

Heart to Heart with Mother Adela, scjtm

Foundress of SCTJM and FCTJM

Extracts from letters written to our Spiritual Family

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CALLED TO LIVE IN THE SCHOOL OF THE GOSPEL

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

The Heart of Jesus calls us to keep and ponder the treasures of His Gospel in our hearts so as to be formed in His School and to obtain the gift of wisdom.

Before this beautiful and challenging word from the Heart of the Eucharistic Jesus, we respond like Our Lady, with promptitude and joyful obedience to every indication that comes from His Heart.

Do Whatever He Tells You!

Our Mother, the Mother of the living Gospel, is the one who teaches us that to truly be disciples of Her Son, we need to sit in the School of the Gospel and listen, treasure, guard, and cultivate in the fertile soil of our hearts, each word, each gesture, each act...all the things of Christ...doing just as She did so that the Gospel may be our path of life and our way of life.

Listening to the Gospel, like Our Lady

"The faithful need to be helped to see more clearly the link between Mary of Nazareth and the faith-filled hearing of God's word," Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI teaches us. It is my greatest desire that this year, through the maternal mediation of the Blessed Virgin, we may learn to listen to the Gospel with the heart, so that each word, each teaching may be made flesh in our heart. May we learn to be hearts of faith, or rather, of loving response to His word, that we may learn to deeply study the Gospel so that it might form our heart, our values, our vision so that we walk through the world knowing how to live as children of the Kingdom of God. It is my greatest desire that we sit with Marian hearts in the School of the Gospel and contemplate the luminosity of the truth, and we base our lives upon the rock, that we build our house upon solid and permanent soil. *"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock."* (Matthew 7:24-25)

Prayerful Contemplation of the Gospel: Lectio Divina

It is our task to learn to contemplate, in prayer and in the silence of our heart, the passages, the events, the teachings, the signs and gestures of the Gospel of Our Lord. Only in this way will we be able to be authentic disciples of Christ; only in this way will we be able to know deeply what the mystery of the Incarnation means, the mystery of Redemption.... Only in this way will we be able to contemplate the Face and the Heart of Christ, the Redeemer of man and walk behind him, retracing His Way, whole heartedly receiving His Truth and experience the fullness of His Life. We must allow ourselves to be illuminated by the light of the Word made flesh, the light that

illuminates every man, the light that shines in the darkness, the light that orders our whole interior with true values and clear priorities.... The light that gives us divine wisdom to respond with the gaze of faith to all the events of our daily life. The light that transforms our measure, our values, our interests and purpose...light that gives us direction and right orientation to sail in the oceans of our life, of our own vocations and missions. Yes, we must sit to listen to the Gospel, to listen to Christ speak to our hearts...because like St. Peter said, **"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."** (John 6:68) Every authentic spirituality, every authentic growth in Christian maturity begins with this reflection and profound receptivity of the Gospel.

To grow in this prayerful contemplation of the Gospel, we have as our task this year, the application of Lectio Divina to our daily reading of the Gospel. Lectio divina, which is truly **"able to open to the faithful the treasure of the word of God, and also to create the encounter with Christ, the living divine Word."** (Final Message of the Synod of the Word)

I would like to remind you here briefly of the fundamental steps for this spiritual practice that is so fruitful in the heart of the one who contemplates the Gospel with a prayerful attitude: (Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini, 87)

1. It begins with the reading (lectio) of the text, which raises the question about the understanding of its authentic content: *What does the biblical text say in itself?* Here the authentic memory of the text will develop from the Gospel passage.
2. Then follows meditation (meditatio) in which the question is: *What does the biblical text tell us?* Here, each one personally, but also as a community, must let himself be questioned and examined, since it does not involve considering words pronounced in the past, but in the present.
3. Next comes the moment of prayer (oratio), which supposes the question: *What do we say to the Lord as a response to His Word?* Prayer as a petition, intercession, gratitude and praise, is the primary way with which the Word changes us.
4. It concludes with contemplation (contemplatio), during which we accept as a gift of God, His own gaze in the judgment of reality, and we ask ourselves: *What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of us?* St. Paul, in the *Letter to the Romans*, says: *"Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."* (12:2) In effect, contemplation tends to create in us a vision of wisdom, a way of thinking like God, of reality and forming *"the mind of Christ"* (1 Cor 2:16) in us. The Word of God is presented here as a criterion of discernment, *"is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart."* (Heb 4:12)

5. *Lectio divina* does not end its process until it reaches action (*actio*), which brings the life of the believer to become a gift for others through charity.

As such, this year we will have five interior movements in our contemplation and reflection on the Gospel at a personal level as well as groups that gather by areas. In each monthly meeting, I will give you passages of the Gospel for personal and community meditation, and so that you may apply these five movements of love that constitute the interior strength of *Lectio Divina*. You will also have a concordance with the passages of the Four Gospels which I prepared for the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. These are the five movements:

Lectio → Meditatio → Oratio → Contemplatio → Actio

Reading → Meditation → Prayer → Contemplation → Action

The fruit of *Lectio Divina* - the Prayerful Reading of the Gospel - will be to grow in a greater intimacy, familiarity with Christ and His Word. To live in intimacy with the Gospel is to live like Our Lady.

