



LIVING IN GRATITUDE

GB

“Thank you! Thank you!”

1. Gratitude arises from a meeting between people *“Face to face with Mary.”*

(In front of the Chapel of the Apparitions)

In the evening, 15th January 1933, Mariette saw a Beautiful Lady in the garden, radiant with light. Convinced that it was the Virgin Mary, she took her rosary and prayed. Mary smiled and, with a hand sign, called the girl to join Her.

When Mariette saw the Beautiful Lady in the garden, she was not afraid: from the start, everything happens in a climate of sympathy and kindness. She discovers that she is loved by the Visitor; she is recognised as a person in her own right.

Mariette experiences it as what the prophet Isaiah describes: *“Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by name, you are mine ... You are precious and honoured in my sight, and I love you.”* (Is 43:1-4) The Beautiful Lady manifests this through her smile, the call to join her, to be close to her. She emphasises on Mariette’s value, making her aware of her dignity.

Is not this what happens in most of the Marian Apparitions? In Lourdes, Bernadette said: *“She looked at me as a person who was speaking to another person.”* And at Banneux, Mary speaks tenderly to Mariette, calling her: *“My dear child.”*

This is the first gift that the Beautiful Lady did to the child: **the consciousness of being a person**, a consciousness that nevertheless remains humble.

Those, to whom Mary appears, discover that they are loved by the Lady, and the Beautiful Lady suddenly is loved by them. They spontaneously want to give something in return: they pray the rosary, want to be present at the meeting with Her, and, in Mariette’s case, she goes back to catechism and mass.

► *Like Mariette, let us pray a decade of the rosary.*

This is a frequent experience in the Bible: the eyes of the Lord are on the humble, left out, the marginalised, those whom men hardly consider. And this gaze is different: "Men see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart." (1 Sm 16:7)

It is the experience that Mary herself was granted. She remembers it in the Magnificat: "*He has looked with favour on the humble state of His servant.*" (Lk 1:48) And the heart of Mary is in a joyful gratitude:

► *With Mary, let us sing the Magnificat to give thanks, while going to the first stone:*

Lector: My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;

**All: Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid;
For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;**

Lector: Because He who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is His name;

**All: And His mercy is from generation to generation
on those who fear Him.**

**Chorus: Magnificat (3x) anima mea, Dominium.
Magnificat (3x) anima mea.**

Lector: He has shown might with His arm,
He has scattered the proud
in the conceit of their heart.

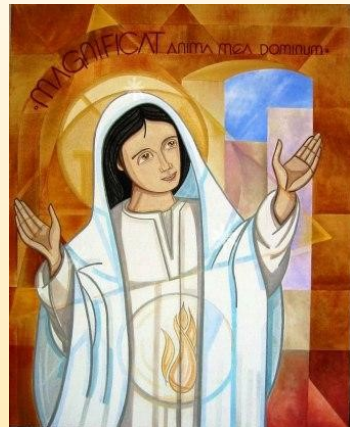
**All: He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and has exalted the lowly.**

Lector: He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich He has sent away empty.

**All: He has given help to Israel, his servant,
mindful of His mercy,**

Lector: Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.

**Chorus: Magnificat (3x) anima mea, Dominium.
Magnificat (3x) anima mea.**



2. The obstacles that paralyse our gratitude

“Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads...”

(at the first stone)

In the evening of the first apparition, at Mariette’s determination, Mama Beco also comes to the window and sees a silhouette. She thinks that it is a ghost or a witch and takes fright. When her daughter goes towards the door, she puts the bolt and prevents her from meeting the Lady in the garden.

Often, our gaze on the world, on others and on ourselves is one-sided and prevents us from recognising the true value of people and things.

Lector: *The way I look at myself* can be an obstacle for my gratitude:

All: It is difficult for me to accept myself because of my physique, my limits, my incapacities, my failures, a handicap, a disease, the difficulty of making relationships.

