

To Know Her Well Is To Know Him Better

Many of our modern downgraders of Marian devotion seem convinced that they are performing a noble service — an apostolate of confirming the solid doctrinal truth that there is but one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ. They seem to be saying that Mary is a distraction from this saving truth which St. Paul expressed so often in the phrase 'in Christ Jesus'.



There have undoubtedly been exaggerations in devotions to Mary, but there is a balanced reverence for her which should lead us to a greater knowledge of her Son. She may truly be called the Pathway to the Sacred Heart.

The essential truth about Mary is her Motherhood of the Son of God — her part in making Him perfectly man. God could have created a human nature for His Son without

her, but it would have been a deception of a sort. The Heart of Jesus was formed physically in the womb of Mary. Through the marvel of Divine Providence, the Holy Spirit used the flesh and blood of the Immaculate Virgin to fashion a perfect and complete nature for the Son of God. The laws of heredity were not repudiated. In fact, since Mary was the only human parent of Christ, these laws applied with a two-fold efficacy. All of us are by heredity prolongations of both parents. Christ is a prolongation of Mary alone. Cardinal Newman expressed this when he wrote: "He received her lineaments and her features".

Since motherhood is much more than a physical function, it is true to say that Christ received the blessings of her moral influence on his life. Essentially, the moral excellence of the humanity of Christ came from its contact with the divine nature. But Mary was allowed a mother's role in training Him that He might be perfectly human and advance like us in wisdom, age, and grace before God and men. It is safe to believe that His emo-

tional maturity was derived from the wholesome environment of Nazareth.

The important truth for us is that His mother has been willed to us as our mother to fashion us into the image of a Son whom she was privileged to fashion. Just as a maternal principle is so necessary in our total physical and moral development, so God has willed that our supernatural life be perfectly human — with a maternal principle devoid of all selfishness. The Immaculate Conception freed Mary of all egoism.

I would prefer to err by excess than by defect in devotion to Mary. For the attitude of Mary expressed in the Magnificat would correct our excesses. Hers was the habit of total referral of all honor to her Son. But I often wonder how many who have thought of her as a distraction from her Son, have thereby found themselves closer to Christ. I wonder if they may not have experienced that a rejection of a part of God's goodness has cast doubt on the entirety of His goodness and the reality of the Incarnation. Yes, I often wonder.

Guest Columnist

By Fr. Ferdinand M. Cisek, OFM Conv.

Father Kolbe — A Boyish Dream?

Thirty years ago, Aug. 14, 1941, the boyish dream or vision of a Conventual Franciscan became a reality. This year, on Oct. 17, 1971, Pope Paul VI will confirm this by raising Father Maximilian Kolbe, OFM Conv., to the altars.

At the urgent insistence of his mother, the young Kolbe revealed that the Blessed Mother had offered him two crowns: a white one and red one, and as a toddler he grabbed for both! On this dream or vision he founded his entire life as an apostle and martyr of love.

In 1907, after having attended a mission preached by the Conventual Franciscans, he decided to enter their minor seminary. On his ordination in Rome in 1918, Cardinal Basil Pompili had prophetically written: "Sit odor vitae tuae delectamentum Ecclesiae — May the odor of your life be a joy to the Church."

His priestly life was an apostolate of love fed by his great devotion to the Immaculate, whom he tenderly called 'Mamusia.' Beginning his mission to the modern world as an

Father Cisek is pastor of St. Theresa's Church, Rochester

apostle of modern communication media, he paved the way for the Vatican II Council. Under the guidance and with the help of Mary he founded two Cities of the Immaculate — one near Warsaw numbering 800 friars just before Hitler's invasion of Poland; the other, on a slope away from Nagasaki, Japan, a folly that saved the entire friary from the atomic blast of Aug. 9, 1945. From these two centers by means of the printed word he spread the good news to both the Western and Eastern hemispheres.

But World War II offered the final answer to his early dream. Called back to Poland from Japan, he was arrested by the Gestapo on Feb. 17, 1941. Transported to the Auschwitz Concentration Camp he became #16670 in Block 14. To punish the escape of an inmate of that bunker, ten were selected to die in reprisal. The man bearing #16670 stepped boldly out of line and to the astonishment and wonder of all freely offered to be

taken in exchange for another prisoner, the father of a family, condemned to die in the starvation bunker.

When, the slow death was too slow, the camp doctor, on orders, descended the dark stairway on Aug. 14, 1941, to the starvation bunker with four intravenous-injection syringes. He quickly disposed of the three emaciated victims of hunger and thirst that lay sprawled out on the floor, unconscious but still alive.

Then he headed for the corner where Father Maximilian, a living skeleton, sat. He had assumed that position three days earlier. His head kept its characteristic slant toward the left. He still had an enchanting smile on his lips. His hands lay helpless in his lap. As the white-gowned figure approached him, Father Kolbe, with a prayer on his lips, held out his arm. It was over in a moment! The eyes remained open, focused on some definite object, the whole body in a state of ecstasy. Who can resist the thought that in the final instant, the immaculate, his dear Mamusia, appeared once more to him bringing him the red crown?

Editorial

Synod . . . an Ideal Time for Action

The synod in Rome is so lackluster to date that most of the discussion generated by it centers on Pope Paul's opening warning to the bishops to resist outside pressures.

One of those reporting on the synod for Religious News Service, Father Robert P. Kennedy of the Social Action Department of Catholic Charities in Brooklyn, in describing such pressures says there are no pickets, no demonstrations, no stuffing of bishops' mail boxes — "apparently all is calm and serene."

We are sure, however, that he would agree that even though there are no physically manifest pressures there is a great deal of emotional arm-twisting.

The synod is not meant as a policy or decision-making conference but as an exercise in collegiality where the bishops discuss the priesthood and justice then pass on their feelings to the Pope.

But in this modern day of mass communication coupled with burgeoning problems which are scraping the hearts and con-

sciences of more and more people, no one can expect the leaders of the greatest moral force on earth to meet and leave without using the opportunity to offer guidance.

Much of the pressure on the synod is American-born. Members of the National Office of Black Catholics and of the National Association of the Laity are there to see something done about the Third World and about the plight of the blacks and chicanos in America.

The American press is there in great numbers and Father Kennedy reports that "they are working on what they feel their readers want to read about." Namely celibacy.

Another group with representatives in Rome is the National Federation of Priests Councils whose spokesmen say, "We are here to indicate to anyone who wishes to learn, what the majority of priests in the United States feel on the topic of priestly ministry."

Meanwhile a group of European tradi-

tionist Catholics assailed the synod itself as a grave attack on the Pope.

So indeed there are pressures, but with all due respect we do not feel they are outside pressures. They are the concerns of people vitally interested in the Church for its own sake and also as an important molder of world opinion.

With the Church getting so much scurrilous notice in American publications, the bishops should use the Synod to clearly show their concern in such areas as world poverty. Pope Paul's encyclical "Progress of Peoples" and his obvious personal concern for Africa in particular have opened the window for further action.

Certainly there is little room for such statements as that made by a Bishop Enrico Bartoletti who used the occasion of the Synod to attack the press for writing about the problems of the priesthood.

This is representative of the kind of thinking that believes that if you ignore a problem it goes away. Can anyone name one that has?