

**THE PRIEST CONSECRATED TO THE IMMACULATE HEART
OF MARY IN THE HEART OF THE CHURCH**
b. In Simplicity of Heart and Reparation.

MYSTERY OF TRANSFORMATION

We have been reflecting on the relationship of the Marian Movement of Priests and the Church. If we wanted to define our place within the Church, perhaps it would be best expressed in the words of our Mother of Herself: *"He has looked on His Servant in Her nothingness"* (Lk. I:48). The priests of the Marian Movement are nothing in the eyes of the world, often poor, humble, not renowned for their learning (unless the Will of God desires otherwise); they are men who come to their Mother as children in need of Her help. They are Mary's little ones. In a retreat like this, it is helpful to listen again to our Mother's words on those who are truly Hers:

"I will again have to go about searching out from among Priests those who are faithful, those who listen to Me, those Who love Me. Through them I will again shine more resplendently in the Church, after the great purification... The Mother has received from Jesus the power to bring back home the children who have gone astray. But I have need of humble and courageous Priests: ready to let themselves be laughed at. Ready to let themselves be trampled on for Me. It will be through these Priests, humble, laughed at and trampled on, that I will form the cohort that will make it possible for Me to bring to Jesus an innumerable number of children, now purified by the great tribulation". (M.10, 1st. August 1973)

And then there is that ideal priest, anonymous in the messages:

"For you, there has been a meeting here today: you have found a brother. But for a long time he has been made ready by Me! You see, from long ago I have been fashioning this Priest: through suffering, through misunderstandings, through solitude: oh, how I have accustomed him to that interior humility and to that childlikeness of spirit which is so pleasing to My Immaculate Heart. Now I look upon him with satisfaction; he is only a little child in My arms, and I can carry him and make use of him as I wish. Such is one of My Priests; such are all My Priests. Called by Me long ago, long ago they have answered. Nourished by Me, fashioned and guided by Me, now they let themselves be led with docility". (M. 39, 18th. February 1974)

“One of My Priests, such are all My Priests”, that is, if they allow themselves to be so. This is the “stupendous book of our life”, of which our Mother spoke in the first meditation, the book She is writing of each one of us. If we want to be truly Hers, it is in these terms that we must be able to recognise ourselves.

We are the “army or cohort” of the little ones of Mary.

But what use will She make of such material? *“The Almighty has done great things for Me, and holy is His name”* (Lk. I:49) That was what She said of Herself, that from Her nothingness She should be formed into the likeness of Her Son. She was “full of grace”, so that in Her, in Whom the human race was having a fresh beginning, all goodness should reign, and She should be conformed in Her Immaculate Heart to the Sacred Heart of Her Son. Also, from being His Mother, She became His most perfect disciple, and learned Her Son in that way too. *“She kept these things in Her Heart, pondering them”* (Lk. II:19,51). The two Hearts are twins.

But, precisely because She is so much “just one thing” with Her Son, we have here the gift which She can give to Her consecrated children, whose hearts are Hers to dispose of in any way that She wishes. By conforming us to Her Immaculate Heart, She draws us into the reality of the Sacred Heart. We have to see that, in order to receive so high a gift of grace, a very full living of our consecration is necessary, and our sharing in the grace will be in proportion to our living that consecration, but the promise is there to draw us, and to encourage us to greater efforts:

“You have given Me your hearts. I will put in the place of your hearts, filled with sin, My Immaculate Heart, and thus I will draw down upon you the power of God, which will form in each one of you My Son Jesus in all His fullness”. (M. 148, 11th. February 1978)

“Give Me everything with great love and I will transform it all in the burning furnace of the most pure love of My Immaculate Heart. I Myself will transform you into the most faithful replicas of My Son Jesus. It is Jesus Whom I want to make live again in these Priests who are consecrated to Me, these Priests of My Movement. It is Jesus living in these Priests of mine Who will again save My Church at the very moment when it will seem to be sinking”. (M. 49, 8th June 1974)

Speaking of our gift of the Priesthood, She tells us:

