

## THE MYSTERY OF THE CENACLE

In the messages, our Mother indicates that the spiritual dwelling of the children consecrated to Her and the forum of our prayer together is to be the Cenacle. It is a word chosen by Her; She could have chosen other words to describe our coming together in prayer in Her Movement, for instance "meetings" or "gatherings for prayer", but She did not. She distinguished them from other meetings by this title (which Pope John Paul II also used as the spiritual home for the Church). I remember a religious sister, who organised a prayer group, who told me that it was in no way different to our cenacles, The ingredients were often similar to the programme of the cenacle. They said the Rosary, they prayed (sometimes) for the Holy Father; it was the same thing! (She said!) They were both prayer groups... Good, but no! Our Mother says:

"It is therefore necessary that these priests of My Movement begin to meet each other and to gather together. It is not necessary that they come together in great numbers: even two or three can be enough. These gatherings MUST CONSTITUTE REAL AND TRUE CENACLES".  
(M.17th. January 1974)

It is a title which gave rise to some difficulty in translation. In Russia, for instance, the original word used was "gornitsa", which meant the "upper room", so that the word meant nothing more than a place, that is the upper room where the Last Supper had been held, and the Apostles gathered with our Mother to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. We had to change that translation to "tsenakl", for the meaning is far deeper than simply a place.

It stands for a spiritual reality, modelled on that first Pentecost which took place in Jerusalem, but now independent of the place where it takes place today. In this meditation, I would like to look, with you, at this reality, which is at the heart of the gift our Mother has made to us in Her Movement.

### *The Heart of the Cenacle is Mary*

The mystery of Pentecost, the overshadowing of the grace of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles through Mary, is an enduring reality in the Church, not just an historical event which began and ended that day in the Upper Room two thousand years ago. Pope John Paul, when he wrote to us in "Ecclesia de Eucharistia", told us that the events of Calvary, of which the Eucharist is the "memorial", remain present, not just past historical events, in virtue of the fact that they participate in the "divine eternity". In the same way, we must say the same of the events of that first Pentecost: it is a perpetual mystery in the life of the Church, going to its very nature, for the Church is divine as well as human, through the continual inpouring of the Holy Spirit, which goes to the root of its nature for all time.

In the message of 17th January 1974, the message in which the nature of the cenacle is most fully developed, our Mother takes us back to that first cenacle and relates it to our cenacles today:

"Where two or more Priests of My Movement come together because of Me, there is the Cenacle. In the Cenacle, there were the Apostles with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. In these Cenacles, I want the priests of My Movement to be gathered with Me, the Mother of Jesus, and a Mother most specially for them". (ibid.)

As for the Apostles, so also for the priests of the Marian Movement of Priests who, in union with the bishops, succeed them, the point of unity of our gathering together is our Mother. She promises us here that, wherever the Cenacle is held, from the biggest assembly to the tiniest (and perhaps most valuable) family cenacle, She is personally present. We have a statue which represents Her presence, but that presence is active, and She is at work, just as She was in Jerusalem

"When two or three are gathered in My name, I am there in the midst of them"; thus spoke My Son Jesus. When two or more priests of My Movement are gathered together on My account, I also am in the midst of them. I manifest Myself to them and through them, especially when these Priests are joined in prayer". (ibid.)

Brothers, Mother is here.

### *Birth*

So, once again, what is the particular nature, what is the particular function of the Cenacle, which distinguishes it from other gatherings of prayer?

To seek an answer, let us look at the two books written for us by St. Luke. Both his Gospel and his Book of the Acts of the Apostles begin in the same way: they both speak to us of the birth of Jesus, of His birth to our Mother in the Gospel in His physical human nature and, in the Acts, in His Mystical Body, the Church, at Pentecost. In each case, the birth comes about as an act of the Holy Spirit (*the Holy Spirit shall come upon You, Mary*) and, in the Acts, the momentous event of the arrival of the Advocate promised by Jesus. In both, our Mother Mary is His channel and the Spirit comes upon the infant Church (the Apostles) through Her motherhood. She is not present at the events of that first Cenacle by chance, but as essential to what is taking place. She is the Mother of the Church (*the Mother of Jesus and a Mother most specially for them*), as we have just read.

It seems to me that, in naming our gatherings "cenacles", our Mother is indicating to us their true function and place in the life of the Church. She is drawing us most closely into that mystery of the birth of the Church at Pentecost, that perennial mystery, because in our time, the moment has come for that immense grace to be renewed. It is true: every priest of the Church, whether formally enrolled in the Marian Movement of Priests or not, is involved in this re-birth; we do not claim to be exclusive But it does involve the priests consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in a special way, for they must be at the heart of the new Church.

