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A Spiritual Profile of a Priest Consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Meditation 2

As we speak of what makes up our spirit, we find so much that is familiar from the traditional spirituality of the Church, and that is the function of a Movement. St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that movements exist either to underline something in the life of the Church which has come to be overlooked or to give emphasis to some aspect of that life which has a major importance at the present time. In other words, it has to speak to the needs of the times. Such is the nature of the spirit of the Marian Movement of Priests, which draws together many aspects of our Catholic tradition which need to be re-emphasised in the present time of deep conflict within the Church. It is not a question of presenting us with new things, but of seeing many things together in a new way – non nova, sed noviter. It is our Mother's way of understanding the priesthood and its special role in the present time, Hers because it has come directly from Her in the messages. Our brothers the Carthusians (I remember referring to this some years ago) have a coat of arms, which consists of a globe (the world) surmounted by the Cross. Beneath, there is a motto "*Crux stat, dum mundus volvitur*" i.e. "The Cross stands firm, while the world goes round about its business" seems a reasonable translation. It seems a good picture of what our Mother is doing with Her Movement: establishing a solid path, which is nothing other than the path of the Catholic Church clearly identified by the Immaculate Heart of Mary and according to Her plans, while the spirit of the world pursues its fantasies and caprices, often deeply sinful. It is the "sign which is contradicted".

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Our Mother takes us into the heart of the priesthood: She leads us, along the ways of littleness, guided by Her hand, to remember that, to be truly a priest means to become, like our Master, Priest and Victim, *Sacerdos et Victima*. In this, our Mother accepts no compromise, just as She offered no compromise to Her other little children, Blessed Jacinta and Francisco, who should be models for us, who want to seek, like them, the way of littleness. The fact that Her words are pronounced with the deepest motherly tenderness does nothing to contradict this. As priests, we have to be one with our Supreme High Priest. Our Mother offers us the Cross as our way.

"Oh! ... as for one, so all for all the Priests of My Movement. All little children, nourished, kissed, caressed and cradled by me. So that I may place them all, with much love with much love, on the wood of their cross, I must prepare them for this ineffable and painful moment: they like My Son Jesus, will have to be immolated on the Cross for the salvation of the world. Let them entrust themselves therefore to me like little children: the Heart of their Mother will be the altar on which they will be immolated, victims acceptable to God for His triumph." (M.61, 19th. November 1974)

"The path along which I wish to lead My beloved sons, the Priests who are consecrated to My Immaculate Heart and who belong to the Movement *is that of the Cross*. This is the road which the Priests called to form My cohort must follow, in order that men redeemed by My Son, but snatched from Him by satan, nay yet be saved today through a special intervention of this motherly Heart of mine. *The way of the Cross*, My little children, is the only way that I have traced out for you, because it is that which your Mother first travelled together with Her Son Jesus. Journey along it without fear, because you will led by the hand by me, heartened by My motherly tenderness. Journey along it with me, in My Immaculate Heart; near your cross you will thus feel the presence of your Mother Who will comfort and help you. This road must be travelled by you, because only in this way can you be similar to My Son Jesus in all things. My duty is that of making you in every way similar to Him". (M. 71, 28th. March 1975)

This is, in many ways, nothing new; as we have seen, the Church has always pur before our eyes the figure of Jesus as Priest and Victim; our priesthood shares in His and, therefore, in both states. But, generally speaking, the expression has been used in a sort of mystical way, a sharing sacramentally in His Victim state (the

priestly state often being reduced, insome ways of thinking, to what is called "celebration", a word often incorrectly understood). The solemnity and centrality of sacrifice must be made clear.

But our Mother invites us to see ourselves with great clarity as called to be victims with Jesus, and remember these words which She offered us on the occasion of the proclamation of St. Thérèse as Doctor of the Church:

"You too offer yourselves as victims to the Merciful Love of Jesus so that, through you, He may very soon pour out upon the world the wonder of the Divine Mercy." (M. 600, 1st. October 1997)

What we have here is a new emphasis on the role of the priest as victim, and of the importance of the place of the Cross in his life *precisely because he is a priest*. This is a most important aspect of our spirit, for ourselves, but also for the people we are called to serve (for we share the same spirit, *mutatis mutandis*). Our Mother is asking us to have a special appreciation of the role of suffering, and in this we are heirs to Fatima, where these lessons formed the children.