“Remember the institution of the Eucharist and the Priesthood. How Jesus desired to eat this Pasch with His disciples before He suffered! You too should desire to consummate with great love the mystery of your priestly Pasch. *It is a divine mystery of love.* For this reason, I am at work in you powerfully each day to transform your hearts and make them conform to that of My Son Jesus. I am leading you into the blazing furnace of His divine and most pure love, because a priestly heart has to be made and transformed by the Heart of Jesus, the Eternal High Priest. A priestly heart has to be meek and humble, merciful and sensitive, open like a chalice to loving God in an exclusive and total way...”. (M. 322, 27th. March 1986)

FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS

“I bring you tidings of great joy, which will be for all people: for to you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. II: 11) Jesus comes to us as Saviour and our Mother wishes to unite us with Him in this. Some years ago, the Holy Father, in his Holy Thursday letter to Priests, proposed to us the figure of St. John Vianney, asking us to make our own his passion for souls. It is the heart of Jesus’s reason for coming, that men should have life and have it in abundance. Sadly, in the neo-pagan world of to-day, the sensitivity of men to the need of spiritual things, of the need for forgiveness of sin and of salvation has been blunted. What remains in a consciousness of the material needs of mankind. But the urgency of the salvation of souls remains in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and our Mother wishes it to be urgent in those who bear Her Heart:

“It is the Will of God that you should burn with a great zeal for the salvation of souls, and therefore you should always be ready for the serious task which is entrusted to you as Ministers of reconciliation. Already this Sacrament, which is so necessary, is disappearing in a great part of the Church, precisely because many Priests do not go into the Confessional any more to be at the disposal of souls who have extreme need of this Sacrament of divine Mercy”. (M. 321, 2nd. February 1986)

So essential does our Mother regard the work of the dedicated confessor that She says:

“Above all, the perfection of prayer is to be found in your docile and urgent availability to the needs of souls, which leads you to frequently go to the Confessional, as Ministers of the Sacrament of Penance, with which you can heal the deep wounds of so many sins...”. (M.322, 27th. March 1986)

In speaking of the desire to save souls, our Mother is speaking, of course, of a desire which should be in the heart of every priest; the priests of the Marian Movement do not presume to have a monopoly of holiness. But we are reflecting on a very special interior formation which our Mother promises to carry out in the hearts of those consecrated to Her: *a pure and urgent longing which is Her own, learned directly from the Heart of Jesus, a longing which flows from His own redeeming love.*

SERVANTS OF MERCY

The presence of these Priests is a quiet one in the Church, indistinguishable in their outward activity and apostolate from all others. But (and we have to say, if the consecration is deeply lived) they bring a very special Presence of the Mother into the community. This is their special gift to the Church; not just their priesthood, but a priesthood which brings a special presence of Mary, because they are consecrated to be Her instruments, and She "wishes to live through them and act through them" (M. 575, June 27th. 1996). Their hearts are attuned in a very special way to being sensitive to the needs of souls in danger, because they are attuned to Mary's motherly Heart. Their intercession is accompanied silently by that of the Mother, giving it a new value, that of Her Immaculate Heart at prayer. Our prayer, our sacrifice is offered with Her and through Her. The union with Her Immaculate Heart, brought about by our consecration, is very deep indeed and, in a passage not frequently quoted, She hints at something similar which bound together Herself and Her Son:

"Give Me the many difficulties which you encounter, all the sufferings and the abandonment which you experience. Nothing comforts My Immaculate and Sorrowful Heart 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 true 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)

This plan of Mercy is a motherly one. The greatest pain in the heart of a mother is to see her child in danger of death or injury. In this age, when sin had assumed vast proportions, She came to Fatima, to confide Her tears to the three little shepherds, showing them hell where sinners go and imploring their help to save them with prayer and suffering. This appeal our Mother has now repeated to Her Marian Movement of Priests; you could say that Her Priests should share Her motherly concern:

"*Great is My sorrow* for an increasingly immense number of My poor children, treading the road of evil and sin, vice and impurity, egoism and hatred, in the great danger of being lost eternally in Hell. So today I am asking you, sons consecrated to My Immaculate Heart, the same as I asked of My three little children, Lucia, Jacinta and Francisco, to whom I appeared in this same place in 1917: *Do you too wish to offer yourselves as victims to the Lord on My Immaculate Heart, for salvation of all My poor children?*" If you accept this request of mine, you have to do what I ask of you now. Pray increasingly, especially with the Holy Rosary. Make frequent hours of adoration and Eucharistic reparation. Accept with love all the sufferings which the Lord sends you. Spread fearlessly the messages which I give you, as the Heavenly Prophetess of these last times of yours". (M.411, 15th. September 1989)

