

SUNDAY SERMON 16 SEPTEMBER 1962

There are theologians who see it as their life task to study the person of Our Lady and her position in the economy of salvation. The longer they study, and the more successful they are, the greater is their wonder at the infinite greatness and dignity of Our Lady, the greater is their conviction that the whole of Christianity has and must have a Marian character. They say in a learned way that Christianity must orientate itself on Mary. The person of Our Lady, and her position, casts light on all supernatural truths and realities. In their turn, all supernatural truths throw light on the person of Our Lady. They like to use the expression, Our Lady is the *Speculum Justitiae*, the mirror of all the glory in heaven and earth, above all the mirror of the supernatural reality. This means: Mary mirrors God, she mirrors Christ and also man; above all woman. We may also stress that she mirrors the Church.

Each week brings us closer to the great Ecumenical Council, the Church wishes to renew herself according to the image of Our Lady, nor does she tire of looking into this mirror and reforming herself accordingly.

Thus theologians have come to say: *De Maria nunquam satis!* Of Mary never enough! One will never be able to compass her greatness and her place in the order of redemption. The reason is already given. The order of salvation knows an infinite greatness and beauty. Unfortunately, today, we no longer have the ability to grasp it. Thus, if Our Lady is the most perfect possible mirror of all glory, it is natural that her person and her position share to some extent in this infinite greatness and glory. *De Maria nunquam satis!* One cannot say enough about Our Lady, nor can one do enough for her.

Let us try to comprehend her position deeply. Some saints have tried to make this truth the norm and direction of their entire lives, and they did not rest until their lives had taken on a Marian colouring. In practical life they change the word: *De Maria nunquam satis*, into: Everything through Mary, like Mary, for Mary, and nothing, absolutely nothing without Mary!

When we see this laid out so boldly we are inclined to ask ourselves - is that right? Must we not in the end say: From God, and for God? God is our final aim, not Our Lady? Without doubt this is true. The meaning of our lives is to love God, to surrender ourselves to God the Father. However, it is just as true that the actual order of redemption is determined by Our Lord's words: Nobody can come to the Father but through the Son. Therefore, whoever wishes to go to the Father, whoever loves the Father intimately, must strive to love Christ intimately. However, with that the order of salvation is not complete. Our Lady and Our Lord are united in an indissoluble unity. It is not as if Our Lady were equal to Our Lord. We know the difference. But we also know that both represent a single principle.

Nobody can come to the Father but through the Son in connection with Our Lady.

With that we have answered many questions. Our Lady has a right to our total surrender - of course only in relationship to Christ and the Father. It is her right, and when we surrender ourselves to her we only do so in order to be more closely united to Christ and the Heavenly Father. Our total surrender to Our Lady is the expression, the security and the means to arrive at a permanent, deep, earnest and intimate surrender to Our Lord and to the Father.

With that we see the foundation of our consecration to Mary. Through it we say a heartfelt yes to Our Lady's right to our self-surrender, in order to belong to the Father for time and eternity. Therefore, let us renew our consecration to Our Lady.

From the very beginning we have said that Pope Pius XII not only advocated surrender to Our Lady, but to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. With that we come to two questions:

1 What is the meaning of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary? 2 What is the importance of such a consecration?

1 By consecration to the Heart of Our Lady, do we mean her physical heart? No, we mean the person of Our Lady in so far as she is personified love, a firebrand of love for God, for man and for creation. We understand the entire person of Our Lady, in so far as all her actions finally flowed from her soul, from her measurelessly great and deep love.

By the consecration to the heart of Our Lady we mean her physical heart as the symbol of love, as symbol of a flaming brand of love. On the other hand we may also say, at least those who understand the consecration correctly, that the consecration is a mutual exchange of hearts. She takes over the responsibility to make our cold, stony hearts soft again. She gives a clear answer to the petitions in Holy Scripture. Make my stony heart into a heart of flesh, into a warm, human, beating heart, into a divinised and God-like loving heart.

2 What is the importance of this consecration to the heart of Our Lady? It gives a clear answer to the fundamental problems of our time. Doctors speak of many different heart diseases - we dare to say that the main heart disease today is a certain paralysis of the heart, a wasting of the heart, a hardening of the heart. We could use this term: dwindling of love.

Our heart has become hard. We may almost speak of the death of love, death of the heart. The Apocalypse tells us that times, such as we experience today, are characterised by the cooling of love. Who of us does not suffer from this disease of our times?

If we wish to discover the characteristics of this disease, we need only call upon our own observations. Those who experienced the Third Reich, or who fled from land to land, may remember how many millions were gassed and we asked ourselves how was that possible? Impoverishment of love. When we think of what is being done today, of the Berlin Wall, walls between the members of the same nation, walls often in our own families, between parents and children, between husband and wife, then we may truly apply the word: Impoverishment of love, death of love.

Various novels also bring this to our notice. By 1948 technical development had progressed so far that man can now produce electric waves able to influence heart and mind to such an extent that the mind thinks, and the heart feels what the waves transmit to them. Involuntarily we think of brain washing. Men and women, who until then had been strong characters, relate what can be done in that direction. The heart and mind can be revolutionised through an amazing power, so that one hates what one formerly cherished, and loves what one formerly hated.

What is the disease of our times? A lack of love. Death of love. Look into religious communities, no matter what name they carry. We find the same symptoms, the same disease. Recently a scientific book appeared on European History. In it we find a new division of history: 1 Until the 13th Century: the history of the realm of God; 2 until about 1914: the history of the realm of man.

Man is the centre and from that time on we find a new history. It is the history of the machine, the history of the machine-man, or the mass-man. What is the mass-man? Machine and mass - both have no heart.

When we look at our consecration against this dark background of modern life, and ask after its importance, we realise that through it we find a heart which is a reflection of the Sacred Heart and which loves us warmly. It is an incarnation of divine and human love to the highest conceivable degree. Here we find a home and shelter in the loving heart of Our Lady and Our Saviour, and we desire in our turn, that our hearts may be fired with a similar warmth of love. Love must once again reign in our families. The prophet of the Old Testament said even then: 'When the Lord comes - (we add: with His blessed Mother) - he will make the hearts of the fathers warm for their children once more, and the hearts of the children warm for their fathers. What does this mean? The bond of love will unite them to one another again.

Therefore, the more we consecrate our hearts to the heart of Our Lady, and through her to Our Lord, the more surely and securely will we be immune against the modern disease of the heart. When parents no longer feel able to control their children, they often start to lose their tempers, and thereby achieve the opposite effect.

Lord, take my hard and stony heart and give me one of flesh!

Perhaps now we understand the two ejaculations better: 'Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, make my heart more like Thine', or 'Sweet heart of Mary be my salvation'.

The heart of Our Lady is the salvation of our heartless times. Sweet heart of Mary be my salvation from the mechanistic modern world, the death of love in our times.

Teach us to love our children with our whole heart, so that we do not push them away from us with our hardness. This in its turn will light the love in the hearts of our children for You, so that once again the bonds of love will unite the world, the states and nations. Amen.