**O MARY. O MARY**

Before the contemplation of the beauty, of the brightness, of the light which emanates from the Virgin Mary, the heart is rapt into ecstasy, the mind stops thinking, the spirit of man is quenched, the soul immerses in the mystery and lets itself be annulled by it and in it. Our own body loses its heaviness and is raised toward heaven, attracted by it, in the same way as a powerful magnet raises the very heavy iron from earth and leads it where it desires. Before the braveries accomplished by Jael, Judith, the own Ester, that are figures of the Mother of the Lord, the men and the women of their time, were taken by a deep amazement and sang songs of joy and of exultance to celebrate and recall eternally the works fulfilled by these singular women, through whom God has showed his divine almightiness, crushing, annulling the enemies of their people. These women were seen as givers of life for everyone. Deliverers from slavery, oppression, various servitudes, from the own death looming upon them as threatening. The song that is raised through Jael is wondrous:

*After Ehud's death, however, the Israelites again offended the LORD. So the LORD allowed them to fall into the power of the Canaanite king, Jabin, who reigned in Hazor. The general of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth-ha-goiim. But the Israelites cried out to the LORD; for with his nine hundred iron chariots he sorely oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. At this time the prophetess Deborah, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under Deborah's palm tree, situated between Ramah and Bethel in the mountain region of Ephraim, and there the Israelites came up to her for judgment. She sent and summoned Barak, son of Abinoam, from Kedesh of Naphtali. "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, commands," she said to him; "go, march on Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand Naphtalites and Zebulunites. I will lead Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, out to you at the Wadi Kishon, together with his chariots and troops, and will deliver them into your power." But Barak answered her, "If you come with me, I will go; if you do not come with me, I will not go." "I will certainly go with you," she replied, "but you shall not gain the glory in the expedition on which you are setting out, for the LORD will have Sisera fall into the power of a woman." So Deborah joined Barak and journeyed with him to Kedesh. Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and ten thousand men followed him. Deborah also went up with him. Now the Kenite Heber had detached himself from his own people, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law, and had pitched his tent by the tere-binth of Zaanannim, which was near Kedesh. It was reported to Sisera that Barak, son of Abinoam, had gone up to Mount Tabor. So Sisera assembled from Harosheth-ha-goiim at the Wadi Kishon all nine hundred of his iron chariots and all his forces. Deborah then said to Barak, "Be off, for this is the day on which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your power. The LORD marches before you." So Barak went down Mount Tabor, followed by his ten thousand men. And the LORD put Sisera and all his chariots and all his forces to rout before Barak. Sisera himself dismounted from his chariot and fled on foot. Barak, however, pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-ha-goiim. The entire army of Sisera fell beneath the sword, not even one man surviving. Sisera, in the meantime, had fled on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of the Kenite Heber, since Jabin, king of Hazor, and the family of the Kenite Heber were at peace with one another. Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come in, my lord, come in with me; do not be afraid." So he went into her tent, and she covered him with a rug. He said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink. I am thirsty." But she opened a jug of milk for him to drink, and then covered him over. "Stand at the entrance of the tent," he said to her. "If anyone comes and asks, 'Is there someone here?' say, 'No!'" Instead Jael, wife of Heber, got a tent peg and took a mallet in her hand. While Sisera was sound asleep, she stealthily approached him and drove the peg through his temple down into the ground, so that he perished in death. Then when Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man you seek." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera dead, with the tent peg through his temple. Thus on that day God humbled the Canaanite king, Jabin, before the Israelites; their power weighed ever heavier upon him, till at length they destroyed the Canaanite king, Jabin. (Jdc 4,1-23).*

