

3. Excerpts from Mary, Our Mother and Educator, 1954 (from the Sixth Sermon, p. 119-135)

Mary as Christ's Helpmate and Modern Man's Leader and Educator

"It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2,18). These words resound from the dawn of creation and through the millennia. The man meant here is Christ. It is not good that the Redeemer of the world be alone. Strictly speaking, He does not need any human help or assistance at all. After all, He is God, He is almighty. But since it was decided in the council of the Blessed Trinity that the eternal Word take on human nature from a woman, He needed a mother. Therefore the eternal God spoke in regard to His Son: Let us make Him a helpmate (cf. Gen 2,18).

Christ's Helpmate

It is not good for man, for Christ, to be alone. This Helpmate would not only give Him human life, would not only place Him in a manger and wrap Him in swaddling clothes, would not only dry His tears and coax Him to make His first smile, would not only flee with Him into Egypt to escape the designs of Herod and feed Him by the labor of her hands. No, she would also stand at His side, permanently helping in his entire life's work. That means she would truly become His physical and our spiritual Mother. That and that alone is the way it is ordained in the plan of the eternal God. That, too, is the way it happened in reality. Let us make Him a helpmate who to the extent that it is possible for one who is solely human will be like unto Himself That is how God's omnipotent word rolled and thundered and echoed throughout creation. Then Mary, as permanent Helpmate of the Lord in the entire work of redemption, became the masterpiece of divine omnipotence, wisdom, and kindness: the singular image and likeness of God, practically the shadow of the Son, free from original sin and personal guilt, virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ, full of graces and virtues, and bodily assumed into heaven.

Our Helpmate

It is not good for man to be alone. I am that man. That man is the whole of human society. It is not good that we always face God alone. Let us make him a helpmate. That helpmate is Our Lady. As Mediatrix she stands between God and us, between heaven and earth, between Creator and creation. In and with Christ she stands at God's side. In the same manner, however, she also stands at our side. She is God's Helpmate and our Helpmate. If God does not think it beneath His dignity to use her to come to us and to communicate with us and to bestow on us His gifts, then we certainly do not need to be ashamed to let ourselves be taken by her hand and into her heart and so be led to God. Let us make him a helpmate like unto himself. Mary is like unto us. She belongs to the human race just as we do; like us she has Adam and Eve for her first parents. We are children of God, members of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit just as she is. She has suffered as we do, and except for sin, she was spared no sorrow. We are, therefore, like her, and we should become even more like her from day to day. "Such as all mothers," we read in the papal encyclical for the Marian Year, "are deeply affected when they perceive that the countenance of their children reflects a characteristic likeness to their own, so also our most sweet Mother wishes for nothing more, never rejoices

more than when she sees those, whom she has adopted under the cross of her Son as children in His stead, portray the lineaments and ornaments of her soul in thought, word, and deed."

Mary's Influence over the Hearts of God and Man

God is infinitely wise. He therefore not only delegates tasks to us but also endows us with whatever is needed to carry them out. He makes the means available to us which suit the task and secure its realization. In order to make it easier for God's Mother and our Mother to fulfill her mediating and maternal position as permanent Helpmate of Christ in the entire work of redemption He has bestowed on her a singular power over both His heart and the heart of man. (....)

Finding Mary

If we summarize what we know about Mary's position in the divine plan of salvation and her power over the hearts of God and man, we understand why the Holy Father desires to draw her triumphal chariot onto the battlefield of our confused times and of our own hearts during this Marian Jubilee Year. We must draw this chariot, we must draw it ourselves, for it is our task to prepare for her the way into our own hearts and onto the battlefield of our times. God demands this cooperation from us. Our Lady herself exacts it of us. She wishes that we seek and find her. For this reason the Church places in her mouth the words, "He who finds me shall find life and have salvation from the Lord" (Prv 8,35). "Happy the man watching daily at my gates and waiting at my doorposts" (Prv 8,34). (....)