"Jesus works the wonders of the Divine Mercy especially through your priestly suffering. For this, the moment has come in which I wish to render you all *conformed to Jesus Crucified*. Conformed to Jesus Crucified in your daily priestly ministry. The times have arrived in which you, My beloved sons, must drink to the dregs the bitter chalice which the Heavenly Father has prepared for you. Interior sufferings are on the increase, caused by your own limitations, by human misery, by your feeling in your life the weight of your weakness, which is so great. The intimate sufferings caused by lack of understanding and being set aside often by those around you are increasing. I am asking you also to taste the painful hour of Gethsemane. *Conformed to Jesus Crucified*, above all in your many exterior sufferings. I have need of your priestly sufferings. For each one of you too I have prepared the moment of a personal suffering". (M.601, 21st. November 1997)

"Offer me also your sufferings: your interior sufferings which are so humiliating to you, because they come from the experience of your limitations, your defects and your numerous attachments. The smaller and more hidden the sufferings which you offer me, the greater is the joy which My Immaculate Heart experiences". (M. 148 11th. February 1978)

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This concern for suffering is not simply a stoical counsel to accept whatever is in our lives as given or permitted by God. It is a very positive invitation to follow Our Lord along the path of Redeeming Divine Mercy. We live in an age in which God's Mercy has been placed before us with the greatest urgency because, as the Holy Father said in "Dives in Misericordia", a large part of the human race has forgotten what the word means, and therefore does not ask for mercy. We are living in the middle of a world which is, in great measure, spiritually dead. The spirit of our Movement flows directly from the anguish of our Mother's Heart before the prospect of losing so many of Her children (and, even more importantly, of seeing them lost to the Kingdom of Her Son), and of Her desire to recover them. We are called to be priests who consecrate themselves to obtaining that Mercy, so much so that our Mother can say to us:

"For the salvation of the world, be everywhere the faithful ministers of the Merciful Love of Jesus, and let yourselves always be led by me, Who am the Mother of Divine Mercy, because only in the Triumph of the Divine Mercy can the Triumph of My Immaculate Heart come about". (M. 547, 28th. June 1995)

Our Mother speaks to us of these children of hers, far away:

"How to help them? How to save them? I have need of much prayer, I have need of much suffering. Only through the prayer and the suffering of others, of the good and the generous, will I be able to save these children of mine. And so there is then the Movement of My Priests: it is desired by me to make reparation in souls for the immense harm caused in souls by atheism, to restore in so many hearts the image of God, the merciful countenance of My Son Jesus. My Priests are My restorers: they will restore in so many souls the face of God, and thus they will bring back many of My children from death to life. And in this way they will be the true consolers of My Sorrowful Heart". *(M.21, 16th. October 1973)*

The spirit of the Movement is, in a certain sense, maternal, sharing in our Mother's concern for the eternal life of Her children. Not, we may say, with a "love similar to Hers", but sharing in Her very own love for, as we have seen, we do all things with Her and in Her.

"Give me all the difficulties which you encounter, all the sufferings and the abandonment which you experience. Nothing comforts My Immaculate and Sorrowful so much as a suffering which is offered to me out of love by My

priest-sons. Even Jesus willed to offer to the Father all His sufferings through and with me. And it was thus that, offering My Son freely to the Father, I became truly Co-Redemptrix. Let these children of mine offer me all their sufferings, all their misunderstandings, all their difficulties. This is the greatest gift that they can make to me, because thus they allow me to carry out in time - in this, your time - My task as Mother and Co-Redemptrix. I will save many souls redeemed by Jesus, but at present so far away from Him, *because My sons, together with me, will pay for them. Oh, all I want of them is prayer and suffering: this is how they will really comfort My Heart and respond to the great plan of Mercy which I am about to realise through them". (M. 44, 1st. April 1974)*

These passages make it clear that the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is not an action which can be entered into lightly. It is a very serious commitment indeed, both in what it asks of us and in its consequences for souls. Much depends on its being lived to the full.

Then these words take us back to the question of littleness. We are not all called to the greatest of suffering. While I look on the members of a cenacle which I know in England and see, in a group of about twenty priests, two who have had heart attacks and another a heart condition, one awaiting a cardiac operation and another whose state of health does not permit it, another a psychological condition, accompanied by the difficulties of age and much arthritis (our Mother is faithful to Her promise to put us on the Cross!) the fact remains that these are not the principal ways in which these priests are called upon to offer themselves. It is rather, as our Mother tells us, in the passages we have quoted, the sufferings of every day, in the daily work, in the companions of life, that this offering must be habitually exercised.

