embodied in her humility of spirit and gentleness of life, which are the true characteristics of Christian discipleship. Jesus himself said, “Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart” (Mathew, 11:28). In fact, humility is one of the greatest and finest attributes the human person can have and is, by far, the most noteworthy source of greatness in life. Precisely in this, Mary the Mother of

Jesus is the perfect example of humility. Christian discipleship is a lifelong endeavour service to appropriate the virtue of humility so that we might be transformed into the likeness of God and possess the heart and mind of Christ, as Mother Mary lived.

Mary, the first and perfect disciple of Jesus, lived the virtue of humility in words and deeds. Humility is found clearly in the life of Mary when she said, “*Behold, I am the humble servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word*” (Luke 1:38).

The virtue of humility is the very foundation of our Christian Life. Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, with their prophetic vision, lived the humble beginning of the Salesian Family; they understood their call to be the disciples of Jesus to bring good news to all people especially to the poor and abandoned young people of the society. The mandate of proclaiming the Good News to all people propelled Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello to endure all hardship and laid strong basis of faith in the foundation of the SDB & FMA congregations and in the nurturing of the Salesian Family; the fruits of which we the followers are reaping today.

Humility is a foundational virtue for both faith and life, we read in the scripture from the book of Sirach, “My son, perform your tasks with humility, and then you will be loved by those whom God accepts. The greater you are, the more you must humble yourself; so you will find favour in the sight of the Lord. For great is the might of the Lord; he is glorified by the humble” (Sir. 3: 17-20).

Yet many a time in the eyes of the world and in our day-to-day life, humility is associated with weakness. Conversely, the fact is that, a humble person is grounded in reality; in his or her own reality and of course most importantly, in the sight of God. Humility is truth. A truly humble person can readily acknowledge his/her accomplishments, never losing sight of God the Heavenly Father, whose goodness has bestowed upon us all the abilities, talents, all that we have and are. Humility enables us to avoid the temptations of the world and lead us to lean on to God who is the true author and the source of our life and being.

It is not possible to have a true relationship with God without the exercise of real humility, for to the humble the Lord reveals Himself. Jesus himself have said, *“I am gentle and humble of heart”* (Mathew 11.29). The Lord continues to invite all His disciples, followers to the same school of life, regardless of who we are and what we are capable. Mary, being the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ in the practice of all virtues, was the first also in that of humility, and by it merited to be exalted above all creatures (Vatican, 1964). The humility of Mary in her greatness is the perfect model for all followers of Christ.

Mary had the ability to take swift and decisive action to be of service to others. She went ‘with haste’ to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Mary sincerely and with great humility acknowledges the great thing the Lord has accomplished in her life. The Magnificat of Mary is the song that acknowledges her nothingness and glorifies the greatness of the Lord. The Magnificat expresses Mary’s radical sense of justice and her ability to articulate pointedly the social injustices that she sees around her.

Mary referred all to God, and answered with her humble Canticle. “*My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, as he promised”* (Luke 1:46-55).

If humility is truth, then gentleness is mercy and love. Humility of spirit and gentleness of life are the true hallmarks of Christian discipleship. Like Mary, let us sing a hymn of praise and gratitude to God, for the great things the Lord has done and is doing in the life of the Salesian Family members; let us with great humility continue to entrust ourselves to the Lord and steadfastly walk in the footsteps of Mother Mary in our following of Christ.

MOTHER MARY CONTINUES TO INSPIRE US ALL.

Pope Francis said Mary, the Mother of God, is a source of inspiration and strength for everyone who seeks to understand their life and vocation, and remain faithful to it. Mary is the model of every vocation and the inspiration of every mission in the Church: Young people who are seeking or questioning their future can find Mary to be the one who helps them to discern God's plan in their life and find the strength to follow it.

"There is a need for people who are simple and wise, humble and courageous, poor and generous. In other words, people who, taught by Mary, welcome the Gospel without reservation into their life" (Francis, 2019).

Mary is the first and perfect disciple of Christ. She gave him his humanity. All that happened then and subsequently, happened in her daily life is the consequences of her **“Yes”** to God’s plan for her. The Lord chose her to collaborate as woman in the salvation of humankind, but this did not change her refinement of life and service to her brothers and sisters.

Let us be convinced that, without Jesus Christ at the centre of our thinking, feeling, living, dreaming, working… there is no future, and we cannot offer anything significant to our brothers and sisters. Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello lived and worked in the company of Mother Mary and anchoring their lives firming on God. Today they are inviting us to continue to live life with great passion and fervor for the Gospel and for His people. With daring zeal and zest, let us anchor our hope in God move forward with humility and faith under the guidance of Mary our Mother.

**Sr. Lolia Annie, fma**

REFERENCES

1. Memoirs of the Oratory of Saint Francis De Sales from 1815 to 1855: The Autobiography of Saint John Bosco (Don Bosco Publications, 1989).
2. Bible
3. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church ***Lumen Gentium*** solemnly promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964
4. Pope Francis messages, March 25, 2019