

Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel - July 16/96

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If we were to take in our hands the Bible, especially the Old Testament, we encounter different mountains with different names. Each mountain has a message to proclaim to those who have ears to listen and to those who have an empty heart ... a heart that is ready to be filled.

We encounter, for example, Mt. Moriah. Mt. Moriah is a mountain which is strange. It is a mountain that stands for death, and at the same time it stands for resurrection. "Take your son Isaac whom you love, and offer him for me on the mountain that I am going to show you." and the Lord showed Abraham Mt. Moriah. At first it seemed to be the mountain of death that is going to steal from Abraham, his son. But Abraham had by now learned to be obedient to the word of God. He had experienced that God never approached him to take away anything from him, but any time that God approached him, it was always to give to him, and for sure this was no exception. So Abraham went up, and he discovered this mountain, and after his experience where the angel came and told him not to kill his son, Abraham named that place "Yahweh Jireh" "God sees". "On the mountain of the Lord, Yahweh provides". On the mountain of your problems and on the mountain of my problems, God is not indifferent to our problems. On the contrary, he provides for all our needs. So Mt. Moriah stands as a monument that God provides, that God is rich enough to meet all the needs of all humanity.

Then we meet for example, another mountain, Mt. Sinai. It is the mountain where God reveals himself. It is the mountain of the covenant. It is the mountain which made a people out of a bunch of slaves. Israel was made a people of God out of a bunch of slaves. It is a mountain where we are reminded that God chose us - not because we are better than other people - and I hope by now your journey in Carmel has taught you this important message, that if the Lord called you to walk in Carmel, it is not because you were better than other people, but because out of his love for each one of us, he wants to use us as an instrument to communicate to the world the importance of Our Lady in the life of a Christian. So Mount Sinai stands as a monument that God, out of a bunch of slaves, can make a people.

Then we discover other mountains. We discover for example in the new Testament, Mt. Tabor, also in the Old Testament we discover Mt. Horeb, the mountain on which the Prophet Elijah went up. Horeb stands for Herba, Herba means disaster. When the people don't listen to the word of God, they experience disaster in their life - when they listen, they experience that God does marvels. That God performs miracles. That God can fill the jars that are empty, in such a way that he will make them overflow. They will experience the same experience that the people at the wedding at Cana experienced. They lacked wine, and Mary could see that the people lacked wine. Wine is the symbol of joy. And Mary, looking on the faces of the people, and in their hearts, turned to Jesus and said to him "These people lack wine. They don't have enough wine." They lack joy in their life. And Mary turns toward humanity, toward you and me, and she tells us "Do whatever he tells you."

My brothers and sisters, Mary is the one, who far from separating us from Jesus Christ, on the contrary, the more we imitate her, the more intimate we become with Jesus Christ. Among the devotions to Our Lady we have the one entitled Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. In the Old Testament we find a mountain with the title Mt. Carmel.. It is mentioned quite a good number of times. Mt. Carmel brings to you and to me a very important message, the message that God, out of corrupt humanity, brought up a flower. The flower of Carmel - He brought up a flower, Our Lady, and Our Lady is like the rain that comes down upon humanity. Humanity that is thirsty. For

seven years the land did not see a drop of water. Imagine, if we here in Canada were not to have rain for seven years. How thirsty and dry the land would be. It would suck any drop of water that would fall on it after seven years.

The first reading from the Book of Kings presents a very beautiful scene. The Prophet Elijah on Mt. Carmel praying, praying for rain. Rain is the symbol of God's grace, of God's love. We read in the Prophet Zachariah that "For those who do not go up to Jerusalem to worship my name, there will be no rain for them that year. They will not experience God's blessing, God's grace.