*On that day Deborah (and Barak, son of Abinoam,) sang this song: Of chiefs who took the lead in Israel, of noble deeds by the people who bless the LORD, Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes! I to the LORD will sing my song, my hymn to the LORD, the God of Israel. O LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, The earth quaked and the heavens were shaken, while the clouds sent down showers. Mountains trembled in the presence of the LORD, the One of Sinai, in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel. In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of slavery caravans ceased: Those who traveled the roads went by roundabout paths. Gone was freedom beyond the walls, gone indeed from Israel. When I, Deborah, rose, when I rose, a mother in Israel, New gods were their choice; then the war was at their gates. Not a shield could be seen, nor a lance, among forty thousand in Israel! My heart is with the leaders of Israel, nobles of the people who bless the LORD; They who ride on white asses, seated on saddlecloths as they go their way; Sing of them to the strains of the harpers at the wells, where men recount the just deeds of the LORD, his just deeds that brought freedom to Israel. Awake, awake, Deborah! awake, awake, strike up a song. Strength! arise, Barak, make despoilers your spoil, son of Abinoam. Then down came the fugitives with the mighty, the people of the LORD came down for me as warriors. From Ephraim, princes were in the valley; behind you was Benjamin, among your troops. From Machir came down commanders, from Zebulun wielders of the marshal's staff. With Deborah were the princes of Issachar; Barak, too, was in the valley, his course unchecked. Among the clans of Reuben great were the searchings of heart. Why do you stay beside your hearths listening to the lowing of the herds? Among the clans of Reuben great were the searchings of heart! Gilead, beyond the Jordan, rests; why does Dan spend his time in ships? Asher, who dwells along the shore, is resting in his coves. Zebulun is the people defying death; Naphtali, too, on the open heights! The kings came and fought; then they fought, those kings of Canaan, At Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; no silver booty did they take. From the heavens the stars, too, fought; from their courses they fought against Sisera. The Wadi Kishon swept them away; a wadi. . . , the Kishon. Then the hoofs of the horses pounded, with the dashing, dashing of his steeds. "Curse Meroz," says the LORD, "hurl a curse at its inhabitants! For they came not to my help, as warriors to the help of the LORD." Blessed among women be Jael, blessed among tent-dwelling women. He asked for water, she gave him milk; in a princely bowl she offered curds. With her left hand she reached for the peg, with her right, for the workman's mallet. She hammered Sisera, crushed his head; she smashed, stove in his temple. At her feet he sank down, fell, lay still; down at her feet he sank and fell; where he sank down, there he fell, slain. From the window peered down and wailed the mother of Sisera, from the lattice: "Why is his chariot so long in coming? why are the hoofbeats of his chariots delayed?" The wisest of her princesses answers her, and she, too, keeps answering herself: "They must be dividing the spoil they took: there must be a damsel or two for each man, Spoils of dyed cloth as Sisera's spoil, an ornate shawl or two for me in the spoil." May all your enemies perish thus, O LORD! but your friends be as the sun rising in its might! And the land was at rest for forty years.” (Jdc 5,1-31).*

The singer of the glories that God has accomplished through the means of his Mother, the Virgin Mary, begins to celebrate the praises of the Woman made by God in such a wondrous and great way, to darken the beauty of every other work of the Lord. The beauty of Lucifer, of the Angel bearer of light, before his sin of pride, compared to the beauty of the Virgin Mary can be drawn with the flame of a candlewick before the wondrous light of thousands and more suns brightening the heaven of God. This is the spiritual beauty of the Mother of Jesus. He begins to celebrate the glory of this unique Woman in the creation of her God, but then he stops. He is not able to go on. He does not know what to say. His heart is blocked. His thoughts come to a halt. His voice stutters. He cannot but repeat endlessly: O Mary, O Mary. It is the ecstasy of the one who is speechless, for truly there are no words to say. In the name there is everything. The word is enough. It is enough to repeat it endlessly. While one repeats it, the mind immerses in the mystery and the heart lets itself be carried by a whirlwind of sweetness and of endless joy, so immense is the seen, contemplated, enjoyed beauty.

Before the contemplation of the Virgin Mary, narrating her beauty becomes almost impossible. There are no suitable words. All of them appear to be insufficient. One then needs to pass from contemplation to enjoyment. One needs to apply the words of the Psalm for Her: *“I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in”* (Cf Psal 34, 1-9). Taste is a sublime way of knowledge, it infinitely overcomes that of the eye and of the ear. Tasting the beauty of the Mother of God is going infinitely beyond our mind, our heart, our ear, our touch and our smell. One needs to put senses apart. Through them, one will always know a little both of God and of his works. One must rely on the senses of the soul and of the spirit, that are the senses of the Holy Spirit ruling our soul and our spirit. The Virgin Mary is the Deed of the deeds of God. The absolute Deed of God is Christ Jesus, who is born of her virginal womb, when the Word is made flesh and comes to dwell among us to give us the grace and the truth. One enjoys the Virgin Mary not through learning, not through school, not through study, not through other human ways, of the earth. One tastes through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is He the very perfect knowledge of the Mother of God. He is the eternal taste of the Father and of the Son. He will have to be our taste, too. In Him, we must always taste the beauty of this Woman. Without the divine taste, we would have an earthly knowledge of the Virgin Mary, made of the thoughts of this world. We will never have a divine knowledge, made of divine thoughts. This is why it is right that the song be interrupted and that one let himself be carried away by the taste of the Holy Spirit, by his divine thoughts, that are not even thoughts anymore, but life given through participation, through creation, through gift. This is why it is necessary that the Spirit of the Lord grows in us with no measure. We will know and enjoy the beauty of the Mother of God and our Mother in the measure of the growth of the Holy Spirit in us. The more He will grow and the more we will know, enjoy, be immersed in this mystery of unique and unrepeatable beauty in heaven and on earth. Holy Spirit of God, our Consoler, Paraclete, our eternal Truth, give us your own taste for we want, for one only moment of our life on earth, let ourselves be marvelled at the knowledge of the Woman who is the Enchant of the Blessed Trinity. Angels and Saints, intercede for us and obtain this grace for us. It alone is enough to satiate our life. Nothing is more necessary to it.

***30 April 2023***