

Sunday Sermon Our Lady and the Eucharist 7 June 1964

Today's Gospel gives us a welcome opportunity to pick up where we left off last Sunday, and to continue and round off our theme. We probably still remember to a certain extent what we have discussed. It occurred in conjunction with the feast of the Queenship of Mary!

In the foreground was the question: How do we picture our Lady? Not as we picture her now in heaven, but we may imagine how she lived and acted while she was here on earth. We may still remember the answer. She was exceedingly simple, down-to-earth, objective, penetrating and loyal to her duty to the extreme, and all this through a deep faith. We may well say today: that is simply the ideal of simple workday saint in everyday life.

We also touched on the second question. This ran from what springs did she drink in order to realise such an ideal in such a simple way? We were only able to give a very general answer without going into it deeply. It was: She achieved all this because a very great love lived in her heart, a love for the historic Saviour until his ascension, as well as an exceedingly warm love for the Eucharistic Saviour after his ascension.

We understand her love for the Eucharistic Saviour which we stress especially. We know that the Council wishes to lead us to put the altar and thereby our Eucharistic Saviour more into the foreground of our lives. We should centre on the altar as much as possible like Our Lady after the ascension of the Redeemer.

If we now meditate on today's Gospel, will think that it just fits into the whole train of thoughts with which we are concerned. What does the Gospel say? It points the portrait of Our Lord. We may say: of the historic Saviour. We have just heard when the Gospel was read. It was an extract from St. Luke's Gospel and we know that Luke never tires of singing a single great hymn of praise to the mercy of Almighty God, to his merciful love. This is the love which we receive without deserving it.

The symbol of this love is good shepherd and the drachma. Merciful love is revealed in a special way towards the poor, the lost. I repeat: the symbol of this love is the lost drachma, the lost lamb, the lost sheep.

Let us, right at the beginning of this sermon, stop and recall that we have used the example of a little child who wished to take up the ocean in his hand. Of course, we will shake our heads and say: That is a joke, it is impossible. Of course it is impossible.

We may say that it is even more impossible for our human minds to want to grasp or penetrate the infinite God to some extent with God everything is infinite, each individual attribute. Great is God's omnipotence. God called the world into existence a

proof of his omnipotence. Great is God's wisdom. How does he rule the world? We could list attribute after attribute in this way and it is not only Luke who tells us, the entire Gospel is full of the thought: *super omnia haec misericordia ejus*. Every attribute is surpassed by his mercy. It sounds strange to say that all attributes are Infinite, and then add: *super omnia haec*. All the attributes are surpassed by the merciful love of God the Father.

If we were to ask in a human way, even if it sounds strange: How 'wide' is this love, this merciful love? Holy Scripture answers: The whole universe is filled with the mercy of God. How long could and should and must we meditate on this, in order to be able to take in such expressions even to a certain extent!

And if we think on the 'length' of God's mercy - Our Lady has already sung it to us: His mercy is from generation to generation. Elsewhere we read: His mercy is from eternity to eternity.

If I were now to ask: Where is the spring from which Our Lady drew the strength to master everyday life, then we may say: It is the love for Our Lord, in the first place for the historic Saviour. How does this love of the historic Savior show in today's Gospel? In the picture of the Good Shepherd!

If we want to apply this picture to his historic life, to the way in which he acted, when he wandered the earth, we will not have great difficulty. We hear: The Good Shepherd is always with his sheep. Was Our Lord not continually with the sheep at that time, especially if we consider the sheep to represent Our Lady herself? Was he not always with Our Lady? What does the Good Shepherd do? He feeds his flock, leading it to good pastures.

Let us return to Our Lord, to his example, his teaching, and over and above this he gave his life for his sheep. Did he do this during his life? Doubtlessly! Did he not do this especially for his Mother? I think that we must one day stress this in a special way.

However, at the moment this probably does not interest us particularly in our connection. What interests us more is the fact that Our Lord continues this endless, infinite, merciful love in the Holy Eucharist. This is the source of strength for Our Lady. Last Sunday we touched on the point that after the death and resurrection of the Saviour, after his ascension, there remained the image of the Eucharistic Saviour.

We will find it easy now to transfer the picture of the good Shepherd to the Eucharistic Saviour. The same three thoughts arise. He is constantly with us. This is actually a great law in the kingdom of God: we should not have a dead God in the foreground. He is not dead. We should not be able to say: He was once on earth! Oh, no! We must have a living God!

Emmanuel! God with us, among us! He wants to remain with us. The Good Shepherd in the tabernacle invites us: We should come to him; he wants to be with us always. Will he lead us to good pastures? We know that he even gives us his own Flesh and Blood to eat and drink. In the final analysis he wishes to draw us into his single great sacrificial attitude towards the Eternal Father.