For this, we must be little, to see the value of small things and, as a Movement, we "make a profession" of being little. Not that many of us are going to make a big public impact on the world or the Church, but there can always be a little temptation to be something important, that others should notice us or that we should have some rank or position or prestige in the Church, our diocese or religious congregation. It is not a huge invasion of pride, but rather something small and subtle, which only vigilance

will detect. In our Act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary we pledge to *"bring about in ourselves that interior conversion which will free us from all human attachment to ourselves, our career and our comforts, in order to be available, like You, only to do always the Will of the Lord"*.

It is a matter of having our eyes open to see what is truly the Will of God for us, rather than what we would like it to be, and of being able to grasp that condition of my life, in order to make it a more perfect service of Him. It does not depend on our being able to see or understand the particular importance or purpose of anything in my life, but rather of being content that He (or our Mother) wishes it to be so. The little one is content to be led by the hand by his Mother:

"Why do you not wish to entrust yourself to me? Let it be I who build – moment by moment – your future. It is enough for you to say, just as a little child "Mother, I entrust myself to You. I let myself be led by You. Tell me: what must I do?" (M.6, 21st. July 1973)

Let us repeat: *Trust and Love*: without these, our words are meaningless. Some of you may remember a little state which I once brought to San Marino; it was made by a Carthusian monk, and showed a little, rather scruffy boy, who needed his nose wiped, with his hand in that of his mother, big, strong and tender. An English priest, looking at it, said that it portrayed for him the spirit of our Movement. The child was an urchin, in need of everything, so poor, but he stretched out his hand to that great Mother in whom all his needs were satisfied. This priest said: "I now understand who we are: Mary's urchin priests!" Yes, and glad to be so. To be truly little can help us also to be grateful: "He has looked on His Servant in Her nothingness." The little one can see the great distance that the Lord had to travel to come to the aid of our poverty. We are very little people, faced by the vast, infinite power of God, Who has deigned to incorporate us into this great Work which He is carrying out through His Mother. We have no need to understand, only to be faithful in following Her.

"Be only and ever My little child, in need of everything, rejoicing to receive everything from me in all simplicity... This way I have of talking to you may astonish the great ones, but it is very natural and simple for My little children".

I believe that littleness is the most important aspect of the whole life of our Movement and of the living of the spirit of its consecration. We have nothing of our own to offer, but then our Mother comes to us in a most delicate way. We have seen it:

"Offer me also your sufferings: your interior sufferings which are so humiliating to you, because they come from the experience of your limitations, your defects and your numerous attachments. The smaller and the more hidden the sufferings which you offer me, the greater is the joy which My Immaculate Heart experiences". (M. 148, 11th. February 1978)

To what is our Mother referring? We are, all of us, conscious of our failings. Our aim is holiness but, instead of feeling that we are making progress on the road, we can so often feel as if we are going backwards. We become progressively aware of our own defects, always there but not always observed, not deliberate sin, but something which, for the moment, we cannot overcome. We suffer from ourselves and from our poverty, from things we find in ourselves, which seem to us only fit for our confession. Our Mother tells us that what She wants of us is the offering of our true selves, not of what we would like to be. If that involves the offering of a self which is imperfect, and we suffer from that fact, that suffering is capable of being a welcome offering to Her Immaculate Heart, and even the means of saving souls! I find this one of the most consoling statements in Her messages, and it is truly maternal.

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But it is also possible to note two other aspects of our spirit from this. Our Mother speaks of our "consoling" or "comforting" Her Immaculate Heart, expressions with resonances from Fatima. As well as being a consecration which is demanding and in some ways austere, it is also undertaken in a spirit of tenderness towards our Mother. The Marian Movement of Priests is directed towards the heart, and has as its foundation the relationship of our Mother with Her sons. A priest who truly belongs to Her is aware of the depth of suffering in Her Heart and seeks to console Her. This is what gives tone to the invitation become victims *to the Merciful Love* of Jesus, as explained to us by St. Thérèse, as distinct from being simply victims to the Divine Justice.

