

## **“A HOME FOR THE TRINITY,” FROM DAY 12 OF *SHELTERED WITHIN HER HEART***

Mary, in her childlike and virginal openness to God, is truly one of the “little ones” of the Almighty, who are blessed by him in their poverty, because their hearts depend upon him alone in total faith. In this way she is able to welcome the very Incarnation of the Son of God in her womb, as is so beautifully (and surprisingly!) prophesied in the words of Zephaniah, as well as in the famous words of Isaiah: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel,” which means God-is-with-us (Is 7:14). Mary’s consent allows the divine Well-spring to inhabit her very body, and to unleash itself in and through her so as to irrigate the entire world with its presence.

When we open ourselves to this “Marian” receptivity, we allow our own heart and life to become “good soil” for the seed of the Word, which is ultimately Jesus Christ himself, who comes to us and pours his love into our hearts. Further, through his coming to us by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus brings with him the full mystery of the Father. Therefore our contemplative openness to welcome this gift allows the entire Trinity to take up his abode within our hearts. Our being becomes, in a real and profound way, a “home” for the Most Holy Trinity, as Jesus himself said during the Last Supper: “If a man loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23).

The reality of “home” and the reality of “keeping the word” are deeply connected. The word *to keep* in this case means much more than mere obedience to an external commandment; rather, it also implies *guarding, watching over, or sheltering*. This is exactly what we saw in the previous reflection on being good soil, or even a womb, for the word and the love of God. When we open our hearts in order to welcome Christ’s word, whenever we make our being a shelter for his gift and his will, then he can come, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and inhabit us in the most profound and intimate way.

But indeed our very ability to open ourselves in this way is itself God’s gift, as his grace precedes, awakens, and sustains our own loving response. This is, in particular, the unique work of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us and prays in us, teaching us how to pray by incorporating us into his own prayer. As Saint Paul wrote:

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)

The Spirit’s presence and grace alive in our hearts cradles and sustains our own response, so that our every prayer, our every encounter with God, is a matter of “grace encountering grace.” In other words, the *grace-within-us* through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes us able to receive the *grace-outside-of-us*, which comes through the gift of God incarnate in Christ, and made present in all the circumstances of our life in which he makes himself known.

We see in this intimate movement of prayer, therefore, our profoundly beautiful dynamic: the Spirit draws us to the Son and makes us able to welcome him, and the Son in turn draws us in himself to the Father and also allows us to welcome the Father. Within this “drawing,” further, there is a twofold movement, two movements going in “opposite” directions which are actually the same: 1) we pass in the Spirit through the Son to the Father, so that we may abide in his bosom, 2) and we welcome the Father in the Son through the Spirit into the recesses of our own hearts, so they may make their home within us. This is the most breathtaking intimacy, which God ardently desires to have with each one of us. “May they all be one, Father; even as you are in me, and I in you, may they also be in us” (cf. John 17:21).

We are invited to share in the mutual indwelling of the three divine Persons, who each “inhabit” one another in the most blissful intimacy of love. If we are willing to give our “yes,” then the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit come to make their home in us, dwelling in our hearts and breathing forth in us the fragrance of their love and joy. And by doing this, they are simultaneously enfolding us in their own most intimate embrace, such that we find our home in them, in the eternal communion that they share.

This, indeed, is not only the greatest gift we can possibly receive—the reality that encompasses all of life and gives it meaning—but it is also the greatest gift we can offer to our brothers and sisters. If we truly allow the Trinity to live within us, giving him a place of welcome and repose in our inmost heart and life, then the fragrance of his

Love will necessarily spread through us to others. Indeed, the Trinity brings with him the ceaseless hymn of his own life of perfect love and joy, and the echoes of this sacred music, this song of jubilation, through sounding in our hearts, will be heard by others, attracting them to God.

In welcoming the indwelling presence of God, indeed, we find that he is able to perpetuate within us his saving mysteries, his redeeming and healing activity in the world. Christ comes to live so deeply within us that he perpetuates in us his own life and the mysteries of his existence: his Incarnation, his prayer, his ministry, his compassion for humanity, his Transfiguration, his Passion, his Resurrection, his Ascension, and his gift of the Spirit. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says:

Christ enables us *to live in him* all that he himself lived, and *he lives it in us*. “By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22.2). We are called only to become one with him, for he enables us as the members of his Body to share in what he lived for us in his flesh as our model: “We must continue to accomplish in ourselves the stages of Jesus’ life and his mysteries and often to beg him to perfect and realize them in us and in his whole Church. ... For it is the plan of the Son of God to make us and the whole Church partake in his mysteries and to extend them to and continue them in us and in his whole Church. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us” (St. John Eudes). (par 521)