Homily for Advent Day of Reflection

December 1, 2012

Albert Lea, MN

Humble and bold. Two words we don’t often associate in our minds. Humble and bold… we find them both in the person of Mary.

The humble virgin Mary, docile to God’s will, God’s word, yet the most bold of all the witnesses of the Word made Flesh, of her Son and Lord, Jesus.

No, it was not Peter. No, it was not James or John or Paul who was the boldest yet most humble of all the witnesses of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus….. No, it was Mary, for from her heart came these words:

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord*

*My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior*

*For He has looked with favor on his lowly servant*

*From this day all generations shall call me blessed!*

It was Mary who bore the most humble but bold witness to her Son. It was Mary who bore the Word of God in her heart and then conceived Word in her womb.

Only because of her faith in that Word that came to her, who she nurtured in her Immaculate Heart, was she then able to conceive and bear the Son of God, her creator and Savior, Jesus.

Mary kept close to her heart the Word made Flesh. She said, “Yes.” She said, “Fiat.” She said, “Let it be done to me.” St. Augustine would later write that Mary was more blessed for hearing God’s word and keeping custody of it in her heart than because of the flesh she gave to her divine Son. Since this was true, Mary was able to stand by her Son as he died on the cross, stand by Him without staining her Immaculate Heart. She knew it was by virtue of her faith in God’s Word that she had been able to conceive that Word in her womb, and it was by faith in that Word that she was able to give bold witness to her Son when he gave up his life on the Cross.

Mary, who surpasses all of us in her sanctity and her fidelity, remains like us, a member of the Church, and a member of the Body of Christ her Son, a witness to her Son’s death and resurrection.

You too are members of the Body of Christ. You also carry God’s Word in your hearts for you are heralds of that Word.

My brother deacons, we are more blessed and find greater dignity in the Word we nourish in our hearts and profess with our lips than in the office we bear. We are first, and most importantly, members of the Body of Christ, *from which we must never separate ourselves*. We are called in a special way to preach the Gospel and become Icons of Jesus the Servant.

We cannot become that Icon, we cannot become the Image of Jesus the Servant unless first we have welcomed the Word in our hearts, treasured it, nurtured it, obeyed it, followed it, trusted it. Mary would not have become the Mother of God had she not first accepted and kept the Word of God in her Immaculate Heart. We cannot become the Icon of Jesus the Servant if we do not first hold in purity of heart the Word entrusted to us. Mary could not have endured the passion and death of her Son without cradling in her heart the Word that had come to her. We cannot endure the trials and difficulties of ministry without knowing and nurturing and loving the Word entrusted to us as deacons of the Church.

Yes, our diaconal ministry can be modeled after Mary. We too are to give humble yet bold witness to the Gospel. Ours is a vocation of humble service, not arrogant rule, but ours is also a vocation of boldly proclaiming the Gospel. There is no place for the timid there. We must teach and preach boldly, with conviction and faith arising from a pure conscience.

My brothers, thank you for your ministries in our diocese. To all you wives here present, I thank you for the sacrificial love you live out on a daily basis in the support you give us. Without you, we could do very little.

May God bless us all!