It is through living in this way, as little children on the Heart of their Mother, that Mary's children will make reparation in the heart of the world filled with sin, and help to win the grace for many of Her lost children to return to the Father. In their poverty, they will offer their nothingness to Him through the Immaculate Heart, filled with hope and confidence in His Mercy, to which He will respond with the gift of that Mercy where it is needed. Their poverty and nothingness becomes the voice of the world's desperate need, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

"Your presence here, My son, should be like an act of reparation. It must therefore be a presence of love and of prayer, a presence of life with me. So also is the presence of the Priests of My Movement in the world of today: consecrated to My Immaculate Heart, it is offered by me to the Father as a *sign of reparation*. For this reason, the more sin increases, the more their love for God will grow; the more filth submerges everything, the more their purity will become limpid and shining; the more apostasy spreads, the more heroic will be the witness of their faith, even to blood. In this way, they will be a sign of reparation: by their love, their fidelity, by their purity. And it will be due to these little children of mine, consecrated to My Heart, that evil will not prevail. And thus in the end it will be defeated. For this purpose they have all been chosen and prepared by me for this great purification of the earth. From this place I bless you all with an abundance of graces, including your spiritual director, whom I have placed at your side and whom I am making an increasingly docile instrument in My hands for the realisation of My plans, and also all these little children of mine who are keeping you company". (M., 75, 24th. July 1975)

Reparation. It has as its foundation a friendship for the Suffering Heart of the Mother and, with Her, for the Suffering Sacred Heart of Jesus, like the heart of the little Francisco, who spent long hours in the parish church, hidden behind the pulpit "to console the hidden Jesus": he was truly a friend of the Sacred Heart. Therefore it comes from a heart of prayer. It comes also from a heart of optimism for, if this reparation is made (like all else) with Mary, Omnipotentia Supplex, it must be efficacious and win the grace of new life in the world.

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All of these things which form part of the spirit which our Mother wishes to form in Her sons, Littleness, Prayer, a sense of Mercy, of consecrated suffering and of being made for sacrifice, of friendship of heart with Our Lord and our Mother, come together in a single reality: that of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. On the one hand, our Mother reminds us that the Triumph towards which She is working in the world is that of Her Eucharistic Son:

"The glorious Reign of Christ will coincide with the triumph of the Eucharistic Reign of Jesus because, in a purified and sanctified world, completely renewed by Love, Jesus will manifest Himself above all in the mystery of His Eucharistic Presence. The Eucharist will release all its divine power and will become the new sun, which will reflect its luminous rays into the lives of individuals, families and peoples, forming one single sheepfold from them all, docile and meek, of which Jesus will be the only Shepherd". (M. 505, 21st. November 1993)

Again, nothing new here, but an appeal made by Our Lady, because of the great need of the Church of today for eucharistic adoration. So many churches remain empty, of which She complains bitterly, although there is certainly a revival of adoration among many, but to a priest in particular adoration is part of the essence of his vocation.

He belongs beside his Eucharistic Lord, because his life must be just one thing with Him. All these qualities which our Mother wishes to form in Her Priest-son are to be found in the hidden Jesus and are the pattern offered to us as the model of a priest of Mary. He must be little with the One Who is so little in the Sacred Host; he must be a sacrifice with Him Who is *Sacerdos et Victima* (Priest and Victim), called to be consecrated in suffering for his people, a point of reconciliation with Him Who reconciles the world to God, a point of friendship and union with the Most Blessed Trinity:

"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you". (John XV:15)

Our Mother prepares us in this spirit and offers us to Her Son in adoration, but that adoration draws from Him an answering blessing which forms the pattern of His Eucharistic self in us and makes that reality strong. It is so for all, but in the life of a priest

this must have a special meaning, for he is the one called, in his unworthiness to live and act *in persona Christi*. His presence of adoration is to reflect this:

"But, before the Tabernacle, yours must not be just a presence of prayer, but also of a continual *communion of life with Jesus*. ... Jesus in the Eucharist becomes the new form of your priestly holiness, which you attain through a daily and hidden immolation, for a continuous presence of love for your brethren, from a capacity to accept in yourselves the sufferings and crosses of everyone, from an ability to transform evil into good and to go to work in depth, so that souls who are entrusted to you may be led by you to salvation".
(M.360, 21st. August 1987)

Our Mother tells us: "Second My action, the purpose of which is to transform you interiorly, in order to make you all Priests according to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. The Triumph of My Immaculate Heart cannot take place except in the Triumph of My Son Jesus, Who will reign once again in the hearts, the souls and the lives of each person and nation: in all humanity. But as Jesus is truly in Heaven, so also is He truly present on earth in the Eucharist: with His Body, His Blood, His Soul and His Divinity. His glorious Reign will shine forth above all in the Triumph of His Eucharistic Person, because the Eucharist will once again be the heart and centre of the whole life of the Church".
(M. 176, 14th. June 1979)

Here our Mother brings us to the peak of the spirit into which She is leading us: and She does so as the instrument of the Holy Spirit, *digitus Spiritus Sancti dexteræ*. "**He will take what is mine and give it to you**" (John XVI:14). It is that peak, for it is Jesus.