The first reading presents to us the Prophet Elijah in a position of prayer. Notice how the reading starts. "Elijah went up to the top of Mt. Carmel; there he bowed himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees." Why is it so important for the author to tell us that he bows himself to the earth? He placed his face between his knees and there he began to pray. His servant was looking at him, and he said to his servant, "Go up on the mountain and tell me what you see." And so he went up, and on his return he said "There is nothing." And Elijah told him "Go again seven times." And he went up seven times, not one, two, three, four, five, six, seven but seven times meaning an unlimited number. And he went up an unlimited number of times, only travelling under the word of obedience. Every time he went up there, he was even more disappointed. The first time he saw nothing. The second time he saw nothing. The third time he saw nothing. Every time nothing. Imagine this servant saying to himself "This is useless, this journey, I am seeing nothing. It is useless." But sometimes we have the same temptation in Carmel. We think "It's useless in this community ... I am experiencing nothing ... The more I travel, it seems to be more disappointing." But if we, like the servant of Elijah, travel under the influence of obedience, obedience to the word of God, what happened? the servant saw a small thing. He saw a cloud so small and insignificant, that he was not sure it was a cloud, it was the size of the palm of your hand. Imagine, in the whole sky, to be able to see a cloud the size of the palm of your hand - you would need a radio telescope, you need a telescope. But because this person was under the influence of prayer, and under the influence of the Word of God, he could see the details. It is the same with you and me my brothers and sisters - when we are under the influence of Mary, and when we are under the influence of the Word of God, we too will see details in our lives. Perhaps, for the bare eye, or for the person who has no faith, they are details not worth seeing - but for the person who has faith, every small detail is an important message. He takes care of the periods, and the commas in the literature because he knows that although they are small, they are needed to communicate the message. That period is telling you to make a pause there, otherwise your message will not make sense, you will not be able to communicate.

There is something better, something more to learn from the first reading - the position of the prophet Elijah. "Bending down towards the earth" ... that is in a position of humility. You know how our Holy Mother Teresa tells us that humility is one of the conditions for prayer. Wilfred Harrington says that "Prayer is recognition of one's limitations, and of another who holds the whole world in his hands and who respects the free will of his creature, man." To recognize one's limitations. The prophet Elijah is teaching us here this attitude of prayer ... to be humble ... not to think that we are better than others, but to have in us the mind of Christ . That's what St. Paul told us. Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, He did not look to his own interest, but to the interest of others. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans told us "Count others better than yourselves." To do that we need the virtue of humility. Elijah, in humility, bending down, and we know the message "Those who do not bend, the probability is that they will break." Humility teaches us how to be flexible to God's direction, like Mary who was a very humble person. A person who believed every word that came to her. She did not question the word of God. And here also we see another virtue of Mary, the virtue of faith, which shines on all

humanity. Elizabeth, when she saw Mary, she told her "And blessed is she who believed what the Lord has told her." "Blessed is she who believed." She is the one who teaches us how to believe the word of God even when we are surrounded with darkness, even if we are in a community and sometimes we see that it is a disaster, that there is no unity, that this is not a community. Mary teaches us how to see there a sign of Jesus Christ.

A couple of you recently heard me preaching this story in London, and since there were only a few of you, I am going to repeat the story, because it is very important. Mary is the one, my brothers and sisters who brings us close to Jesus, and when we are conscious that Jesus Christ is present among us, then everything has a meaning, even the things that you think are a disaster - even the things that you think are an obstacle in your life, those are the things that Jesus Christ teaches you how to use.

Once in a carpenter's workshop, there was this conversation going on. Everyone was accusing Brother Hammer. Brother Hammer ... because he makes a lot of noise ... so Brother Hammer was in the chair, and he was the target of conversation. They said that Brother Hammer had to leave the workshop because he is always hitting Brother Nail on the head and he is always making noises.

And Brother Hammer said "o.k., I will leave, provided that Brother Pencil leaves also, he always makes little impressions in the workshop, just a line, what use is Brother Pencil?"

Brother Pencil said "I will leave the workshop, provided that Brother Plane also leaves, Brother Plane always works on the surface, always (when you are planing something, it is on the surface).

Brother Plane said "I will leave, provided that Brother Screw leaves. Because Brother Screw, in order to make him do something, you have to turn him round and round, and round." and it takes time to make him do anything.

Brother Screw said "I will leave, provided brother Ruler leaves, because Brother Ruler always measures the others with his own measurements, as if he is the only one right here. He is the one who always measures everything."

Brother Ruler said "I will leave, provided that Brother Sandpaper leaves, because Brother Sandpaper is always rough, he is rough with others."