This message, with the original given originally to the three little ones in Fatima, is intended to become the spirit of Mercy at the heart of the world through Her Marian Movement. We live in an age of sin, of practical atheism, of indifference to the things of God, of violence, injustice and corruption and physical and mental abuse of little ones, the murder of babes in their mothers' wombs on such a vast scale. Many cry out against the social and material evils of our times, but one may wonder how many share Our Mother's principal concern: the salvation of the souls of Her children. So many, even Priests, are able to speak learnedly about the state of the world (and it can be a good thing to do so), but purely in social and political, even economic terms, but without going further and making their principal concern the eternal life of even the worst of those who do wrong. One suspects that it often does not enter into even their prayer life!

Yet the perspective of the Church is the same as our Mother's. One only has to remember the encyclical "*Dives in Misericordia*" of the present Holy Father, in which he asked us to remember that the "mark of the Church today" (i.e. its most important duty, must be to utter loud cries to Heaven for Mercy on behalf of a human race which has even forgotten what the word means. Terrible words, for where there is no sense of the need for mercy, it is not asked for; where it is not asked for, or desired, it cannot be given, and only judgement remains.

And so our Mother plants the Marian Movement of Priests at the Heart of the Church, to plead for mercy on behalf of a human race thoughtless about its own spiritual destiny. In other words, She places the spirit of Her own Heart in the Heart of the Church for, whatever else the renewed Church may be, we can see now that it will have been constructed on a vast effusion of Mercy. This is our place.

"I thank you for your generous correspondence with My desires and My repeated requests. Through My Marian Movement of Priests, I have been able to obtain, from every part of the world, a great response from Priests and the faithful to My request for consecration and prayer. The Cenacles, which I asked for with My message of the 17th. January 1974, have spread everywhere. Now your Heavenly Mother can exercise Her great power. Now I have in My hand the precious key to open the golden door of the divine Heart of Jesus, so that the ocean of His mercy may be poured out over the world. The water which gushes from the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus will wash and purify the whole world and will prepare it to live the new era of grace and holiness awaited by all. In these years you will see the great miracle of the Divine Mercy being fulfilled". (M. 416, 31st. December 1989)

This perception of our place in the heart of the Church in the Merciful Hearts of Jesus and Mary, is a very precious one. It flows from our Mother's place at the foot of the Cross, contemplating Her Jesus.

REPARATION

The evils of the world today require reparation. Where there is human suffering, a true friend will try to show his solidarity with the sufferer, sharing in his pain, offering his compassion and love as a counterweight to the anguish of the friend. When the friend is, in fact, Jesus Christ, our God, it is on a different level but similar in

basis: it becomes reparation. It is a desire to share in His suffering. The greatness of the reparation needed lies in the gravity of the offence against God, a perspective which is being lost today in a world which recognises wrongs but not so much sin, that is, that that wrong is an offence against God and must be atoned for. At the heart of this lies a loss of sensitivity to the suffering Heart of Jesus, Who continues to be offended gravely by the conduct of humanity today. It is not just a question of "committing acts of sin", but rather an atmosphere in which, in many cases, the whole concept of respect and reverence for the divine has been lost. It is one of the signs of the devil's conviction that he has won the battle that he comes out into the open and, certainly in my own country, we find the media feeling the liberty to abuse what is holy. Just in the last few months, we have had to protest about a blasphemous film concerning our Heavenly Mother and about a project to present another in cartoon form concerning an aged and feeble Pope, in a bad light. Of course, when challenged, the media deny any reference to our Holy Father, but the fact is that they succeed in ridiculing him.