If you have understood all that we meditated on regarding the Blessed Mother in the course of this Lent, it will not be difficult for you to independently discover where we meet Mary in everyday life, where we can seek and find her. We need only recall two principles of Mariology; then things will become fully clear which our Christian thinking and sentiment have always held to be true and have simply taken for granted without giving it much particular thought.

1. Where Christ is, There Also is Mary

The first principle is this: Because, as is God's plan, Jesus and Mary belong together by one and the same divine decree of selection in an inseparable two in oneness of life and work, we will always find Christ's Mother wherever He is and works, and wherever she is active we will similarly encounter in some way the Redeemer of the world.

A. With Mary to the Altar

The Savior lives and works in a transfigured state in union with the Father. We also find His Mother there as Queen of heaven and earth. (....)

Wherever our Savior lives and works, there we find His permanent Helpmate active in her accustomed fashion namely through her love and care. She once kept faithful watch at His manger, accompanied Him through His childhood and youth, and attentively followed His public life with loving interest. She did not abandon Him during His passion, and she stood at the foot of the cross when He died. That is how intimately her life was united with His. Therefore Christian thought has always understood that she does not leave Him alone in the Sacrament of Love. There her love keeps watch with Him during the night hours while we sleep. There, as St. John Chrysostom tells us, she adores Eternal Love with the angels and

archangels. She incessantly offers Him to the heavenly Father as the sacrificial gift of thanksgiving, petition, and atonement. She does it in our names and for us who so often leave the silent "prisoner in the tabernacle" to Himself because of our lack of fervor or our laziness or because of the outward bustle in our lives. She does that as the Queen of the universe in the name of all creation. (...)

Those who have become accustomed to viewing Mary in connection with the altar and the sanctuary lamp have no difficulty in going to church in Mary and with Mary, walking with her and in her to the communion rail, ascending with her and in her to the altar to offer the Lord's Precious Blood to the eternal Father with her hands, and proclaiming in her and with her from the altar the death of Our Lord throughout the day by living a life rich in love and sacrifice. (...)

B. Mary Chooses Special Places

The gates where Mary waits for us can be understood to signify, first of all and primarily, the doors of our churches where the sanctuary light is found burning. But at the same time and above all we can indeed we must see that the "gates" also refer to the Marian shrines, to her places of grace and pilgrimage.

1. Marian Shrines

There she has, as is attested to not only by the traditional piety of the faithful but also by many of the councils and in particular by the Council of Trent, erected her throne of grace in a very special way so as to live and work among her people, to listen to their needs and accept their veneration, to prove herself completely as the Mother of the people in every situation, to take the education of the people into her hands and lead them victoriously through all the battles of our time. Just as the same sun shines in all places but shows a special fruitfulness in particular places and uniquely situated regions, and just as there are special springs of water with curative effects, so it is that Our Lady works in her places of grace in a particularly excellent manner. That means she is active there in a richer, more fruitful manner than she is in other places.

We need only recall the way she was active in the places which she specially visited during her life here on earth. Then we will know in detail what we may expect at her places of grace. In the home of her cousin Elizabeth, she revealed herself as the Mother of Grace. Only after Mary's greeting had sounded in Elizabeth's ear did it come to pass that John was sanctified in his mother's womb, and Elizabeth herself began to prophesy (cf. Lk 1,39-45). At the home of the newly wed couple in Cana, Mary intervened by mediating a miracle in the face of financial difficulties and thereby proved herself as the Bread Mother (cf. 2,1-12). When she was in the midst of the apostles in the cenacle, she called down the Holy Spirit in abundant measure upon the infant Church (cf. Acts 1,14). After the death of Our Lord she accompanied St. John to Ephesus where Christian life began to flourish under her influence, or at least that is what St. Augustine testifies. (...)

