

## **Mary and the Renewal of the Church**

1. Today, opposing opinions exist on the actual importance of the Blessed Virgin. Some believe that – to be a modern Christian – one must put aside the ancient/antiquated devotions of our grandparents. According to them, the Virgin, the Saints and other things are no longer in style.

But what happens then to the outdated? To be a modern Christian, must one really abandon all the religious customs of former times? What interests us specifically is knowing if the Blessed Virgin and the devotion to Her are important for the renewed Church and for the world of tomorrow.

2. We all know that the Church is in the middle of a process of rapid changes. And it should be this way: if the world changes, the Church should adapt to the new mentality. Thus her same message for all times can be presented in a new style, with words and forms which the man/woman of today understands. It is very important to distinguish these two aspects: the message, which is the spirit, and the style, which is the form in which this spirit is expressed.

The renewal of the Church does not consist, primarily, in changing its exterior forms. This could be a sign or an incentive for renewal. But the true renewal comes about only when there is interior growth, in the spirit. Without this, the new forms are only empty forms.

Let us think about the case of a family: we cannot say that the family has renewed itself simply because they painted the house in a color which is in style. The renewal comes about only if the family grows in spirit, in the spirit of respect and understanding, love and unity.

The same happens with the Church since the Church is also a great family. Her renewal is measured, especially, by the new forces of the spirit which enliven and motivate her.

And could a family truly renew itself in its spirit without growing in love for its Mother? It seems impossible to me. Therefore, all authentic renewal of the Church should be accompanied by an increase of love for the Blessed Virgin.

Whoever does not understand this, remains on the surface of the changes.

True, the forms in which we express today our love for Mary can be different from those of the past. But if our love for Her does not grow, then we cannot speak of the renewal of the Church. There is no new life where there is no new love.

3. The Second Vatican Council – which began this process of renewal – placed the Virgin in the center of daily life more than ever before. But we were not only asked to grow in love for Her. Moreover, She was shown to us as the perfect model for that renewed Church which God wants for the newest times. Radiating precisely in the Blessed Virgin is that entire new spirit which the Church needs in order to face the world's problems today and to build a world for tomorrow.

Thus the Council shows us Mary as the Great Sign which indicates to us the only way for true renewal and gives us the strength to overcome its obstacles and dangers. So, for the post-conciliar Church, to renew itself and modernize itself means to strive to become like Mary. Thus, the Church of today becomes – with Her and Like Her – a Great Sign of salvation for our times.

4. Therefore, let us look toward that Great Sign in Heaven to allow ourselves to be penetrated by her light! May we discover in Her the image of the Church of the future, the image of that Marian Church which longs for the Holy Spirit! May we also discover in the light of the Blessed Virgin the image of the new man who has become, in Mary, a perfect reality.

Renewed in the spirit of the Blessed Virgin, let us build the Church and our society!

### **Questions for reflection**

1. What does the Virgin Mary represent for me?
2. Which traits of Mary could I imitate?
3. What opinion do I have of the Church today?

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