I think we must stop here. The question which is of special interest to us is this: How did God see to it that Our Lady could constantly live from the Eucharist? It was not as if she was merely interested in the Eucharist, but that she lived from the Eucharist, from the Eucharistic sacrifice, from the Eucharistic Bread, and yet at the same time she constantly lived in the presence of the Eucharistic Saviour. Three great questions arise which must now be answered. On the one hand the Ideal should always shine before our spiritual eyes through which we wish to be irradiated as reflections.

Today let us be satisfied with the single thought: Our Lady lived from the Eucharistic Bread.

The concrete answer can be summarized thus: She lived

1. full of longing for this Bread,
2. she received this Bread daily, and
3. she did it after a good preparation in keeping with it.

1. Is it true, where will we find it written, that Our Lady always longed for the bread? We can and should say this more simply: for the Eucharistic Saviour as he is present in the form of bread. This does not have to appear in Holy Scripture. Of course, we confine the question to the 20 years after the Ascension of Our Lord, which one guesses was the time she still lived on earth. We take that for granted, why? Actually we could give the answer very well ourselves. It is the old saying which we so often heard and lived as simple children of the people. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also!

Where your treasure is.... What was the treasure for the heart of Our Lady? Any school child knows the answer it was Our Lord, Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

If we wish to put this truth into a great framework, we must remember what Holy Scripture tells us. How does Our Saviour wish to be known; what does he want to be? Emmanuel - God with us! God among us! We want to be with us always. How did Our Lady experience this after she had said her *Fiat*? We read: *et verbum caro factus est*. The Second Person of the Godhead descended to earth and became man, and who lived with him more intimately than Our Lady? Almighty God lived in this uniquely intimate way with Our Lady for 30, 33 years. Her treasures! Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also!

Once we have taken all that in, do we not take it for granted that Our Lady always had an endless longing for Our Lord, now in the form of his Eucharistic presence! Longing, warm, deep longing was thus the fundamental affect of her heart.

You have already heard that Napoleon looked back over his life while he was in exile. When he recalled the millions of people whom he had electrified, inwardly gripped, and when he compared himself to Our Lord, he said: I had to be like that, my personality had to be visible, and otherwise men would not have become attached to me, and would not have become enthusiastic. But how was that in the God-man? He had thought he was dead, but, no, he lives on. We do not have a dead God, He who lives among us is the living God, above all in the mysterious form of Bread, which we can grasp and comprehend in the light of faith.

Let us therefore take it for granted that Our Lady constantly longed for the Eucharistic Bread, for the Eucharistic Saviour, after the Ascension.

And if we were to ask: What were the fruits of this life-long communion between Our Lord and Our Lady? Of course we will never experience what she experienced until his 33rd year. We can only savour what she savoured. What did she experience after his Ascension? We circle around the thought: communion with the really present Eucharistic Saviour.

What result did this have? She has already sung to us of her great longing in the Gospel: he has filled the hungry with good things. Now, if she hoped in this way for the Eucharistic Saviour, what good things did she receive and achieve through living with and in our Saviour?

For our purposes, I think I must stress two points:

1. a heavenly, a supernatural atmosphere and attitude,
2. a divine supernatural disposition.

This sounds so simple, it is so quickly said. However, if we only apply this to our lives...

I have already used the picture of the eagle in my sermons - a favourite picture - I will, not repeat it, but I want to paint out another view point, we need not stick to the legend, we need only consider practical, life.

When, the time comes, and the eagle is old enough and strong enough to fly through the air, the parent eagle takes him and throws him out of the nest. What is the effect? First of all the eaglet shivers! However, after a second he feels that he has a hold on the air, that the atmosphere carries him. We know what the picture has to say to us.

If we live with God, with the Eucharistic Saviour in this way, then a supernatural atmosphere bears us up during the day. How important for us who feel the world around us is really not supernatural, nor even natural, but is entirely opposed to us; it is an exceedingly dangerous atmosphere. Whoever must live in this atmosphere -- and we all must -- and whoever does not live like the eagle in the air -- we call it the divine atmosphere, -- who is not borne by the air, will be dragged under, will suffocate in the purely wordly atmosphere.

Where does the eagle fly? Always to the sun! But before he can reach the sun he must enter the atmosphere. Whoever of us wants to reach the sun - and who does not? - even the superficial children of men, who greedily stretch out their hands to sensual pleasures, to tangible pleasures, to all that is low and sexual, whose one aim is pleasure, who want to enjoy: they may make sacrifices, but only to be able to enjoy! Whoever wants to reach the sun must enter the divine atmosphere which surrounds them, which surrounded the Maid of Nazareth in union with the Saviour.

Longing - what does this longing give us? Fulfillment!