We can remember those words in our Act of Consecration: "*Mindful that atheism in causing shipwreck in the Faith to a great number of the faithful, that desecration has entered into the Holy Temple of God...*". I understand these words to mean that we are conscious that everything that is specifically sacred in the life of the Church has been undermined by the powers of evil and the dead hand of secularism. It is a call to us to be sensitive to the rights of God to be respected in His own Creation, to have a deep sense of the supernatural. Our Mother tells us:

"I offer you to the glory of the Holy Spirit, Who gives Himself to you with inexhaustible abundance, in order to lead you into the heart of His very own plan of Love for the Father and the Son, so as to make you into fervent witnesses of the divine Charity. For this I obtain for you His seven holy Gifts, which give you vigour and constancy, courage and strength, zeal and perseverance in fulfilling the mission entrusted to you. In this way while, in the temple of the created universe, God is denied, despised and blasphemed, in the Temple of My Immaculate Heart, the Most Holy and Divine Trinity still receives today, from the mouths of My little children, praise and Its perfect glory". (M. 487, 2nd. February 1993)

It is not simply a question of loud protests when wrong things are said, but of hearts which feel with the wounded Christ and with His Church, and wish to console the Heart of the Lord. One finds this attitude present in the little shepherds of Fatima, who felt deeply the wrongs against the Church, against the Holy Father, the loneliness of Jesus in the Tabernacle when no-one visited Him, and they wished to console Him. One thinks readily of the hours spent by little Francisco, hidden in the Church, just "to console the hidden Jesus". Indeed, you might say that this was an interior attitude of the little ones, and one which our Mother wishes to revive in us today as an attitude of indifference to sacred things creeps in.

Such attitudes can manifest themselves in the simplest patterns of behaviour: in the lack of silence in our churches and in careless ways of making genuflections and of receiving the Blessed Sacrament, lack of regular confession. Sometimes one can have the impression that, for many, while they believe formally or at least verbally, in the Presence of Our Lord, it does not reach deeply. Sometimes, one hears the excuse given that a certain fraternal charity requires that we speak, but then one wonders about charity towards Our Lord and the lack of respect He is forced to tolerate in His house. I remember a letter which I received from an aged Benedictine father, who wrote to say that he was so distressed by the lack of reverence that he always genuflected on both knees when passing the Blessed Sacrament. No doubt many would have criticised him as excessive, but I am sure that Jesus appreciated the littleness of his heart, which felt the carelessness with which He is treated and wished to make reparation.

These things, we might say, are felt with the heart rather than known with the heard, and our Mother wishes to establish in us a certain tenderness towards Her Son, like Her own, which comes out in a sensitivity for Him. We have to remember that, being Man as well as God, He has retained the capacity to feel and be aware of human things. We remember the psalm, which echoes the Passion: "*Insults have broken My Heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none*" (Ps. LXIX (LXVIII): 20).

Our Mother tells us:

"In the hearts of all My little children, I place My dwelling in which I Myself take refuge to be consoled by your tender and filial love and to obtain that great reparation which I have asked of you, and of which I have need, in order to shorten the great sufferings of these days of yours".
(M. 487, 2nd. February 1993)

In seeking to build Her Marian Movement of Priests into a great force of reparation, we can see, our Mother is also building us into friends of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, just as little Francisco, alone for hours in the Church to give comfort to the "hidden Jesus" was most truly a friend of the Sacred Heart. And so it should be for those who seek to follow the path of littleness.

This service of reparation to Jesus takes place, our Mother tells us when we come to prayer in our cenacles and when we go to adoration before the Blessed eucharist. In a message given in Jauru, Fr. Nazareno's parish, our Mother said:

"Look at all these children of mine: they are simple, they are little, they are so tried by suffering and poverty. And yet you see how they have responded with generosity to My request for consecration and prayer. *This response has been given to Me by the children*, who love Me and surround Me with filial tenderness, who gather together in cenacles of prayer made with Me, and together renew their act of consecration to My Immaculate Heart. The generous response on the part of children gives so much joy to My Immaculate Heart and forms a great force of intercession and reparation around the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus".
(2nd. February 1990)

We can look then at a similar appeal to us as Priests:

