



Apostles for Today

Reflection and Prayer - February 2008

Fundamental Rule 27

Seeing his mother and close to her the disciple he loved, Jesus said to her: “Woman, here is your son”. Then he said to the disciple: “Here is your mother” (Jn, 19, 26-27).

St. Vincent Pallotti wrote:

“While he was dying (on the Cross), our Lord Jesus Christ, said to Mary, most Holy, “Woman, here is your son” (Jn 19, 26), with this gesture he gave us Mary, most Holy, as our Mother. And when he said to John : “Here is your Mother” (Jn 19, 27), he made us children of his Mother. Therefore we must be ever grateful to our Lord Jesus Christ for such a precious gift. So too we should propagate (make known) the glories of Mary most holy in whatever way possible, and even more by encouraging the use of the devout practices that are approved by the Church and have been enriched by indulgences. We should stimulate a greater confidence in ourselves and in all persons, in the powerful intercession of so august a Mother. As children of hers, to console her, (to make her happy,) we should strive to become as similar as possible to our first-born brother, our Lord Jesus Christ. (OCC III, 56-57)

St. Vincent Pallotti turned frequently to our Mother Mary, and he addressed her in many forms using many adjectives to both recognize and honour her, which all confirm his devotion and his certainty that each work, every act that he commends to her care, and which we too commend to her, will be blessed and protected very specially.

We find him addressing her as “my most beloved Mother”, or exclaiming: “In Mary the abyss of grace shines forth” (OCC X, 289). St. Vincent used to carry around in his hand a picture of the “Mother of Divine Love”, an image very dear to the Romans. He placed the Union under the spiritual protection of “Mary, Queen of Apostles”. He promoted devotion to Mary through the exhortations of the “Month of May”. In these texts he addresses Mary as Mother of God, as Daughter of the Eternal Father,

as Spouse of the Holy Spirit. These exhortations of Pallotti were not only addressed to his contemporaries, but are also very relevant for us in our devotion to Mary.

The presence of Mary in the life of St. Vincent was so strong and so fundamental that in reading his writings one comes across constantly the words ‘the Mother’, ‘the Spouse’, ‘the Queen’. We are drawing inspiration now from number 27 of the Fundamental Rule, but in every volume of his writings and in the various chapters we also encounter these references, for example in the daily rule, in his spiritual exercises, in the Rules of 1846, 1847 and 1849; and we could go on listing the references.

Prayer (OOCX XI, 85-86)

O Immaculate Mother of God, Queen of Apostles!

With you and all the angels and saints in paradise, I thank the Holy Trinity that I have been given the gift of faith.

I am happy, dear mother, to greet you with the title of Queen of Apostles, because while this title gives honour to you, it gives courage to me.

So I implore you to unite yourself as a mother to me, a sinner, and to the entire heavenly court, while we offer now and forever the Precious Blood of your Son, his merits and those of the whole Church. Amen

In the Fundamental Rule which is the subject of our reflection this month, the sentiments of St. Vincent in his recognition of the infinite mercy of God in giving us our Lord Jesus Christ as our first-born brother in the words he addressed to Mary “Here is your son” are of special importance. Some quotations from his writings “The God of Infinite Love” are particularly relevant:

XXIV. The infinite love and the infinite mercy of God in giving us our Lord Jesus Christ as our first-born brother.

XXV. God, in giving us his divine Son, made man for us, as our first-born brother, gave us also the most holy mother of his divine Son as our mother. He gave us all the saints as our brothers and sisters, and this is why the holy angels look up to us.

Prayer

“My God, my merciful Father, you alone know and understand how ungrateful I have been. Not only have I forsaken you, but I have betrayed my brother Jesus

as well. I have betrayed him as many times as the sins I committed and helped others to commit. Moreover, many times I have wounded the heart of my dear mother, Mary, with the spear of iniquity. I have neither profited from her mediation nor from the mediation of all the Saints, my beloved brothers and sisters. I have always been a sinner, because I never cared to imitate the virtues of the Saints as I could and should have done.

But now, enlightened by your grace, through your infinite mercy and through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, through the merits and intercession of Mary, my most beloved mother, and of all the Angels and Saints, I firmly believe that you will grant me perfect contrition for my sins and the grace to imitate the Saints in order that I may closely imitate my dear mother Mary, and my first-born brother, Jesus Christ, with greater perfection until death.”

MARY OUR MOTHER. Short reflections based on the book “El silencio de María (The Silence of Mary)” by Ignacio Larrañaga:

+Mary’s personality is striking due to her traits of humility and courage. Throughout her life she stayed hidden, always in the shadows of the background; however, when the hour of humiliation arrived, she came forward and took her place in the forefront, dignified and silent.

+The Romans, keepers of law and order, used to ensure that the bystanders were kept at a distance from those crucified, with few exceptions; one of these was Mary, she was at the foot of the Cross, a solemn moment in her life and in that of the Church.

+It is here that Mary’s spiritual maternity is born, what appears to be a series of circumstances which give way to a simple domestic arrangement to take care of the mother, contain a messianic meaning.

+In the context of the social customs of that period the task Jesus entrusted to John must have seemed very strange, were it not for another very clear and patent meaning.

+Jesus established a double relationship, but the most important part was announced first. This first part is a descending relationship, commending Mary to receive John and to care for him as if he were a son. In the person of John he gives Mary as Mother to all of humanity.

+Given the fact that the Mother is one and the children are many, it is sufficiently clear that, in John, all those whom Jesus wished to redeem, are represented.

+From that moment on and forever, all the redeemed have a Mother by the express and final will of the Lord, she is his very own Mother. Nobody need ever complain of being an orphan or of loneliness in life's journey.

+Jesus Christ revealed the Father to us and gifted us with a Mother! He gave his Mother to Humanity in order that it would take care of her with faith and veneration, and he gave all of Humanity to his Mother so that she would care for it and transform it into a Kingdom of Love.

+ Humanity in general does not exist, men and women exist. It was because of this that Jesus, the great teacher, gave the gift of his Mother to the concrete person John, who represented all of Humanity. With this symbolic gesture Jesus wished to signify that just as the maternal-filial relationship of Mary and John was expressed in mutual attention, so too should be the relationship of the redeemed with our Mother.

+ We live in the world of faith: we have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, who died and rose from the dead, we are embraced by the strong loving arms of God the Father, and we are cared for by a consoling Mother whom Jesus gave to us in his final hour!

+Mary is consolation and peace for every moment. She transforms bitterness into sweetness, combat into tenderness. She is benign and delicate. She suffers with those who suffer, she stays with those who remain, and she departs with those who depart. Our Mother is patience and security. She is our joy, our delight and our tranquility. Our Mother is full of sweetness and of invincible strength.

Final prayer: Hail holy queen, mother of mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope. To you do we cry poor banished children of Eve, to you do we send up our sighs mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then o most gracious advocate your eyes of mercy towards us and after this our exile show unto us the fruit of your womb Jesus. O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary. Pray for us o Holy Mother of God so that we may be worthy of the promises of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.