**Ave, Regina caelorum**

The antiphon to Mary, which we are called to reflect on, will be Hail, Queen of Heaven. In its entirety, it reads as follow: *“Ave, Regina caelorum, Ave, Domina Angelorum: Salve, radix, salve, porta ex qua mundo lux est orta. Gaude, Virgo gloriosa, super omnes speciosa, vale, o valde decora, et pro nobis Christum exora”.*  Hail, queen of heaven: in the Holy Scripture the greeting is often manifestation of the essence of the person who is greeted. Let us read the greeting of the Angel to the Virgin Mary: *"Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."* (Lk 1,28). From this greeting we know who the Virgin Mary is. She is full of grace. The Lord is with Her. It is truth. A certitude. It is not a wish, nor a prayer. This is the essence itself of the Virgin Mary. Other times the greeting is manifestation of the essence of the person who greets. Here is the greeting of Jesus in the Cenacle after his glorious resurrection: *“Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (Jesus) said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit.* *Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."* (Jn 20,19-23). In this greeting Jesus reveals Himself as the Giver of the true peace. He shows Himself as the Giver of the Holy Spirit. He is also the one who bestows divine might to his disciples. He gives them the power to forgive the sins. Thus acting, Jesus truly attests that He was made by his Father the Lord of his grace and truth.

Thus the Church greets the Virgin Mary: Hail, Queen of Heaven. Who is Heaven? Heaven is the heavenly Father, his Only Begotten Son, Incarnated, Crucified and Risen, the Holy Spirit, all the Angels, all the souls of the saints and of the blessed. Heaven is simply God and his Kingdom of light, truth, grace, righteousness, holiness. Well! The Virgin Mary is proclaimed Queen of this Kingdom. Beware, though! The Virgin Mary is Queen more than any other queen of earth and in a totally different way. she is the Queen who presides over all the heavenly court, all the sides of Paradise, all the Angels and Saints. Not only. She is the Queen through whom all the grace of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit is poured into our hearts. She is the Queen who truly rules Heaven and earth. God, from her hands, overflows the source of his blessing, the rays of his eternal charity, the springs of his mercy, the fruits of his endless piety toward the man to redeem, save, justify, sanctify, raise and lead to the eternal glory. This is the glory that the heavenly Father wanted for the Mother of his Divine Son. He has made Her his Queen. Heaven lacked a Queen and He has created Her beautiful, wondrous, full of grace, resplendent with holiness, clothed with sun, crowned with twelve stars, with the moon under her feet, the entire universe in her hands. We can apply to the Virgin Mary what the Psalm sings, but in an infinitively higher, divine, transcendent way: *“All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad. Daughters of kings are among your honored women; at your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir. Listen, daughter, and pay careful attention: Forget your people and your father’s house. Let the king be enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord. The city of Tyre will come with a gift, people of wealth will seek your favor. All glorious is the princess within her chamber; her gown is interwoven with gold. In embroidered garments she is led to the king; her virgin companions follow her those brought to be with her. Led in with joy and gladness, they enter the palace of the king.”* (Psal 45, 9-16). Great is the mystery that surrounds the Mother of God. She is the Queen of Heaven today and in eternity. Now it is righteous to ask: “Why has the Lord raised Her in such a high, sublime, divine glory? Why has He given Her such a great honour?

The Holy Spirit has already given the answer in the Song of the Magnificat, Hymn of truth and of praise that the Mother of God sings to her Lord, confessing Him as the Doer of every good thing done to Her: *“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."* *(Lk 1,46-55).* The secret of the greatness of the Virgin Mary is her lowliness. The Mother of God, led and always moved by the Holy Spirit, achieved the highest lowliness. What does this high lowliness consist of? In being entirely, in every moment of her life, always from the will of her God and for Him. She has never been from Herself and through Herself. Her handover to the Father was total, with all the fibre of her being. Soul, spirit, body always at the service of the Father for the work of salvation of the world. The Mighty One has truly done great things for Her. Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, obtain for us eyes of spirit to contemplate your beauty that gives God’s heaven a new splendour.