"Jesus asks of You, His Priests, only that He be loved. He asks it of you with all the urgency of one suffering from thirst, who sighs in hope of receiving a drop of water; with the desire of one suffering from hunger, stretching out his hand to have a piece of bread; with the ardour of one in love, longing to receive love from the person he loves. My beloved sons, open up your priestly hearts to perfect love for My Son Jesus. Your love on His Heart is an ointment which soothes the bitterness of feeling Himself so little loved, in these times in which the hearts of men have become icy cold, closed by egoism and by a great dryness. Today, as never before, Love is not loved. You, His Priests, must love Jesus Who is surrounded by great coldness and by a general indifference. Let your priestly mission be a service of love for Him. Place a kiss on His face, which is so often disfigured;

bandage His head, deeply pierced by thorns; kiss His lips to feel the bitterness of His chalice; sprinkle with balm His body, which is covered with sweat and blood; *make reparation with your presence* for the repeated and innumerable abandonments; give Him your lives as a loving answer to the betrayals which continue". (M.490, 8th. April 1993)

"Make reparation with your presence". It is something so simple. Our presence before Him serves as reparation, because we have chosen His Presence in preference to all other activity which could attract us. At the root of all sin is the fact that He is no longer adored as God, and the answer to sin is adoration. Hence, our Mother's repeated call to eucharistic adoration, which itself becomes the means within the Church to much purification of the earth.

We have seen in previous retreats the great emphasis placed by our Mother on *doing everything with Her*". All prayer, all reparation and suffering offered in this way acquires a new and superior value, because what begins as our gift grows to be Her very own, and is especially precious to the Heart of Jesus.

But then reparation is to be directed, not only through Mary to Jesus, but also to the Immaculate Heart of Mary Herself. She speaks of this as being at the heart of the devotion of the five first Saturdays. That Immaculate Heart has itself been the subject of much abuse as has that of Her Son. By reparation offered to Her, souls are recovered:

"At this time, when the danger of being eternally lost is so grave, bring souls to safety by entrusting them to the particular protection of your Heavenly Mother. Today, reparation on the part of My children must also increase, because there is an ever-increasing number of offences committed against My Immaculate Heart, by insults against My Immaculate Conception, against My perpetual virginity, against My divine and universal Motherhood and against My images and because, above all, the souls of the little ones are being alienated from Me. Through you, this filial and loving crusade of reparation must grow." (M.180, 4th. August 1979)

CONCLUSION

Such is the Marian Movement of Priests. Criticisms of it abound, trying to demonstrate defects in it, but they are misguided, seeking to demonstrate some fault in its organisation or way of acting, but this will always fail because the truth of the Marian Movement is necessarily and always hidden. Apart from the cenacles and the book (the first, a way of prayer which can never be criticised, the second bearing the Imprimatur from very many bishops and some cardinals, to say that there is nothing contrary to Catholic doctrine here), the Movement is totally invisible, for what is there to see? The superiors? We have none. The style of our premises? I was amused at the reaction of an English bishop, who asked me where our headquarters were. I told him "In Italy, in the bedroom of Don Gobbi; for England, it is in my bedroom!" After a moment of surprise, he smiled and said: "That is the best way!" Truly, humanly, we are nothing. A priest who wishes to belong to the Movement does not even have to tell the local responsible!

So what are we and what have we? In a sense we are nothing and we have nothing. But in another sense, we are the richest in the world. We have a very special gift from Heaven which, for us, becomes the meaning and purpose of our life as Priests and our special way of giving joy to Jesus, which is pure gift and is in no sense due to ourselves. It is the secret of the Marian Movement of Priests, which would otherwise be most truly nothing. We possess the Immaculate Heart of Mary! It is a gift for us and a gift for Jesus because, living within the Immaculate Heart, we can give Him a joy which cannot otherwise be given Him (M. 8th. November 1976).

So what makes us a Movement, rather than individuals who have consecrated themselves in this way. How can we be said to be something together and not just separate persons. Because, binding us together in that Immaculate Heart of Mary, by living and acting through us, our Mother makes us into a Presence in this world of Herself, for its healing and to be the family of Her children.

We began by recalling our Mother's invitation to "*read in the stupendous book of our existence*" (M.29, 19th. December 1973). Let us read with joy and gratitude because, even if that existence has been marked by falls and failures along the way, our Mother had always destined it to come to this.

"I am forming a cohort of priests who will perhaps never be perfect, but they will certainly be all mine". (M. 80, 12th. September 1975)

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MARIAN MOVEMENT OF PRIESTS

International Retreat for Priests

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