### *These times*

The Marian Movement of Priests was formed for these times of ours, to experience the sufferings and trials of this moment in the Church's history, and to be a sign of hope in the midst of them. Our Mother describes the situation:

"These are the times of the great punishment. The cup of divine justice is full, overfull overflowing. Iniquity covers the whole earth: the Church has been darkened by the spread of apostasy and sin." (M. 357, 3rd. July 1987)

One even hears some voices which speak of religion and the Church as being outdated, irrelevant and even dying. It is a time where a real

reconstruction is needed in its heart. For this we were born, as our Mother offers us Her Immaculate Heart as the new heart of the Church:

"My times have arrived, From this year on (it was the Marian Year), in a powerful and official way, the times of your Heavenly Mother will begin... I want to save all My children....Bring them all to me, because I want them all within the secure refuge of My Immaculate Heart". (ibid.)

"In the harshest of winters, you are the buds which are opening up from My Immaculate Heart, and which I am placing on the branches of the Church, to tell you that its most beautiful Spring is about to arrive".  
(M.604, 31st. December 1997)

Yes, that reconstruction has begun. There are little signs to be seen by those who wish to look. For me, in my journeys in Australia recently, where secularisation became widespread, one notices signs of stability returning, with some good seminaries and vocations, under good guidance by some wise bishops.

In Russia too, there are signs of encouragement there, even in the country where the demon made his nest. They are small signs, you understand, but in the very small communities which we visit there are many indications of priestly vocations, and the seminary in St. Petersburg has many students (although that seminary serves the whole of Russia). For that country, in a very special way, the Immaculate Heart of Mary is the means of its rebirth; we still await the collegial consecration asked by Our Mother in Fatima, but one notices that in almost every Catholic Church the statue of Our Lady of Fatima or of the Immaculate Heart is present. If the collegial consecration has not yet been made, the bishops of Russia have together consecrated that country to the Immaculate Heart on a number of occasions, at one of which I had the privilege of being present.

But, it may be said, they need the cenacle.

### *The need of the Cenacle*

Our Mother gave us these two weapons: the consecration to Her Immaculate Heart and the Cenacle. We may be tempted to say that, having made our consecration, we have done everything asked of us. When I first was given responsibility in England, there were no cenacles in my area, and it was said by some that they were not really necessary. Quite the contrary!

Once we have made our consecration, our life in the Immaculate Heart has only just begun. A seed has come into being, but it needs to be placed in a warm and fertile soil in order to grow and develop. We responsible have lists of priests who are said to belong to the Movement, but we never see many of them; they do not answer correspondence (yes, that is a priestly failing!) or attend retreats or take part in cenacles. Their consecration, in some cases, was made, in company with others during a Mass presided over by Don Stefano or someone else, and they made their names known. Perhaps it was a moment of enthusiasm or of curiosity, but it does not bear fruit, for the consecration is made, not just for the sanctification of the individual, but to live a spirit for the Church.

The cenacles are the seedbed in which the consecration is nourished, and in which souls grow in the spirit of our Mother. They grow through the grace of the Presence of Mary, Who embraces us into this act of re-birth of the Church in Her Immaculate Heart, and they grow through the interaction of those who are gathered in Her name, sharing their prayer and in the spirit in which they live, the spirit of the love and service of the same Mother. It is true that the grace of having made the consecration continues in those who do not attend the cenacles, but the fact remains that our Mother has given us the cenacles as the vehicle of the growth of that grace, and we lose this by failing to take part. If we do not take part, we may ask ourselves just what the Movement has come to mean in our lives if we ignore the regular opportunity which the cenacles give us for refreshing and renewing the consecration we have made.

### *Forming a cenacle*

Perhaps we are not aware of a cenacle of priests near us. Does this mean that we should feel that it is not for us? The answer is surely "No". Why not form one for ourselves? Cenacles are not ready-made, formalised structures to which we come, set up officially by the Marian Movement of Priests, but rather come into existence because our Mother's consecrated children wish to observe Her wishes by praying as She has asked. I have held them in a prison, and heard of an airport and a university where the staff always began the day with a cenacle. The laypeople teach us. It must be simple, an expression

of the spirit of Her family life, just as She Herself is simple, and we can be sure of Her help if we take the first step.

