

SUNDAY SERMON - 9 SEPTEMBER 1962

This edition of our 'Heimatklaenge' deals with an echo of our eternal home. It sounds and resounds in our hearts and minds. What is this sound? We need only meditate upon the first page to realise what is meant.

'Be a little Mary'.

A strange word. Perhaps you will understand when I explain that yesterday (the birthday of Our Lady) I again and again prayed that the Eternal Father may say over all of us his word of Omnipotence, Love and Mercy! Let the little Mary take shape and form in us. It is a word of omnipotence, it is a word of mercy, the infinite mercy and love of God. Yesterday we celebrated the feast of the birthday of Our Lady. When we pray: Dear God, say those words of your omnipotence, mercy and love: Be a little Mary: it means that Our Lady's birth must be repeated, it means that we wish to become a little Mary through the power and love of your word.

God spoke this word at the beginning of history: Let there be light: and there was light. Thousands and thousands of years later he repeated that word: Let there be! Be the great Mary who was predestined from the beginning of the world, who was formed by the Holy Spirit to be the Christ-like and Christ-forming, Father-centred great Mary. Et factum est! And it happened. With that we have arrived at the beginning of the new creation, the creation of grace. Et factum est.

What was the result? Et verbum caro factum est. The Eternal Word took flesh, and since that time we have become part of a new, supernatural creation.

Eternal Father, repeat over all of us, that word of power and love: Be a little Mary, the reflection of the great Mary! May we expect that the other word may now be repeated: Et factum est!

What has happened or will happen? A new little Mary will take shape and form in us all, in each one of us; a new, little Mary formed in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, a Christ-like and Christ-forming, Father-centred little Mary. Involuntarily we ask ourselves two questions:

1 What do we mean when we speak of the little Mary? and 2 What is the connection between the little Mary and our consecration to Our Lady.

1 What do we mean when we speak of the little Mary? I would like to give two answers. The one we may almost take for granted from what we have already said.

The little Mary is a tiny image of the great Mary. Of course, only a tiny image. When we, as women, pray: Eternal Father, say over all of us those words of your

love, mercy and power - we all wish to be a tiny image of Mary - what do we mean? It is easier to understand that prayer coming from a woman, but what does it mean for a man? Eternal Father, say over me as a man, those words of your love, mercy and power: Let me become a little Mary. It means that Our Lady is for me the feminine form of Christ. If as a young girl or wife I wish to know how I should imitate Christ, I need only look at Our Lady. I then know the feminine form of Christ. However, if I as a man pray these words, it means above all - but not exclusively - Give me the openness of a creature not merely for God and our Heavenly Father, but especially for Christ: as a creature I wish to be open for Christ, in the same way as Our Lady was open for him.

From this we understand that we men should not only pray for a share in Our Lady's openness for Christ, but that we should also become somewhat like Mary. We hear this from the mouth of the Apostle Paul: I am in labour until Christ is born in you. This is a motherly quality. We should all be in labour - at least in spiritual labour - until Christ was born in us.

We may understand the words of St Augustine in this way: We have the audacity - even we men - to call ourselves mothers of Christ. Christ calls in his members, but above all in our children, also in me as a father - for his Mother. Even as a man, I have to be a mother to the members of Christ, to mankind.

May I now ask: Do we understand what it means to be a little Mary? Do we begin to realise what is meant when we ask God to make us tiny images of the great Mary; to make us Christ-like and Christ-forming, Father-centred little Marys?

Let us penetrate a bit deeper, and ask ourselves: What does it mean to become a little Mary? It means to become an image of Our Lady to the highest possible degree in life and being, generated by God's power and love. Let us discuss these three thoughts. We should all become an image of the great Mary, Our Lady, to the highest possible degree. What are the features of this image? Let us meditate on the short poem which appears on the first page of this edition of the 'Heimatklaenge.'

Be a little Mary, royal, noble and pure, A star to all those around her, She belongs to the Father alone.

What should I become? Royally free and pure! do we understand what that includes? I think I have already summarised it in a few words.

Be a little Mary, obedient, kind and mild,
Safely enshrined in the Father's heart,
Gladly his wish she fulfils.

Be a little Mary, humble, selfless and kind,
Each day she gives all for the common good,

And thinks of herself last of all.

Be a little Mary, heroic, childlike and strong,
Who stands unfaltering under the cross,
Gives all for the Father she loves.

