



HOMILY FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LADY OF ARABIA

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"The Mother of My Lord" (Luc 1, 39-56)

For some years now, Mary, under the title of Our Lady of Arabia, has been declared Patroness of the countries of the Arabian Gulf and therefore of the two Apostolic Vicariates of the region. She is the mother and protector of expatriate Christians but also a blessing for the natives. The original statue, blessed by Pius XII in the year 1948, is in Kuwait in a small church that is its current shrine. The feast day was placed on the Saturday before the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, and therefore after the Christmas holidays, but is solemnly celebrated in all the parishes of the Arabian Peninsula.

The liturgy proposed for this feast is a joyful liturgy: Zephaniah 3:14-18 "Rejoice, O daughter of Zion" and Galatians 4:4-7 referring to the fullness of time when "God sent his Son, born of a woman... » (First mention of Mary in the New Testament!). The Gospel is that of the Visitation, the encounter between two women, soon to be mothers, partakers of the mystery of salvation.

Mary, Mother of the Lord

Mary goes to find Elizabeth, pregnant with John the Baptist. This meeting is full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Does Mary go to her cousin's house just to help her at the end of her pregnancy? Mary's generosity is praised, but this visit takes on a saving dimension through her revelation in the Spirit: behold the mother of the Lord! Mary bears the Son of promise, the One who will save Israel, who will introduce us to the Father's love, who will go to the end of love. After the Annunciation and before the Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, this Visitation is part of the process of the Revelation

of the child's identity: by calling Mary "the mother of my Lord", Elizabeth participates in the identification of Jesus as the Son of God, as God among us. Could she, the wife of the priest Zechariah, who was supposed to defend the authenticity of the faith of Israel and the Covenant, deeply rooted in biblical tradition, proclaim this newness without the inspiration of the Spirit? She gives to the unborn child the title of Lord, reserved for the divine majesty, for the one God of Israel. She 'goes beyond' the limits of her tradition and launches into a new, surprising, audacious, prophetic profession of faith. In the same way, the child in her exults with joy at Mary's greeting, like David dancing in front of the Ark of Covenant. He participates in this profession of faith, in the prolongation of the Annunciation and the "yes" of Mary.

Mary, Ark of The Covenant

In the Eastern tradition, Mary is depicted as the Ark of the Covenant or even in the middle of the Burning Bush of Sinai. It is to make explicit her full participation in the mystery of salvation, pointing out and highlighting her son Jesus. 2 Samuel 6:11 alludes to the Ark of the Covenant present for 3 months (like Mary in Elizabeth) to Obed Edom. The Ark contains the Tablets of the Law. It is a sign of this special bond between God and his people. It accompanies the People on their journey to the Promised Land and will then be installed in the Temple of Jerusalem, the encounter place *par excellence*. But through Mary, the Savior enters the world. She bears the One who will reveal Himself to be the Son of the Most High. She carries within her the Law of the New Covenant, the only Intermediary between God and humanity, the Redeemer who is the Son. Jesus Christ is our Law, our Temple, our Sacrifice, the Way of encounter with the Father. Through Him, the new worship "in Spirit and truth" is possible. He gives the Spirit who introduces us into Trinitarian relationships of communion. In this way, Mary becomes the Ark of the Covenant: she 'carries the All-Bearer', she will protect and then educate and finally let go the One who created and sanctified her. She will sustain this son who reveals himself to be the Son. She will assume the faith of Israel at the crucial moment of the Crucifixion and will rejoice with the newborn Church at the moment of the Resurrection and Pentecost. Mother of the Son, she is daughter of the Father and temple of the Spirit. She carries the whole mystery of the Trinity as the Ark carried all the power of the One God.

Mary, Our Mother

Under the name of Our Lady of Arabia, we entrust to Mary the millions of Christians of the Arabian Gulf and its millions of inhabitants. We ask for her protection and intercession to live in fidelity and Christian joy, witnesses of salvation obtained, and love lived.

As we go through difficult times, we are sure of her motherly presence.

As we experience restrictions, we are convinced of the freedom of the Spirit.

As we face adversity and sometime religious pressure, we are immersed in the love of the Trinity.

Mary watches over us, just as she watched over Jesus. She protects us and teaches us the ways of life. She shows us Jesus as the only Way to the Father in the power of the Spirit. She comes to us as she did to Elizabeth and brings her son to us as she brought him to the world. She fades away to let Him who is Lord and Son of the Most High act. This makes her presence all the more obvious.

This feast is a thanksgiving. It connects us to the eternal thanksgiving of the angels and saints, of the martyrs of these countries and of our countries of origin, of believers who know that they are loved and who try, in humility and truth, to be witnesses of the Risen One.

Our Lady of Arabia,

Watch over us, protect us.

Be a source of grace for us and the people of these countries.

Lead us to the Father, through the gift of your Son, with the power of the Spirit

May we be witnesses to your footsteps of the life given, of the salvation obtained,
of the love lived.

Let your beauty be our beauty, your grace our grace, your humility our humility.

You, the mother of our Lord, Ark of the New Covenant, Gate of Heaven
Sanctuary of the Most Holy Trinity!

With devotion and love,
+ Aldo BERARDI, O.S.S.T.
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