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The priest consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is essentially simply a priest of the Catholic Church. As we have said, what we have in common is not a distinct order congregation, charism or way of behaving, but our common priesthood. It is to that priesthood that our Mother has addressed Herself to renew it, in the heart of Her renewal of the Church. What is distinct is that it is formed in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in Her Spirit, but that is the authentic spirit of the priesthood, for it was to Her that Jesus entrusted His priests in the person of St. John: "**Ecce, Mater tua**" (John XIX:27).

A priest of the Movement is a priest of the Church through the harmony of his life with that of the Church, expressed through obedience to the Holy Father and the Hierarchy and total union with them. It is the second commitment we make through our consecration, and specifically in the words of the Act of Consecration. Once again, we see an emphasis here of something so necessary in these times. Our Mother has created the Movement precisely for the spiritual atmosphere of these particular times, in which the unifying magisterium is repeatedly challenged. She has placed this unity with the magisterium at the centre of our spirit, to say that one cannot authentically be a Catholic priest without that unity, just as the Holy Father says that no-one who opposes one particular teaching of the Catholic Church can call himself a Catholic.

She asks of us a deep sympathy and compassion for the Church. We live in a Church which is suffering, on its Calvary, and we are called upon to be faithful to it and to the Holy Father as they climb it and to stand by it:

"Above all, the Vicar of My Son Jesus is left more and more alone. He is calumniated, even in most vulgar and blasphemous ways; he is criticised and challenged and left more and more alone by My own sons. You must share his lot with him; this is for him and for you the hour of Gethsemane. Live it with me, in My Immaculate Heart. You are the crown of love woven by me to place, as a source of comfort, about the Heart of My Son Jesus and of His Vicar on earth. Therefore I ask you again for prayer, suffering and silence".
(M. 95, 3rd. April 1976)

Again, a deep presence of prayer and reparation. All of this becomes all the more acute in the present climate of scandals with in Church, in various forms. Yet, for us, they must be the occasion for lifting up our eyes in optimism. What we see is, in fact a revelation of just how deeply satan has been working for years in a hidden way, but also that this is the moment of purification, when the hidden evil is brought to the surface, as the poison in a boil must be brought out to be lanced, so that the wound may be cleansed. Our task is to remain faithful, and to encourage confidence and faith in our people in the painful times. While in the United States, I found a tendency to interpret the massacre of

the 11th. September as a possible fulfilment of the great trial predicted for that country in consequence of the sins of immorality and of separation from the magisterium of the Church:

“You will know the hour of weakness and poverty; the hour of suffering and defeat; the purifying hour of the great chastisement”.

(M. 437, 15th. November 1990)

But even such a purifying moment of suffering is only for our good in the mercy of God. Our place is to stand by her in total optimism:

“The Spouse of My Jesus appears again covered with wounds and obscured by Her adversary, who appears to be celebrating his complete victory. He is certain that he has won the victory in the Church, by the confusion which has subverted many of her truths, by the lack of discipline which has caused disorder to be spread, by the division which has attacked her internal unity and by the insidious and hidden persecution which has crucified her anew. But see how, in this most cruel winter of hers, the buds of a renewed life are already appearing. They tell you that the hour of your liberation is near! For the Church, the new spring of the triumph of My Immaculate Heart is about to burst forth. She will still be the very same Church, but renewed and enlightened, made humbler and stronger, poorer and more evangelical through her purification, so that in her the glorious Reign of My Son Jesus may shine forth for all”. *(M. 172, 9th. March 1979)*

In this situation, *“the Marian Movement of Priests is a little seed planted by Our Lady in the garden of the Church. It very quickly became a great tree, which has spread its branches into every part of the world. It is a Work of Love, which the Immaculate Heart of Mary is causing to spring up in the Church today, to help all her children to live, with trust and filial hope, through the final hours of the purification”* (Introduction).

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