Familiarity, Intimacy with the Gospel

Jesus has called us this year to sit in the School of His Gospel and this is what we will do. He is calling us to a new relationship with His Word, an intimate relationship, a relationship of the heart, so that we can live like Our Lady, with great simplicity and great certainty, in total "familiarity with the Word of God." Her Heart was totally full of this Word, it governed Her thoughts and Her words, it directed all Her actions and movements. "This is clearly evident in the Magnificat. There we see in some sense how she identifies with the word, enters into it; in this marvellous canticle of faith, the Virgin sings the praises of the Lord in his own words: "The Magnificat - a portrait, so to speak, of her soul - is entirely woven from threads of Holy Scripture, threads drawn from the word of God. *Here we see how completely at home Mary is with the word of God, with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the word of God; the word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the word of God.* Here we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate". (Deus caritas est, 41)

Yes, the Heart of Mary is in full communion with the Heart of God.... Her thought is in total harmony with the thought of God, Her will with the will of God, Her desire is a desire with God. By being fully penetrated, formed, illumined by the Word of God, She could be Mother of the Word made Flesh, she could be the guardian of His words, Mother of the Living Gospel, maternal Memory of the Gospel...Our Mother teaches us to live like Her, completely penetrated by the Gospel in all the dimensions of our humanity.

Our Lady desires that we know Her Son, that we contemplate His Life, that we listen and obey His Word...simply that we be men and women of the Gospel, living witnesses of the Gospel... May the Gospel be the supreme rule of our life, the luminous path by which we walk our itinerary of faith...just as She did, in prayerful listening to His Words, in prayerful contemplation of His gestures and actions...in attentive discernment of His times, His moments, His desires... Only in this way, by being men and women of the Gospel, like Her, will we be able to be men and women of authentic and permanent values, of clear and

acute vision, of penetrating discernments and incarnated and practical wisdom, to know how to live in everything and with everything, according to the mind of Christ, knowing His will, what is most perfect, most pleasing, and most fecund. Only by sitting in the School of the Gospel will we be able to grow in the capacity to "see" and to "find" how to connect all the events of our life, the deep and mysterious bond that unites every event, action and apparently unrelated or insignificant, or sometimes contradictory details of our life in the great design of God. Only by being men and women of the Gospel will we be able to be and live like leaven in the midst of the world, like salt and light of the earth. Only by opening our heart to the Kingdom of God, only by believing in the Gospel with simple hearts, will we be able to be wise and prudent men and women who know how to keep their lamp lit and always full of oil.

Our Lady teaches us to live with our gaze fixed on Christ and with our interior ear always attentive to His words. She is the woman of fecund listening, joyful and exact obedience, and a woman of intrepid cooperation with the salvific mission of Her Son. For this reason, She asks us insistently that we pray the Holy Rosary...for isn't the Rosary the compendium of the Gospel? Isn't the Holy Rosary a school of the Gospel? Isn't the Holy Rosary, as St. John Paul II told us, the fruit of Our Lady's assiduous and constant contemplation of every word, every gesture, every act of Her Son? "*The memories of Jesus, impressed upon her heart, were always with her, leading her to reflect on the various moments of her life at her Son's side. In a way those memories were to be the "rosary" which she recited uninterruptedly throughout her earthly life. She continues to relate her personal account of the Gospel. Mary constantly sets before the faithful the "mysteries" of her Son, with the desire that the contemplation of those mysteries will release all their saving power.*" (St. John Paul II, RVM, 11).

Dear Brothers and Sisters I invite all of you to have close to your heart, always with you, a Holy Bible...place the Sacred Scriptures in a prominent place in your homes...read a small passage of the Gospel, even if it is only a verse, in and with your families. Teach your children to listen to Jesus and to know His Word... Guard, treasure each word, each event, each act of Jesus in your hearts...I ask you that the Gospels be an essential part of your daily prayer and that the practice of *Lectio Divina* may enable us to sit in the School of the Gospel; may we increasingly live as authentic disciples of Christ and may we discover the potency and strength of the Gospel of love, the Gospel of Life, the Gospel of the Family, the Gospel of the Suffering Redeemer, the Gospel of Christian fecundity, the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven...the Gospel of the Beatitudes...and may we go out into the whole world to proclaim the joy and beauty of the Gospel.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us sit in the School of the Gospel to contemplate together the mysteries of the Heart of Christ, to listen to His words, to contemplate His gestures and actions, to follow His footsteps, entering into the Kingdom of His Heart, through the Heart, gaze and love of Our Lady. May we learn, through the Heart of Mary, Our Mother and Teacher, to contemplate with love the beauty, luminosity, the salvific potency of the Gospel. May she teach us to sit in the School of the Gospel to be transfigured into living and ardent witnesses of Her Son, the Redeemer of man.

Mother of the Living Gospel, pray for us!

Mother Adela, sctjm

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