Be a little Mary, prayerful, simple, devout,
United to God alone in her heart,
Radiant with heavenly light.

Be a little Mary, holy and rich in grace,
Imbued by her love for the Father,
She follows the path Mary trod.

Is that not a most beautiful picture, and does it not fit to everybody? Another prayer summarises it even more simply.

Let us be, oh Queen, like thee,
More and more thy clear reflection,
Strong and noble, lovingly
Walking under thy protection.
In us go through our time!
May in Christ the world be thine.

I think that with that we have drawn Our Lady's picture clearly enough, and also shown clearly enough what we, as little images of the great Mary, should be like.

Involuntarily we ask ourselves: How can we become such a wonderful reflection of the great Mary? Only if God speaks a word of his love, mercy and power. We may strive as much as we like to form the image of Our Lady in ourselves, it will be of no avail unless God speaks his word of love and omnipotence.

Why is God's omnipotence necessary? The little Mary is entirely absorbed into supernature, and we cannot conquer this for ourselves. This must be given us first of all through baptism, and then through the Sacraments. Without God's word of omnipotence and love it is futile to attempt to become such a reflection of Our Lady in being and life.

Why do we need God's omnipotent word? Even if we already share in the divine life which God in his mercy has given us through baptism, we have the great task to reproduce the life of Our Lady ethically and morally. But, we are so weak. We are made weak by original sin, but weaker still by the numberless weaknesses in our character and our personal sins. Let us recall our past life with all its failures. We may strive as much as we please - if God's omnipotence does not penetrate our heart, our whole being, we would never be able to speak of becoming an image of the great Mary. Original sin has damaged our nature too badly. Without

God's aid, unless God himself takes over and lifts us to the image of Our Lady, we may never expect to be- come like her.

If we wish to know how weak we are, even with the help of grace, we need only look at St Paul: who will free me from this burden of my body? The good that I wish to do, I do not; and the evil that I would not do, that I do. Who will free me? The grace of God through Christ Jesus. Only God in his omnipotence can heal the cleft in our nature. Only God's omnipotence can form and mould our souls, can make us divinised, morally perfect and ennob- led images of Our Lady.

God's omnipotence. This is the answer to the great problems of our lives. How often have we not striven towards ideals, only to fall again and again. This does not mean that God's omnipotence alone can do everything. We must co-operate; but in the final analysis our spiritual transformation, our transformation into Mary, is and remains the work of God's omnipotence.

From this we may begin to understand the world in its present state. A great Spanish philosopher who did much research into the past, came across a law: there are times in the history of the Church and the world in which the Church battles in vain against her enemies. The more she fights, the greater are her defeats. However, at the very last moment, God appears on the pinnacle of the temple, blows the trumpet, and the walls of Jericho collapse.

The same law applies to nations as well as to individuals. To God alone belongs the honour of having performed great deeds. It is God's power and kindness which is most perfectly revealed in our transformation into little Marys. We must trust unwaveringly in God's transforming power and grace. Even if it does not happen today, it will do so tomorrow or the next day. If we had more trust we could move a mountain; we could tell it to throw itself into the sea, and our petition would be fulfilled. The measure of our faith determines the measure of the Father's mighty act of transformation.

What are the characteristics of the little Mary? She should be like the great Mary in life and being. We need say no more about her being, but what about her activity? What does the little Mary do? What the great Mary did. What did she do? Yesterday the Church repeated again and again: Your birth, O Virgin Mother of God was the herald of joy to the whole world. Your re-birth in us will bring joy to the whole world. Let us ask ourselves: What did Our Lady give to the world? Without the great Mary we would not have been redeemed, we would not have had a Redeemer. Without the great Mary we would not have an effective representative in our cause before the throne of the Triune God. The birth of Our Lady brought joy to the world. We would have had no absolute ideal of womanly greatness. The Virgin Birth brought joy to the earth, and without Our Lady we would be helpless in the fact of the present world situation.

I would like to discuss and cast new light on two points. The image of Mary has and will always give us a clear picture of woman. This is not only important to women themselves, it is also extremely important to us men. We may not overlook the fact that by nature woman has a strong desire to please. She wishes to please man, and if we want to know the picture of the woman of our time, we have only to ask how man wants to see woman. If man has an incorrect conception of woman, we will not find the correct image of woman today. Our Lady is the exalted ideal of womanhood for both man and woman.

