

True Devotion to Mary

The following is excerpted from the text of a recent address given by Pope John Paul II on Marian devotion.



Marian devotion, as my predecessor of happy memory, Pope Paul VI, taught in the great document, "Marialis Cultus," when subordinated to worship of Christ the Savior and linked with him, is a mighty force of interior renewal. For true devotion includes imitation, as Vatican I reminds us, and Mary, who is the first Christian, brings us nearer to Christ. She is a model for all the faithful; and she is so because she moves us to imitate her in the fundamental attitudes of Christian life: the attitude of faith, hope, charity and obedience. Mary is the example of this spiritual worship which consists in making one's own life an offering to the Lord.

Her "fiat," on accepting the Incarnation, then became permanent and definitive in her life. For this reason, she manifests to us an exemplary attitude for all followers of Jesus, who pride themselves on worshipping the Father in spirit and truth.

When we greet Mary as full of grace there must well up in our hearts the efficacious desire to see ourselves adorned and enriched with the treasure of divine grace and friendship. As Mary bore the Savior in her womb, so we too must bear him spiritually in our hearts, as St. Augustine says. All this contributes to real interior renewal and to making us reflect within ourselves the image of Jesus, for which we were predestined according to God's plans, as St. Paul teaches us.

According to a happy theological expression, Mary and the Church are, by the will of God, closely united in the plan of redemption: both beget Christ here, on this earth.

Mary gave the Lord to the world, realizing the type of the Church in herself for the first time; and the Church in her turn, following Mary, continues to manifest him to the world, to mould him in the hearts of men.

A Church faithful to the action of the Holy Spirit, like Mary, must bear witness to union in faith and charity, in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit moves the members of the ecclesial body to communion and demands from them in turn conduct consistent with the dignity of the Christian



Pope addresses crowd at St. Peter's.

vocation, active awareness that there is one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

For this reason, in the midst of the diversity of gifts, it is necessary to keep in mind this unity of faith and charity, the foundation and peak of the building up of the Church under the animation of the divine Spirit and the guidance of the hierarchy, to which the care of the flock is entrusted among the different spheres of human existence.

Consequently, all members of the Christian community, impelled by the Spirit of God, and following their ecclesial vocation, must be in society architects of the union of men with one another, promoters of dialogue, reconciliation, social justice and peace.

Through the presence of Christians and their testimony, the Church fulfills her vocation as "a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race."

These days which come to an end today must leave engraved in the memory of all the fact that Mary is the personification of the true disciple of Jesus, who finds his deepest identity in service of the Church and in transmitting the message of salvation to all men.

Mary, Mother of the Church, is always present, with the example of her dedication to the plans of God and her motherly intercession, in the work of

evangelization and in the concern of the Church for the tasks of men.

"The special characteristic of the motherly love that the Mother of God inserts in the mystery of the Redemption and the life of the Church," as I said on another occasion, "finds expressions: culture, thought forms, value judgements which give shape to social life, and social, political and economic structures. With her evangelical simplicity, the purity of her soul and her unconditional dedication to the person and work of her Son, Mary shows us how her mystery must be lived and presented to modern men so that it will influence the renewal of Christian life."

My exhortation to you in these moments is as follows: be living and luminous witnesses of the true Marian devotion promoted by the Church in the line marked out by the Second Vatican Council, in particular when it reminds us all: bishops, priests, religious and laity, that devotion to the Blessed Virgin must proceed from true faith, by which we are moved to recognize the virtues of the Mother of God, to love her with the piety of sons, and to imitate her virtues.

We must get to know Mary better. We must, above all, imitate her spiritual attitude and her virtues, the basis of Christian life. In this way we will reflect the image of Jesus. Go with Mary to Jesus! She will remind you continually of what she said at the marriage at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you!"

More Opinions

Fidelity Above All

Editor:

I am not a theologian, but I am a Catholic, by birth and by free choice, and I firmly believe the words of our Lord when He said, "He who hears you, hears Me." Therefore I freely and firmly accept the instructions given by our Holy Father to the bishops of the United States, on "Fidelity to Catholic Doctrine."

