

CHAPTER IV

MOTHER OF JESUS AND OUR MOTHER

“After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy Mother.”

“And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own” (St. John xix. 27).

You cannot have failed to notice that the Church celebrates throughout the year a multitude of feasts of Our Blessed Lady. No month passes without several reminders of her glory and of her dignity. No week passes without at least one day—Saturday; particularly set aside in her honour. No day passes without her being invoked in some particular manner whether in Holy Mass, the Divine Office or the Rosary. Indeed the Church wishes us to keep constantly before our minds this most glorious creature, God’s Masterpiece, “our tainted nature’s solitary boast.” We should strive therefore to discover some method of approach to Our Blessed Lady so that we may be the better enabled to understand her position in regard to us, and the reason why the Church insists so much on our devotion to her. One supremely consoling truth provides us with this method of approach to Mary and explains all that we want to know. It is the truth of Mary’s Motherhood. Mary is a Mother. Let us dwell awhile on this fact and examine its import.

Our Blessed Lady is really a Mother. Now you all know what that word “mother” means. Every letter of that word spells loyalty, sacrifice and love. All the dearest associations of life cling to it. The word brings up a vision of her who brought us into the world, who cared for us and nourished us. It tells of days of anxious watching and loving care. A mother’s love is the most perfect reflection of the love of God Himself. It is the most gentle, the most tender, the most compassionate affection on earth. A mother’s heart is a divine creation. No one but God could have thought of motherhood. None but God could have given us mothers.

So wonderful a creation is motherhood that God Himself determined to have a Mother. When He decided to send His Divine Son upon earth to save us, a Mother was chosen to minister to His needs. And Mary was this Mother. Of all mothers she is the tenderest, the most understanding, the gentlest, the most full of sympathy and compassion, the most motherly, and Mary was all this for her beloved Son. When she smiled on Him at Bethlehem her smile was a perfect mother’s smile; when she clasped her Child to her heart at Nazareth it was the perfect embrace of a Mother; when she stood beneath His Cross on Calvary her sacrifice was the perfect consummation of her motherly love. The relation of a mother and son, always sacred, reaches its summit in the highest perfection that can be conceived when Mary is the Mother and Jesus is the Son. The love of a mother is unlike all other love and the crown of the love of mothers is the love of Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Mary, Mother of Jesus, holds an unique place in God’s creation. By God’s grace she possesses the singular privilege of divine Motherhood. She is the Mother of God. There is none beside her. When we say God is God, we have said all that can be said of God. In like manner when we say that Mary is the Mother of God we have exhausted the measure

of her dignity. When that is said, all is said: it resumes and includes everything. Every honour is contained for Mary in the title of Mother of God. It is an immense prerogative for her to possess with the Heavenly Father a mutual Son.

When you think of it, was it not a tremendous privilege for Our Lady to be the Mother of Jesus! For thirty years she lived side by side with Him. She alone of all the human race enjoyed with Him for all those years that intimacy and familiarity which exist between a mother and son. During those years she exercised all the functions and fulfilled all the duties of a mother. She was the witness of His smallest actions, she piously laid up each one of His words in her heart, she knew intimately each one of the sentiments which animated Him. And to His Mother Jesus paid a perfect tribute of submission, respect and love. Never was mother so loved, never was Son so loving. Now it was in this close association with her Son that Mary learned to love mankind. It was with Jesus that she prepared to be the Mother of Men. For, besides being the Mother of Jesus, Mary is our Mother.

It was her Divine Maternity that made Mary our Mother. When she became Mother of Jesus she became our Mother too. Her Motherhood of us is not of the body, for we have our bodies from our earthly mothers. Mary is our spiritual Mother. She is the Mother of Jesus in the flesh; she is the Mother of His members in the Spirit. Because she is the Mother of the Head, she is the Mother of all the members. The Mother of Christ is the Mother of the members of Christ because the Head and the members form but the one Christ. To give birth corporally to the Head was to give birth spiritually to the members. Motherhood consists above all in the communication of life. Mary fulfilled this function of motherhood in giving life to Jesus, Our Saviour, and in giving to us her children, the spiritual life of our souls.

There is no member of the human race of whom Mary is not the spiritual Mother, for there is no member of the human race who is not, either actually or potentially, a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, an adopted son of God, and therefore a child of Mary. But just as physical motherhood is not confined to conception and to the labours of childbearing, but must continue in the rearing and education of the child until it can fend for itself, so also the function of Mary's spiritual motherhood, in regard to men, is not merely that of conceiving and giving birth to the life of their souls. The role of motherhood must be prolonged until the supernatural life, which under Christ we owe to her, is beyond all the dangers that assail it. Our spiritual mother must rear her children until they have reached spiritual manhood, until they have arrived at the age of the "fullness of Christ," that is, until they have entered into the glory of heaven. During the whole of our life on this earth, according to the teaching of St. Paul, we are spiritually children, and until we have "put away the things of a child" we need the constant care of our spiritual Mother.

