

words of Christ are truly *words of eternal life*, filled with inexhaustible light and fruitfulness. Those of the Blessed Virgin reflect something of this fullness. There is no doubt that her response to the message of the Angel Gabriel is her greatest word. It is the sublime revelation of the Immaculate Heart....

Mary has heard. She believes. She is aware of the mystery which has been revealed to her. All eyes in heaven and on earth are turned in her direction.... Mary senses the expectation of the Archangel, or rather of the God who sent him. She hears the groanings of humanity resounding in her heart, that humanity which is enslaved by sin and burdened with sorrow. Her soul expands with the breath of hope which, for centuries, has given life to her people. She is, as it were, buoyed up by the desires and hopes of all the patriarchs and prophets, but at the same time, astonished at the prospect of such a destiny and its fearsome responsibility....

And Mary answers: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word*. It is as if she said to God: "I am completely yours; use me for whatever your heart desires." These are sublime words whose simplicity contains more wisdom than the whole angelic world! It is an act so great and so decisive that its consequences will be endless. *Be it done to me according to thy word*, the humble Virgin whispers, *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*. And this living Word embodies the grace of redemption and all the sanctity of the Church. It will mean for all people unending union with him in his Father.

FATHER JOSEPH-MARIE PERRIN, O.P.

Father Perrin († 2002) was a French Dominican priest, the founder of the secular institute Caritas Christi, and a close friend of Simone Weil.

Prayer for the Evening

*We have seen his glory:
come, let us worship before him.*

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be for ever. Amen.*

HYMN

Meter: 87 87 87

*This hymn can be sung to the tune used for
Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*

Dawn-star of the world's redemption
Lo! we hail thee "full of grace"!
Destined mother of the Savior
Promised to our fallen race,
Kings and prophets have foretold thee
And desired to see thy face.

Called by God's divine election
To a wondrous destiny
And preserved by his protection
From all sin and evil free,
Mother of his Son Incarnate
Yet a virgin still to be.

Sorrow, pain and deep affliction
Marked thy pathway here on earth
From the moment of thy "Fiat"
To the day which saw his birth
And the dreadful consummation
In the mystery of his death.

But when he achieved our ransom
Raised aloft on Calvary,
Mother of mankind he named thee,
Of the souls he had redeemed,