"Brothers in Christ:

"As we proclaim the truth in love, it is not possible for us to avoid all criticism; nor is it possible to please everyone. But it is possible to work for the real benefit of everyone. And so we are humbly convinced that God is with us in our ministry of truth, and that He did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control."

"One of the greatest rights of the faithful is to receive the word of God in its purity

and integrity as guaranteed by the magisterium of the universal Church: the authentic magisterium of the bishops of the Catholic Church teaching in unison with the pope.

"Dear Brothers: we can be assured that the Holy Spirit is assisting us in our teaching if we remain absolutely faithful to the universal magisterium.

"In this regard I wish to add an extremely important point which I recently emphasized to a group of bishops making their 'ad limina' visit: 'In the community of the faithful.

which must always maintain Catholic unity with the bishops and the Apostolic See... there are great insights of faith. The Holy Spirit is active in enlightening the minds of the faithful with His truth, and in inflaming their hearts with His love. But these insights of faith and this 'sensus fidelium' are not independent of the magisterium of the Church, which is an instrument of the same Holy Spirit and is

assisted by Him. It is only when the faithful have been nourished by the word of God, faithfully transmitted in its purity and integrity, that their own charism are fully operative and fruitful. Once the word of God is faithfully proclaimed to the community and is accepted, it brings forth fruits of justice and holiness of life in abundance. But the dynamism of the community in understanding and living the word of God depends on its receiving intact the 'depositum fidei' and for this precise purpose a special apostolic and pastoral charism has been given to the Church. It is one and the same Spirit of Truth Who directs the hearts of the faithful and Who guarantees the pastors of the flock."

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Prayer Requested

Editor:

Not being a theologian but, in my humble way, would like to state my thinking in the case of Hans Kung, the theologian who

sadly warranted his banishment from teaching theology in Catholic schools by our beloved Pope John Paul II.

As I learned it, Lucifer, the Archangel, in a revolt, became Satan, the Devil; and, as I understand, from that moment there became but two spirits to contend with and choose from, namely the Holy Spirit and the Satanic spirit.

And when we picture Jesus atop the mountain and Satan, so slyly approaching Him, and whispering so cunningly in His ear, I feel it not too difficult for us to see him doing the same for a Father Hans Kung or a Sister Theresa Kane.

In the light of the foregoing, I would like, if I am not too brazen, to ask of our beloved Bishop Matthew H. Clark to consider the reintroduction of the prayer prescribed by Pope Leo XIII and by Pius XI that was recited following Masses in the not too distant past. The prayer follows:

"Holy Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him,

we humbly pray; and do thou, prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into Hell Satan and all the evil spirits who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen."

This was followed by: "(P) Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, (S) Have mercy on us," which was recited three times.

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Humility A Necessity

Editor:

When Louis Pasteur was old and had received many honors from his own and other countries, he was asked what, above all, he desired. He replied that he wished he had the simple faith of a Breton peasant. This great and learned man was able to see that brilliance of mind is nothing if it does not bring us closer to God. The greatest mind that exists or ever could exist is a mere nothing when put along side its creator.

As I understand it, Christ gave the teaching power to His church so that we might have one less worry in life —

we could be certain of our beliefs. Christ said, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." He told this not to a theologian but to a humble, unlearned, loving man. The theologians of the day were too intent on their own shallow thoughts and thus missed hearing the Author of life telling them how to get to heaven. "You have hidden these things from the wise of the world."

Why do the Hans Kungs of this world insist on listening to the applause of their fellows and refuse to submit their writings to the teaching authority of the church they claim to represent? And why do the Greeleys shout "inquisition" when coming to the defense of such people? How many souls have either of these learned priests brought closer to God by their writings?

I do not opt for ignorance in the church, and certainly not for stupidity. I do, however, see the absolute necessity for humility. We may have had some popes whose personal lives were shameful, but we have never had an heretical pope.

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