The second point is the great fruitfulness of the little Mary in our times. With regard to the present situation, Pope Pius XII repeated the word about Our Lady: Victress in all battles. What battles? The world is confused and in disorder. It is antagonistic to Christ and flees from God. We should see to it that the correct picture of Christ and God is shown to the people, so that the coming time may be a Christian era, surrendered to the Father through Our Lady.

Whenever the popes since Pius IX have spoken of Our Lady and her mission, they have used three symbols: 1 The rainbow; 2 The cross; and 3: The heart of Christ and Our Lady.

The first symbol reaches back into history. Mankind was rotten to the core, and God punished it. However, he was not satisfied with this. In his mercy he sent the rainbow. Once again God is in the centre, not human striving.

It is God who desires to forgive the human race and show his mercy.

The second sign appeared to Constantine. A cross, with the words written underneath: In the sign of the cross the whole world will find its way to belong entirely to Christ. Once again a sign of God's mercy. God desires to christianise the world. Human co-operation is necessary, but it is not all-important. The main point is God's love and omnipotence. He must work miracles.

This is even more the case today. We have said that history can be divided into the ancient history, the middle ages and modern history. Since 1914, there has been such a mighty upheaval that one speaks of the latest epoch. At the beginning of this epoch Leo XIII dedicated the world to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He pointed out the great connections, and he added that the great sign of this epoch is the Heart of Jesus. The following popes added: And the heart of Mary. Both hearts beat one beat, they are as closely united as though they were one.

Thus we see Our Lady in history and world events. How is our time to find the way to God, how are our children to follow this way. We must look to the great sign in the heavens of our time, to the hearts of Jesus and Mary. for us that means that we should surrender ourselves unconditionally to these two holy Hearts.

The Little Mary can and should unfold a similar fruitfulness. She should help to give birth to Christ again. On another occasion we asked ourselves why there are so few people who really represent Christ. However, it is the Holy Spirit who, in the final analysis, begot Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who wishes to be fruitful only where he discovers Mary. If we are like Our Lady, the Holy Spirit sees to it that we not only become Christ-like, but also Christ-forming little Marys, and, as such, universally fruitful.

Eternal Father, say over us your Almighty word: Be a Little Mary And when she exists, another truth becomes evident: Christ will be Lord of the new era.

The Little Mary unfolds a fruitfulness similar to the great Mary. To the extent that we are like Our Lady we share in her suppliant omnipotence already here on earth, and later in heaven we will share in her glory. We wish to become images of Our Lady so that eventually the great task of the Great Mary for both man- and woman-kind may be fulfilled. What is that task? To bring Christ back to our disordered times. What instruments is she to use? Those who have given themselves to her without reserve.

The second question was: Of what importance is the Consecration to Our Lady in this regard? Of what importance is the consecration for the unfolding of the Little Mary in us? The Little Mary is the perfect fruit of such a Consecration. What is the proof? We have often said that the consecration to Our Lady brings about a mutual union of hearts, a mutual exchange of hearts. We know that our heart is the core and symbol of our personality. If a union of hearts takes place through the consecration, Our Lady draws us so completely into herself that we reflect her as perfectly as possible. Then her heart beats in our hearts.

An old Scottish sage relates that a king died. A nobleman received the commission from the dying king to take his still warm heart to the Holy Sepulchre. What did Count Robert do? He took the heart out of the bosom of the king, wrapped it in silk, placed it in his bosom and set off immediately for Jerusalem. Hardly had he left home than he felt homesick. He was on the point of giving in to this longing when he suddenly felt the King's heart beat and he found the strength to continue. He crossed the Pyrenees and was pushed back by the fighting between the Turks and Christians. Yet the king's heart gave him no peace. Onwards. You must bring my heart through the battle-lines. Suddenly a Turk attacked him, but eventually he won the day. He hastened over land and sea and had no rest until he had laid the king's heart in the Holy Sepulchre.

We know what the legend had to say to us. Our Lady's heart beats in our heart. Our heart no longer exists. What does the heartbeat say to us? Always the same. God's will, be still. Yes, Father, yes, may your will be done, whether it brings joy or suffering or sorrow.

A Marian heart knows but one answer: Fiat - Volo - Ecce Ancilla. Mary's heart within me not only directs me, it gives me the strength to surrender myself completely to the Father according to her example, and to live a life as she lived it.

Truly to become a little Mary in all situations.

Amen.