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Marian Mariology

Chapter 16



The veneration of Mary, when properly understood, permeates the entire life of the Church; it is a dimension of dogma and of piety, of Christology and of ecclesiology. This dimension needs to be made explicit today in connection with the problems of humanity. Mariology expresses something fundamental to the Christian life itself, to the Christian experience of the world.

Sound Mariology has always been understood in Christological terms. If the Gospel revealed nothing more than the fact that Jesus Christ, God and man, was born of Mary, this alone would be sufficient for the Church to love her and to draw theological conclusions from pondering this relationship of Mother and Son. We need no other revelations. Mary is a self-evident and essential *datum* and dimension of the Gospel.

Chapter one centers on Catechesis flowing from Byzantine Marian spirituality with commentary by Brother John M. Samaha, S.M. Chapter 2 discusses Mariology today with commentary by Rev. Professor Michael Lapierre, S.J. The remaining chapters are commentaries on various Marian topics by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. (1914– 2000).

Chapter 16

Immaculate Heart of Mary

by Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

Though not a dogma of the Church, there is a close relationship between devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of His Mother. Pope Pius XII said it was fitting that after our homage paid to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Christian people should manifest similar piety and love of their grateful hearts for the most loving heart of Mary, our heavenly Mother, through whom we have received the divine life from Christ.

What does the Church mean by the Immaculate Heart of Mary and how are we to practice this great devotion? By the Immaculate Heart of Mary the Church means that aspect of the Virgin symbolized by the word “heart”, then her sinless purity expressed by the word “immaculate”. Calling Mary’s heart immaculate we know to be true and our devotion is honoring her for that great privilege.

What shall we say about Mary’s love? It was totally and exclusively human. Her Son’s Love was both divine and human as He was God and Man, but Mary’s love was always human because that was what she was, a creature – that was all the love she had. Well then, whom did Mary love? And how did Mary love? Both answers are the object of our devotion to her Immaculate Heart. During her life on earth Mary loved God with all her heart. Christ’s command in the Old Testament was followed perfectly, as Mary fulfilled it – loving her Divine Son as only a mother can love the

fruit of her womb; she loved Joseph her devoted husband, to whom she was espoused, as only a devoted wife could. Mary is a model in a special way for women. Mary loved her relatives. We know that because when she first heard that her aged kinswoman was with child and would be needing help, St. Luke tells us that Mary ran across the hill country to a town of Juda to assist Elizabeth. Mary loved her friends. When invited to their wedding and they ran out of wine, Mary did something about it. She had no money to purchase it herself, so she asked the Giver of all gifts and the young couple had an excellent replenishment.

Mary loved John the Apostle to whom Jesus entrusted her on Calvary. She loved Peter whom she knew well. Trying to help she told her Son about Peter's impetuosity, something He might well have seen, but He welcomed His Mother's intuition. Mary knew Paul because Paul's best friend was Luke, and of Paul, Luke spoke often to Mary. Paul never saw Jesus but we can be sure that Mary talked often to this great Apostle of the Gentiles. Mary loved greatly all the Apostles and disciples of her Son. Christ loved them and so did Mary. Weren't they all with Mary on that day when the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost? Now whom does Mary love? Mary, as the Church teaches, loves everyone, but especially those that most love her Son. Mary like every true mother gives her heart to those that love her Son.

How does Mary love? Mary during her life on earth loved suffering, for from the moment she conceived the Christ Child in her womb, she became the sorrowful Mother. Simeon early on told her that a sword would pierce her heart and so it did.

Mary loved chastely. The essence of a chaste love is in the spirit, not in the body. She loved Joseph profoundly She loved him well; she did service to meet his needs. She thought well of him; she spoke well of him always. Her love reached Joseph and made him glad. Mary loved quietly. Think of their going to Egypt. Joseph was commanded to go at night; Mary helped him and the Baby to both get ready and go.

Mary trusted when she loved. She had no idea of how she could conceive a child and remain a virgin, but she trusted that God, Who gave the request, would see it through for her.

Mary trusted perseveringly. Think of her faith on that first Holy Saturday as she waited. Saturday is Mary's day in honor of her perseverance, as on that Saturday she waited for the Resurrection of her Son.

Mary lived and loved effectively - she did something about her love for God. She did and still does intercede for sinful man, helping us obtain from God the graces we need. Mary goes to God for us, that is how Mary mediates for us because she loves us.

When we speak of Mary's heart, which had a mortal existence and now, like her Son, is immortally living in Heaven. Her Assumption assures us she is body and soul, with her feelings there, thinking of us, understanding our needs and yearnings. There is in Heaven now a virginal woman's body with a total purity of soul. She was always sinless by a unique prerogative; sinless at her conception in the womb of her mother Anne. Besides being sinless at her conception, Mary was sinless at birth free from the sins of the world all her life. She lived in the world but was not of the world. She had never said "No" to God; God wanted her to be totally sinless because she was to be His Mother. Her Son was all good and almighty so it is not surprising that He did all for His Mother that He could do and that He did do. Mary's complete sinlessness was dogmatically defined by Holy Church over a century ago.

Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means two things. It means invoking her and imitating her. Invoking her is praying through her to God, beseeching her; while imitating her means striving to become like her, doing what she would do.

For what do we invoke Mary? What do we ask her to obtain for us? Through her Immaculate Heart we especially ask her to love like she does, sharing in her love for God and all mankind. We ask her to obtain for us her spontaneous doing of God's Will. We ask her to become sinless as she was, before our lives are ended, using every grace God gives us as we strive for perfection. We ask her help that the maddening drives of our fallen nature become less compelling and our passions less masterful. We pray most of all that our sins which offend God become less deliberate and less frequent.

Next, in practicing devotion to Mary's Immaculate Heart, we must strive to imitate her in her practice of love. We know that we often sin by saying "No" to God, but we can also sin by saying "Yes" to creatures against God's Will. We can sin by indulging creature satisfaction deep down in our hearts without saying a word. To grow in virtue we must very often sacrifice creatures that God does not wish us to love. In fact, often our greatest obstacle to sinlessness is the attachment of our spirits to creatures against God's Will.

In our devotion to Mary's Heart there is no more effective prayer than the Rosary which is about the mysteries of her Son's life and hers. There is no better way to obtain through Mary's intercession the help we desperately need to learn how to be loving and selfless. To gain this selfless love, we must also learn how to give ourselves in loving those thoughtless people who enter our lives unintentionally. The most grievous pain, the most patient endurance that people will demand of you is from the people you like, who will try your patience and not even know it. It is the good,

unwitting people just being themselves who will crush the last iota of selfishness in you. They seem unaware of how tormented you are by their actions, the way they behave, what they say or don't say. We all have much to learn. Let us ask Our Lady to help us. Say a little prayer to her in every emergency. When you must answer, when you are under pressure, ask help from the "Seat of Wisdom", Mary's title, and your words will be hers amiable and understanding.

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