All of these homes which Mary visited in a particular way—the home of Zechariah and of the newly married couple (at Cana), the Cenacle, and the parish house at Ephesus—are a clear indication of the inestimable riches which the Blessed Mother has given to her children from her shrines in the course of the centuries of Christianity especially in times of great danger. From there she calls unceasingly, "He who finds me shall find life and have salvation from the

Lord" (Prv 8,35). "Happy the man watching daily at my gates and waiting at my doorposts" (Prv 8,34). "I am the mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope." (....) Such places [of Marian pilgrimage] are as one devout writer puts it the most precious treasure that a country has; they are the hearth where holy love burns unceasingly; they are the sacred trees in whose shade the peoples find security; they are golden stars that never let the poor perish in the darkness of night during times of danger and in life's storms, stars which let their gentle rays of peace and grace sink deep into our human hearts so they do not despair; they are like fountains of grace whose waters are never exhausted; they are like rivers of mercy that never run dry.

In the biography of St. Vincent de Paul we can read how deeply and simply Christian piety responds to such gifts. Vincent de Paul loved Mary's sanctuaries of grace. "He fell to his knees and exclaimed with tears in his eyes, 'O happy mountains, O happy river, O happy place, how greatly I envy you that you may be so near this fountain of grace. You men who dwell near the throne of God's Mother, I beseech you to take me into your homes, that I may live and die near Mary, that my dwelling and my grave may be near her . . . ' When he had to return home with his companions, he kissed the floor of the pilgrims' church, and as long as the church was in sight, he would glance over his shoulder and weep bitterly."

Such an attitude would strike us moderns as almost a sign of weakness if we were not familiar with Vincent de Paul, the great founder and apostle of charity whose Vincent de Paul Societies continue to live and work throughout the entire Catholic world. The warmth of his love for Mary never left him during his whole life. She became the secret of his life. She made him a vigorous apostle and great saint to whom modern man looks with deep respect.

Just after his ordination he fell into the hands of pirates. He was wounded by an arrow and was sold into slavery. His master was a former Christian who had fallen from the faith and became a Moslem. Vincent had to do hard physical labor in the fields. However, he did not tire of praying and singing his favorite hymn, the Salve Regina (Hail, Holy Queen). The Mother of Mercy was the great hope in his imprisonment as the radiant star. It happened one day almost by coincidence, one could say that the wife of his master heard him. She wanted to know who this Mother of Mercy was of whom the slave had sung, and who the weeping children of Eve were in the song's text. Vincent then told everything which his glowing heart could about Mary's motherly love. Because his heart was so full, his words came to no end. This impressed the woman so much that she reproached her husband for having changed his religion. God's grace touched them both, and it came to pass that both converted and fled with Vincent to France. After regaining his freedom, Vincent vowed that he would work to ease the lot of Christian slaves which he himself had shared during his imprisonment. Only after a span of forty years was he able to fulfill this oath. He founded an order and sent his missionaries to the slaves.

Wherever Our Lady erects her throne in a special way, Our Lord must also be at home in a singular manner. That explains why she so often has no rest until the sanctuary lamp may be lit in her shrines and the "silent prisoner of the tabernacle" has taken up His abode there. It also explains why all those who surrender themselves to her are as if caught up in a whirlpool swept to Christ and with and in Him in the Holy Spirit to God the Father.

2. The Schoenstatt Shrine

Do you now better understand the importance of the fulfillment of our program for this year? We wish to erect a shrine in our parish for the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. How many graces may we expect for all families and circles if we do this in the proper spirit and protect the shrine in the future as an extremely valuable treasure! All that we know about such places of grace will become a joyful reality in our very own backyard.

Wherever the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt settles, she is primarily and particularly active, as is her wont, as educator in our modern times. Her shrines are the formation centers and workshops of the new man and the new social order in the way that God desires for today, so that the Church can perfectly fulfill her mission for our times. From there she wants to draw human hearts to herself and educate them to become perfect instruments in her hand. All who dedicate themselves to her there, all who make a covenant of love with her will be taken by her into a serious school of genuine, solid everyday sanctity such as our times need. They will be placed by God into Our Lady's care, so that she may educate them to carry out His great plan.

With this we touch upon the methods which God uses when dealing with his favorite children. He gives them to His Mother to be educated, thereby very practically interpreting the last will and testament of our Savior, "Ecce Mater tua!"