Brother Sandpaper said: "I will leave, provided that Brother Saw leaves, because Brother Saw always cuts deep with his teeth. When he speaks, he is sharp, no mercy on anyone, as soon as the teeth hit, he cuts deep.

In the meantime, during this conversation, while Brother Hammer was still in the seat, the carpenter of Nazareth entered the workshop. He put on his apron, and he had a job to do. He was going to make a table. So, he picked up the pencil, he picked up the saw, he picked up the planer, he used some screws, he used the hammer, he used some nails, he used the sandpaper, and by the end of the day, he had used all of the tools, and the table was finished.

Then brother saw said "I perceive brothers that all of us have a part to play in this workshop. There was not a tool that Jesus Christ used, that another tool could have done the job. There was not a single accusation that was not absolutely true. All the accusations were true, and yet, the carpenter of Nazareth, Jesus Christ used every one of those tools. In the community we

each have different characters, and like this carpenter's workshop, each one of us has his unique part to play.

Do you see why it is very important for you and for me my brothers and sisters to be close to our Lady? She is the one who will bring us face to face with Jesus Christ. When we speak about devotion to our Lady of Mt. Carmel, we say that Our Lady is the one who helps us to go up on this mountain, whose summit is Jesus Christ. The summit of the mountain is Jesus Christ. She is the one who teaches us that if you and I want to grow in spiritual life, the only place to be to grow is to be near the cross. "Standing near the cross was Our Lady." Far away from the cross, spiritual life cannot grow. It cannot grow. It is by the cross that spiritual life grows. It is there, in pain and in sorrow, as once Oscar Wilde said "Pleasure for the beautiful body, pain and sorrow for the beautiful soul." You remember what Simeon said to Mary "and a sword shall pierce your heart". Mary was to experience pain and sorrow because she was seeing that people were rejecting the Word, the Word of life. If you and I have come here today, wearing the scapular, it is a sign that we bear the name of Mary. You know what Vatican II said about Mary, about her life ... that her life was a Pilgrimage of Faith. Life is a Pilgrimage of Faith. We need faith. It is only through faith, my brothers and sisters, that we can see light when other people can see only darkness. It is only through faith that we can discover this God who is strong enough that out of corrupt humanity, that out of the disaster that stands in front of us, God will bring something good.

The servant of Elijah saw this cloud, coming out of salty water, because he saw it coming out of the Mediterranean, and the Mediterranean is salty. Salty water is the symbol of corrupt humanity - humanity which is immersed in sin. And God brought out this cloud, and this cloud grew so fast, like Carmel too. Carmel, thank God, is spreading fast. In the Old Testament, God planted a garden in the East. Today, the Lord is planting a garden, Carmel, in the West. We can see it. Just the nuns alone, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, have more than nine hundred (900) houses. And they are spreading. They are also in Lithuania, they are in Russia. Carmel is spreading. It is your duty, and my duty too that we continue to spread Carmel, not so much by our words my brothers and sisters, it is about time that we begin to heed advice from John. "Little children, let us not love in words, but let us love in deeds." When I discover my brothers and sisters in the community who always have a tendency to get on my nerves - that is the moment when Mary will teach me. Mary tells me "I see my brother, I see my sister, that you lack wine, that you lack joy ... I will give you the solution, where you can experience an abundance of wine, an abundance of joy in your life. "Do whatever he tells you!"

On the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, that is what Mary is doing to you and to me. She is inviting us to travel high up on the mountain, and to travel up on the mountain is not easy. Do not think that Christian life is an easy life. Don't think that Carmelite life is an easy life. Never, never have we said that Carmel is easy. Never has Jesus Christ said that to be a Christian is an easy task. On the contrary, on the contrary. He told us that those who want to follow him will suffer persecution. They are doomed to suffer persecution. Mary, stands there beside us to give us the energy and the encouragement we need, and hopefully we will learn from her to treasure the word of God and to ponder upon it constantly in our heart. St. Luke tells us "And Mary treasured the word, and she pondered upon it in her heart." You and me too, if we want to continue to carry the name of Carmel, the name of Mary, worthy children of Mary, it is a must my brothers and sisters that we become familiar with the word of God and listen to the words of St. Paul: "Let the word of God find a rich home within you."