

OUR LADY AND THE EUCHARIST - 3

6.6.2019

(First given as talk (5.5.2000))

May 13th is the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima and it is also that of Our Lady Mother of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Under the latter title she is the Patron of this Tabernacle of St. Francis. Whenever a priest celebrates Mass, he generates on the altar, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, the same person that Our Lady by the power of the Holy Spirit, bore in her womb and gave birth to on the first Christmas day. It is the same Christ that died on the cross for us, the same Christ who redeemed us. For this reason she is also rightly called "the Mother of the Eucharist". It is not because she generates Him afresh to the Reality of His presence on the altar, she doesn't, that task is reserved for priests, when they say the words of Consecration during Mass. They, using their human consent, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, truly generate her Son. It is not at all surprising to find that there is a special relationship between Our Lady and her beloved priests, or to find that God loves them in such a special way. In their vocation, Our Lady sees in them the image of her Divine Son, however obscured that may be by their frailty. In the vocation of victim souls of substitution we identify with the Sacred Host. This neither separates us from our Heavenly Mother, nor lessens the need we have for her. *"Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Pray for our priests."*

On the 30 December 1905, Pope Pius X granted an Indulgence to those who said the prayer *"Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Pray for us."* Linking Our Lady with the Blessed Sacrament is not something new in the Church, and honouring Mary in this way never means giving less devotion to Our Lord. In practice it always resulted in more fervent adoration of her Son. To say that "The Blessed Sacrament is sufficient for me; I have no need of Mary", would be quite wrong, and would not be following the example set by Christ Himself, or by any of the saints. Those who do play down Our Lady because they think it takes away devotion to Christ would surely be led to her Son more firmly by adopting this devotion. *"Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Pray for us."*

When He was dying on the Cross Jesus entrusted His Mother to St. John, a priest. From then on he made a place for her in his house. Celebrating Mass daily in her presence and in contrast to the words used by Pilate *"Ecce Homo"*, taking the Sacred Host in his hands he was in the unique position of being able to say *"Ecce filius tuus!"* "Behold your Son!" What moments these must have been in his life, witnessing the adoration of the Mother of God as she received her Son. The way he was later to write about the Eucharist was influenced through witnessing not only Our Lord's life and by hearing Him, but also by seeing Our Lady adoring her Son and listening to what she had to tell him. We too are sons and daughters of Mary and like St. John should learn from her. She is a unique witness to the whole life of Jesus and as Pope Paul VI reminded us, *"Modern humanity listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."* We have such a lot to learn about the adoration of the Eucharistic Jesus, and there could be no one better to help us with this. Our Lady is more than just a witness she is also the Mother of the Eucharist. In both roles she is a wonderful patron for our Tabernacle, so let's treasure her help. *"Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Pray for us."*

There is a story told, that some may remember from their schooldays, about King Edward III of England and how he had made up his mind to destroy the burghers of Calais because of the harm they had wrought upon his subjects. He had refused to spare their lives, even at the request of his best soldier and favourite knight. Then the Queen of England hurried from her court across the sea to add her petitions to the same cause. Though annoyed at her demand, he could only answer *"I can deny nothing to the Mother of my son."* Applying this to Our Lady we can see how God who is always just, loving and merciful and never repents of His commands, may still have willed to spare at the request of the Mother of His Son. *"Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Pray for us."*

We speak of Our Lady both as 'Queen of Martyrs' and 'Our Lady of Sorrows', because we see her as having experienced the depths of all human anguish. Her whole life was a progress of suffering. We have only to think of the 'seven dolours' of Our Lady; The prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, the loss of the Holy Child at Jerusalem, meeting Jesus on the way to Calvary, standing at the foot of the Cross, Jesus being taken down from the Cross, and the burial of Jesus, to understand that no one can approach her without knowing she will understand our own woe. If she understands as none other, will she not also desire to help as none other can, since she is the mother of Him who is all love? *"Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Pray for us."*

Part of the preparation by God the Father for the birth of His Son, was to ensure that Christ's Mother was conceived Immaculate. That fact is celebrated each year shortly before Christmas. On the 8th December 1854 Pope Pius IX in the Bull "INEFFABILIS DEUS" defined the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. He used these words: *"That the Most Blessed Virgin Mary from the first moment of her conception was by a singular privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin is revealed by God and is therefore firmly and constantly to be believed by all the faithful."* There is an interesting title *"The one who is most like God"*, given to our Lady by the Eastern Churches. In it they recognise that her holiness is different to that of any other saint. Their holiness is of sins forgiven, hers is immaculate. In 1904 Pope Pius X wrote an encyclical called "AD DIEM ILLUM". In it he told us about the position of Our Lady in the redemption of mankind. *"Is not Mary the Mother of Christ? Then she is our mother, too. One thing is unshakably fixed: Jesus, the incarnate word, is also the Redeemer of the human race. As God-man He took the same palpable body as the rest of men."*

As Restorer of the human race however, he also took a spiritual, as it were a mystical body, namely the community of those who believe in Christ; 'So, we, being many, are one body in Christ' (Rom.12.5) Now the Virgin did not give birth to the eternal Son of God only in order that He should become man, taking His human nature from her; no, it was also in order that, by the nature He took from her He should become the Redeemer of all mortals. On this account the angel told the shepherds: 'This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord' (Luke 2.110.) Christ took flesh in the womb of His most pure Mother and at the same time that spiritual body composed of those who would believe in Him. So one can say that Mary bore in her womb the Saviour and at the same time all those whose life was included in the life of the Saviour. All of us, that is, who are bound to Christ, who in the words of the Apostle are 'members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones' (Eph. 5:30), came from Mary's womb in the manner of a

body joined to its head. So we may call ourselves in a spiritual and mystical way children of Mary, she is the Mother of us all." As Children of Mary and members of the Tabernacle of St. Francis we can with confidence say the indulgence prayer.

"O Virgin Mary, Our lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament, who art the glory of Christians, the joy of the universal Church, and the hope of the world, pray for us. Kindle in all the faithful a lively devotion to the most Holy Eucharist, so that they may all be made worthy to receive Holy Communion every day. Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament, pray for us." (Indulgence Prayer - ✠ Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York Feb 2, 1951)