There is a second thing we also take for granted. We speak of divine Bread which means the Eucharist. Whoever eats this divine bread lives in divine peace. We may expect that he will more and more experience the peace of the Lord as his perfect Possession; if we wish to apply this to Our Lady: the peace of heart of the two holy hearts. This peace of heart, this joy of heart - what does it mean in contrast to the joy which the world can offer It is often as though we children of the world want to drink sugar water from a bottle of arsenic. We swallow the sugar water, and before we know what has happened we have also swallowed the poison.

These things are very simple even though very radical. So is our Ideal. And the replica? What about me? Can I say that to a certain extent the fundamental affect of my soul is longing for the Eucharistic Saviour? I think I must repeat the same train of thoughts, but in the opposite order. Where your treasure is, there is your heart also. My treasure! If it is not Our Lord, if it is not God, what is it? Then it is an idol.

If I now want to know what I long for, I will know what my idol is. Then It is natural that I do not succeed, that I do not succeed in copying Our Lady's attitude, I do not get on with the fundamental attitude of those who wish to master the Christian way of life on earth.

I believe that we all without exception must say in one or the other regard: we fail. I am not at all like Our Lady. How often must we not say: All the bells in my soul are silent? They rang once, I had the longing to be with Our Saviour in the tabernacle. But now?

How is it today? I remember reading once about the catholic historian, Johannes Jansen. He later wrote his autobiography. In it he relates what supported him throughout his life - even as a mature man, as a scientist, as a recognised scholar. It is a certain consolation for us fathers and mothers. It was the memory of the childlike piety which he inherited from his mother. He often, he relates, did he not re-experience a uniquely tender religious life he, the mature, vigorous, learned man, who was recognised everywhere. He re-experienced how he had gone to Mass with his mother, or on pilgrimage, or how they had sung a certain folk song. This went deeply into his emotional life.

However, there was one song which attracted him especially. As a grown-up man it came times even moved him to tears. It is a simple song which we all have sung very often – It is the simple hymn which expresses a deep longing for the Eucharistic Saviour, for the Eucharistic God: O Lord, I am not worthy, that you should come to me. I am not worthy to taste this food.” But make us worthy! It echoes again and again: make me worthy, silence my secret longing.

I think this could even prove to be a tiny point of contact for our hearts. Did we not experience the same? Was there not a time when we had this longing and sang with great enthusiasm: make us worthy to taste this food e fulfill my longing!

How is this longing to be stilled? If we would at least try to pray that we may long for this longing! To long for the longing! This alone would be a great grace for us modern men who go through this life with bowed heads as though we had damaged our supernatural wings, as though we knew only the earthly, as though we outwardly did what our religion prescribed in order to have done something, without the inner man being touched.

I think, for example, of St. Augustine. How long did this not go on in his life! How long did he not live a superficial life, even a worse life than most of us, until grace touched him? He expressed this very beautifully in his confessions. Once grace had touched him he began to admire God the infinite God. He adds: Now a part of your creation is going to begin to praise and glorify you through his own life. This is himself: how deeply he has understood that he himself is a part of God's creation. His life is to gather together all that Eternal love has brought about in him. Then, of course, he falls back in deep humility. O that I realised so late, that I did not call you my own before this! He is sorry that until now he has overlooked the living God, has sunk himself in all that is worldly... And then the great, the serious complaints O God, how often you were in me and how often must we not say this when we receive Holy Communion - how often you were is, and yet I was not in me! Do we feel such a deep sorrow in our own hearts when we again comprehend the relations more deeply?

Another writer, Ludwig von Pastor recounts a lovely incident in his many volumed history of Greenland. In the 11th century Greenland was Christianised. A few

centuries later, in 16th century, the neighbouring peoples invaded Greenland in order to destroy Christianity there. The Greenlanders were to revert to paganism. A number were murdered, others thrown into prison, and others taken into exile.

As it happened, those who were in exile had a deep longing for their homeland, and not a few fled. The tragedy was, however, that in the meantime many priests had been killed. Only here and there in a simple village was the Blessed Sacrament preserved in a lonely corner. And how few could find the way there! That did they do? They wrote to some for priests. They were completely cut off from the world, and for 80 years no foreign ship had touched at their shores. They could no longer bear to be without Our Lord in the Eucharist. They had remained loyal because to a great extent the corporals on which the last Holy Mass was celebrated in a district, was treated like a sanctuary, and again and again the people went there on pilgrimage.

If only we were Greenlanders! It is so easy for us to visit Our Lord, so easy to receive Holy Communion it would be if only we were not enslaved to earthly things. How easy it would be for us if only we wanted to accept the graces which are offered us.

These are only a few thoughts. I have only mentioned a single attribute of Our Lady - her longing for her Eucharistic Saviour. The other two attributes: how she received this bread, how often and with which attitude - perhaps I can still say a few words on them at another opportunity. I think we should kneel down quite simply, at least in spirit, and ask Our Lady:

Let us be, O 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!