Lector: My gratitude can be stifled by *people’s gaze on me*:

All: People’s gaze devalue me: because of my race, my handicap, my gender, my religion, my social status, my origin, I feel rejected and discriminated. Some looks hurt and belittle.

Lector: My gratitude can be stifled by *the way I look the world*:

All: I am not surprised at anything; I have lost the ability to amaze myself. I take it for granted that everything is due to me; I am indifferent for all that is given to me. I can only see in the negative. I compare myself with others, and I believe that my life is a hardship.

Yes, sometimes, life weighs us and our heart is dry. Gratitude seems difficult, if not impossible. So it is important that Mary leads us to Jesus. He alone is able to relieve our burden, as the Gospel shows:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew



At that time Jesus said, “Father, Lord of heaven and earth! I thank you because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden from the wise and learned. Yes, Father, this was how you wanted it to happen. “My Father has given me all things. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

“Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.” (Mt 11:25-30)

Let us turn to the Lord. May He heal us and open our heart for all that is good:

Lector: Lord of heaven and earth: let me see the wonders of your creation:

All: O Lord, open my eyes!

Lector: Lord, loving Father, let me discover the dignity of every human being:

All: O Lord, open my eyes!

Chorus: Confitemini Domino, quoniam bonus. Confitemini Domino, alleluia.

Lector: Lord, Beloved Son of the Father, let me hear your word:

All: O Lord, open my ears!

Lector: Lord, let me not be deaf to the cries of my brothers and sisters:

All: O Lord, open my ears!

Chorus

Lector: Lord, gentle and humble of heart, heal me of indifference and contempt:

All: O Lord, give me a loving heart!

Lector: Compassionate Lord, make me merciful like you:

All: O Lord, give me a loving heart!

Chorus

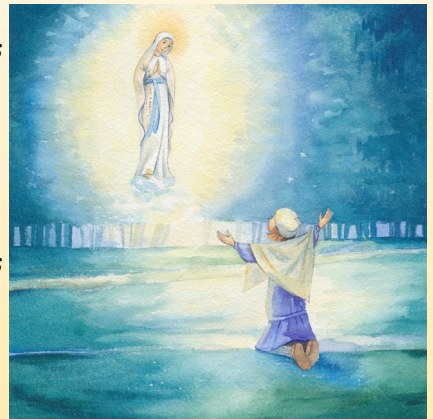
Lector: Lord, let me sing your praise:

All: O Lord, open my lips!

Lector: Lord, give me the grace to be grateful:

All: O Lord, open my lips!

Chorus



► *Let us proceed to the next stop while singing.*

3. Gratitude to our donors

“In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”

(at the second stone)

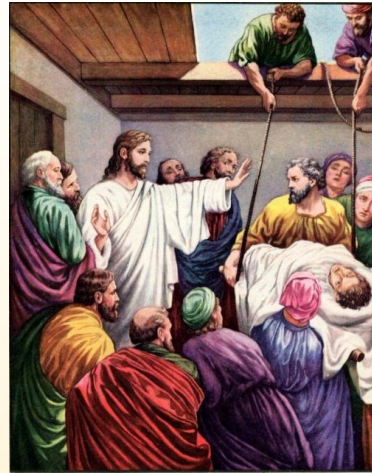
On 19th January, the Beautiful Lady revealed that the spring is reserved for all nations, for the sick. She promises Mariette: I will pray for you. The child’s heart overflows with gratitude: “Thank you! Thank you!”

It is only at the third apparition that the relationship between Mary and the child becomes a real encounter between two people. Mariette dares to ask her name. "Who are you, Beautiful Lady?" Mary answers: "I am the Virgin of the Poor." The Virgin of the Poor promises to pray for Mariette, increasing the gratitude.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark 

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, some time later word went round that he was in the house; and so many people collected that there was no room left, even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them.

When some people came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, but as they could not get the man to him through the crowd, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic lay. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "My child, your sins are forgiven." (Mc 2:1-12)



God needs people, in this case refers to four stretcher-bearers, to carry the sick man to Jesus. The paralyzed man would never have met Jesus without their help. The gratitude of the paralyzed grows at the sight of the creativeness of his friends.