How greatly then are we dependent on our good Mother. How essential to our happiness is her motherly care. Our dependence on Mary is perfectly illustrated by the dependence of a child on its mother; not the child who has seen the light of day, but the little infant yet unborn. The reason for the choice of this illustration is evident. The little infant is

absolutely dependent on its mother. We too, whatever may be the degree of sanctity which we have reached, are completely dependent on Mary. At each moment Mary is essential to us. We can do nothing without grace, and it is through Mary, that every grace comes to us. We cannot, therefore, at any moment, no matter how holy we may be, be without Mary's care. Her motherly care is ceaselessly active. We are the very little infants of the most holy Virgin, and our lips ought to address her as "Mamma" rather than Mother. This childlike title has nothing about it of the puerile or the affected. It shows in its own way, and perhaps in the fullest way, this incontestable truth—the fact of our littleness, of our utter dependence as infants and of Mary's preparation by God that in her ceaseless solicitude as Mother, she might answer our need.

This attitude of spiritual infancy towards our good Mother, is not a pious excess, but it expresses simply our very real condition. It clarifies and makes easier our relations with God, Our Father. Led, so to speak, by the hand of Mary, we are brought with Jesus, and in Jesus, Our Brother, to the true home of the family of the Blessed Trinity. Developing within us the spirit of Mary, a spirit that looks to humility, to joyous, loving resignation, to childlike tenderness, to holy courage in prayer, to perfect confidence, we are led to have the same childlike attitude towards Our Father in Heaven. Mary is the teacher, training us in the exercise of that baptismal gift by which the Holy Spirit enables us to say "Abba, Father." (Rom. viii. 15.) Through her is revealed in human flesh the maternal tenderness of God for His children, who are in Jesus, His only Son.

We are the brethren of Jesus. He calls us His Brethren. "Go and tell My Brethren" are Our Lord's own words spoken of His disciples. He who is Mary's Son calls us His Brethren. Hence His Father is Our Father, and His Mother our Mother. Our Lord by His Brotherhood has given us a share in His Divine Sonship, and so we are the Sons of God. He has also given us a place by His side in His Mother's Heart. We are the children of Mary, for Our Brother is Mary's Child.

Mary is our Mother by a threefold title. Firstly, by the title of our spiritual relationship with Jesus her Divine Son, for as we have seen, Our Divine Lord has adopted us as His Brethren, made us to be His members, so that we form one Mystical Body with Him. At Nazareth, in conceiving Jesus, Mary conceived us too. By her consent to give Him corporal life, she consented to give us the life which He had come to bestow. Mary bore, though in different ways, both Jesus and His members in her maternal womb, for the members and the Head have not a separate existence.

Secondly, Mary is Our Mother by her co-operation in the great work of our Redemption by which the life of grace was truly merited for us. Mary bore Jesus without sorrow, but she bore us, her adopted children, with the greatest anguish. On Calvary she brought us forth when she offered up her Son as a sacrifice for us. Our deliverance from sin and death was accomplished only on Calvary. And it was in union with His Mother that Jesus accomplished this work. She had conceived Him as a Victim; she had brought Him up for the sacrifice, and at the supreme moment she offered Him to the Father for our salvation. At that moment her Motherhood in our regard, was completed. That is why Our Divine

Lord proclaimed it by confiding John to Mary and Mary to John: “Mother, behold thy son; son, behold thy Mother.” (John xix. 26-27) These words did not create that motherhood; they attested, confirmed, and completed it at that most solemn moment of His life, in that hour when His Mother, having become our Mother in the full sense of the word, was able to understand her maternal mission.

And thirdly, Mary is our Mother by her truly maternal solicitude; she continually intercedes for us and looks after all our necessities. During the whole course of our lives she does not cease to busy herself with us. As our Mother, Mary knows all the graces of which we stand in need; as the best of Mothers, Mary asks these graces for us; as the Mother of God, and therefore all-powerful, Mary obtains them for us. We will always be her “little children” whom she continues to bear “until Christ be formed in us.” She loves us all, we who are so poor and imperfect; she loves us all with a love that surpasses in purity and intensity the motherly love of all the mothers of the world.

Mary is Mother of Jesus. She is our Mother too. It is our duty then to be loyal to her, to honour her, to obey her, to imitate her, to love her as Jesus loved her. It is our duty to love one another, because we are her children and she loves every one of us most dearly. It is our duty never to grieve her maternal heart by offending her in any way. It is our duty to be united with her and to make her interests our interests. But her interests are identical with those of her beloved Son. Consequently she wants us to adopt and to enter into the programme for which He came down on earth and died on the Cross. She wants us to be true and faithful members of the Catholic Church of which she is the Mother. She wants us to profess our willingness to respect God’s rights over us. She wants us to signify this willingness by striving, as a united body, to mould the society in which we live in accordance with her Divine Son’s programme for the order of the world. And for this end she wants us to unite ourselves with Him, through her, in that great central act of submission to the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Mass, which is the representation of Calvary. Then only can we say most truly that we are her children, and that she is our Mother. Then only can we call her with Jesus “Mother.” It was from her maternal womb that we first came to the real life of our souls. Let us ask her to take us back again into her bosom at the hour of our death, to be born again, and to live for ever with Jesus as her children in heaven. “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.” Amen.

“Am I not your Mother?”

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I extend my desires to all mothers that you will correspond with God's grace and bring yourself and all your children to live forever with the Divine Child of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let us live each day in such a way that we will always make it a HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY for Mary the MOTHER OF JESUS and our mother!

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