Numbers do not matter, nor do the place and time. A priest may suggest to his friend or neighbour to join him in the prayer of the cenacle and, together, they constitute it, blessed by the promised presence and grace of the Mother. Let us listen to Her description:

"Now that My Marian Movement of Priests is spreading everywhere, these cenacles must be multiplied. There is no need of organisation: everything should be simple, spontaneous, quiet and fraternal. Where two or more Priests of My Movement come together because of Me, there is the Cenacle". (ibid.)

As we have said, the living, loving motherly presence of Mary is the heart of the Cenacle., and it is to this which She invites us.

We might add a note on the question of the time set aside for our cenacle. Obviously, this depends on the availability of those who take part. Ours are busy days for priests, and we have to measure or time. Sometimes, we can do little more than allow the time needed for the five steps: invocation of the Holy Spirit, five decades of the Rosary, prayers for the Holy Father and his intentions, a reading from the book and our consecration to our Mother's Immaculate Heart. If we can do no more, our Mother will be content and bless the cenacle, for She can do wonders in a very short time. She is a Mother, not a person hidebound by times and forms. But, I would suggest, it would be better to give more time to the cenacle, if possible. Forgive me if I quote Liverpool as an example.

For over 20 years now, we have held a monthly cenacle of priests, with an attendance of usually about 15 priests, maximum 20. After gathering with a coffee, we spend an hour with a reflection on the messages, guided by one of ourselves. This is followed by a concelebrated Mass, with another priest offering us some thoughts on our Mother in the homily. After a good lunch (which gives a good occasion for fraternity), we spend an hour of adoration, during which we pray the holy Rosary, and there is an opportunity for confessions. We conclude with a cup of tea (you will notice, of course, that we are English!)

It makes a full day of prayer and, far more important, it gives a regular opportunity to absorb the true spirit of the Movement.

### *Why the Cenacle...?*

Our Mother tells us why She wants us to gather in cenacles in the message of 17th. January 1974. We must pay careful attention to this as, while at first glance it may appear that these are things which she is asking us to do, they are rather indicators of the formation She gives us in the Cenacle. In the end, it is the occasion of our Mother gathering us gently around Her to teach us what is in Her Heart.

The first reason is *to remain with Me*. If we attend carefully to the Gospel, we find that this is exactly what Jesus did with the Apostles when He set out to form them: and *He appointed twelve to be with Him and to be sent out to preach* (Mk. III:14) The Apostles were formed to be bearers, not just of a doctrine, but of a Person known and love through intimate association. So also for us with our Mother.

The Cenacle is the occasion of a personal meeting with our Mother and Her very presence is an occasion of grace, but She continues: "so that I Myself can nourish and form them and cause them to grow in perfect consecration to Me, so that may be truly My Priests alone, and in them and through them I may once again manifest Myself".

It is a very special grace. She forms us through Her presence, Her messages, and through our brothers to grow in Her spirit and manifest Her. Then *above all to pray with Me*, She tells that our prayer becomes specially efficacious *for it is then that I Myself accomplish in them My maternal task of interceding before God for all My children* (ibid). The prayer of the Cenacle is the prayer of the Mother Who gives power to that of Her children.

*To love one another and to live in true brotherhood in the company of their Mother*. It is a recurring theme in the messages, in which our Mother addresses a real need among Her sons: loneliness, a lack of love between priests, too much feeling put aside and emarginated, especially when there are divisions through patterns of thought and a lack of vocations causing many men to live alone. Our Mother brings Her priests together in the cenacles where they are united by a shared love of the same Mother. She tells us in another message that it will soon be as if we had known each other for the whole of our lives.

"Those who will come have for some time been called, chosen and prepared by Me. They will quickly feel at home and amongst

themselves it will seem as though they had always known and loved each other". (M. 17, 23rd. September 1973)

I believe that many of us will recognise the truth of these words from their personal experience. Consecration to the Immaculate Heart is made by us individually, but we belong together. Our Mother hints that this unity will be needed before the times of great trial:

"I must hasten and I desire that the Priests of My Movement be once again reunited before the great tempest... To love each other as brothers, gathered about your own Mother, What grief My motherly Heart experiences every day in seeing that, even among themselves, Priests today no longer love one another, nor do they help each other! Egoism has smothered every impulse of fraternal charity and in the souls of many of My sons there is only coldness and darkness. Love one another, My beloved sons! Seek out each other, be united with each other to be faithful priests: faithful to the Pope, to the Gospel and the Church". (M.68, 28th January 1975)

We remember that we are celibate men; we must be careful not to let that turn into self-centredness and introversion, which is the contrary of love! Our Mother gives us the possibility of a true, loving union with brothers of the same mind.