► *Let us thank God for all the gifts He gives us through others, in our daily lives:*

Lector: Thank you, Lord, for all those who support us and bear us.

All: **Thank you, Lord, for the friendship and kindness that surround us.**

Chorus: **Jubilate Deo, cantata Domino. (2x)**

Lector: Thank you, Lord, for the encouragement received in moments of distress.

All: **Thank you, Lord, for all warm and caring looks.**

Chorus

Lector: Thank you, Lord, for the words that warm our hearts.

All: **Thank you for all outstretched hand, for every smile.**

Chorus

Lector: Thank you, Lord, for silence and attentive listening.

All: **Thank you for the patience and perseverance that you come to put into our hearts.**

Chorus

All: **Thank you, Lord, for sending us the Virgin of the Poor to relieve suffering.**

Because of his unusual entry, the paralytic did not go unnoticed! His arrival in front of Jesus allows the Lord to manifest that He can and wants to give more than physical healing. The first thing that Jesus gives is an inner and invisible healing: "My child, your sins are forgiven." Jesus can give us strength and courage, confidence and perseverance, hope and inner peace.

► *As we walk silently towards the spring, we pray that the Lord may heal our heart and soul.*

4. Our gratitude to God

"Thank the Father who has made it possible for you to join the Saints and with them to inherit the light."

(At the spring)



After a long-three-week of silence, the Beautiful Lady comes back in the evening, on the 11th February. She leads Mariette to the source and makes this solemn promise: I come to relieve suffering. Again, the child thanks Mary with the words: "Thank you! Thank you!" That evening she will say the desire to make her first communion the next day.

Mary wants to guide us towards the Eucharist, for there is a deep bond between her and this sacrament. Her presence could not be lacking among the faithful of the first Christian generation, persevering "at the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42). Through her whole life, Mary is a "Eucharistic woman", filled with grace and filled with gratitude. With Mary, we thank God with the words we borrow from the fourth Eucharistic prayer:

Lector: Father most holy, you are the one God living and true, existing before all ages and abiding for all eternity, dwelling in unapproachable light.

All: **You, who alone is good, the source of life, have made all that is, so that you might fill your creatures with blessings, and bring joy to many of them by the glory of your light.**

Chorus: **Laudate Dominum, laudate Dominum, omnes gentes, alleluia! (2x)**

Lector: We give you praise, Father most holy, for you are great and you have fashioned all your works in wisdom and in love. You formed man in your own

image and entrusted the whole world to his care, so that in serving you alone, the Creator, he might have dominion over all creatures.

All: And when through disobedience he had lost your friendship, you did not abandon him to the domain of death. For you came in mercy to the aid of all, so that those who seek might find you.

Chorus

Lector: And you so loved the world, Father most holy, that in the fullness of time you sent your Only Begotten son to be our Saviour.

All: Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, he shared our human nature in all things but sin. to the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation, to prisoners, freedom, and to the sorrowful of heart, joy.

Chorus

Lector: To accomplish your plan, he gave himself up to death, and, rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life.

All: And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him who died and rose again for us, he sent the holy spirit from you, Father, as the first fruits for those who believe, so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world, he might sanctify creation to the full.

Chorus

► *In remembrance of our baptism, which made us children of God, let us now push our hands into the water of the spring and, with all our heart, sing a song of thanksgiving.*

► *Let us pray together:*

Wonderful Father, you who have magnificently created man and more magnificently restored his dignity; let us participate in the divinity of your Son since he wanted to take our humanity. He, who reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever. Amen.

Dear Virgin of Banneux

1. Dear Virgin of Banneux, in us you believe,
Despite all our weakness, our hearts you receive.

Ave, ave, ave Maria (2x)

2. You heart full of kindness, o Virgin, you smiled,
And confidence showed in a young humble child.

Ave, ave, ave Maria (2x)