*To await the decisive moments which are drawing ever closer.* On the question of brotherhood, we said that our Mother wished to encourage it in anticipation of the great tempest, but this is at the heart of the Cenacle. At the appointed time, the Movement will have to act in unity to defend the Faith and the Church:

"Then the cohort of My Priests, prepared and led by Me, are to come forth into the open to proclaim with courage and before everyone the Divinity of My Son, the reality of all My privileges, the necessity of the hierarchical Church united to, and under the leadership of the Pope, and all the truths contained in the Gospel... Let your gatherings be true Cenacles of life with Me, of prayer, of brotherhood and of waiting". (M.34, 17th. January 1974)

If a priest wishes to live the life of the Consecration to the full as given to the Movement, the cenacles are essential unless circumstances make it impossible.

### *The Enduring Cenacle*

What we have been saying up to now has been in relation to the cenacles which we hold from time to time, like this present one, here at Collevaenza. They have limits of time and place, naturally, and our Mother wishes them to be multiplied frequently. But we should always remember that they are a reflection of that more permanent Cenacle into which we are invited to enter and remain, and which Pope John Paul II saw as the abode for the Church. Our Mother appears to distinguish this from our regular cenacles, as we can hear in the message of 28th. January 1984, where She refers to the first Cenacle in Jerusalem, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which took place:

"But, above all, a gift of My Immaculate Heart will be the New Pentecost. Just as, in the Cenacle in Jerusalem, the apostles, gathered together in prayer with Me, prepared for the moment of the first Pentecost, so also in the Cenacle of My Immaculate Heart (and therefore in the Cenacles in which you are united in prayer) you apostles of these last times, with your Heavenly Mother are able to obtain a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit".

The one leads to the other, from the occasional cenacle to that more permanent dwelling within Her Heart, for us all and for each one individually, and which is described elsewhere as our Mother's Garden of Her Immaculate Heart, in which the Holy Spirit

"cultivates you, embellishing you with His gifts, and enriching you with all the virtues". (M.131, 29th. July 1977)

This is our true home, our meeting-place with the Most Holy Trinity (our Mother tells us She is in the heart of the Divine Trinity: M.201, 14th. June 1980), the home of holiness, and a cenacle which is permanent: "Remain then forever in My Garden". (Ibid.)

In what we have been saying about the cenacles, the emphasis has been on cenacles of priests, partly because we are here in a cenacle of priests, but also because (sadly) the number of priests who regularly take part join in the life of the cenacles is small. But we must also remember that the call to the Cenacle embraces also the lay faithful, who are far more active. It is something in which we, as priests and pastors should be taking a hand, making them known to our people and helping to organise and encourage them. In particular, we should encourage the family cenacles. They are small, but they are directed to helping the element of Catholic society which is so very damaged

in the present trial: family life. Once again, this is an aspect of the consecration which could, in many cases, be lived more intensively by us priests. Indeed, it is in the small cenacles, rather than in big events, that the true spirit of the Movement can be learned.

### ***Conclusion***

This meditation is entitled the "Mystery" of the Cenacle. It is so because within it are hidden great graces, such as that of new birth of the Church, a power of intercession of immense power because in the intercession of the humble gathering of those taking part there is the voice of our Mother and a quiet moulding of the souls of Mary's children, centred on a renewed Catholic priesthood, to a new holiness which comes straight from Her Immaculate Heart.

We are looking at the renewal of the Church in that Immaculate Heart. We have to keep this ecclesial aspect of our Mother's Work before our eyes. Even if a cenacle is parochial or a family or a particular group, it forms part of something much bigger: we are involved in the entire Church and its need of salvation and there are few countries left into which the Cenacle has not spread. We remember our Mother's words:

"Multiply your cenacles of prayer. Multiply your Rosaries, recited well and in union with Me. Offer Me also your suffering and your penance. I ask you for prayer and penance for the conversion of sinners, that even My most rebellious and most distant children may return to God, Who awaits them with the merciful eagerness of a Father. And then, we will form a great net of love that will envelop and save the whole world".  
(M.192, 22nd. January 1980)

And later:

"Already My great net of love and salvation has been spread in every part of the earth".  
(M.391, 13th. October 1988)

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