

SERMON GIVEN ON 3 JUNE 1962

The month of May has come to an end. Involuntarily we ask ourselves whether we have achieved our aim to a certain extent? what did we want to achieve? We wished to become outspokenly supernatural men, men of Easter, the new men of paradise in Christ Jesus, after the example of Our Lady, in a worldly, modern world. Have we achieved this aim? If we look back over the past month and consider what we have discussed Sunday after Sunday, we see Our Lady from two aspects:

She is simply the ideal, the Mistress of this supernatural life in Christ Jesus, but she is according to the divine plan, the Mother of this divine life within us.

Let me ask again what have we achieved? I would not be surprised if we all had to say that in essentials it is with us as it was with the Apostles at the time when Our Lord had ascended into heaven and promised the Holy Spirit. They had been not just one month, but three years in the company of Our Lord, the best teacher of the supernatural life, the divine life. What did Our Lord achieve? Let me remind you of only one example. When the opportunity arose Our Lord spoke of his heavenly Father in the most surprisingly beautiful words. The Apostles were caught up by the wonderful things which Our Lord said about the Father. Suddenly Philip broke out with the plea: Show us the Father! And what did Jesus answer? It is most instructing Three years it is true he did not say this literally as I put it you have been with me for so long and I have been with you. I have been your instructor, your example. What have I not already told you about the Father? We have been together for so long, Philip, and you do not know what I have said so often? Who sees me sees the Father. We feel sorry for Our Lord. After all he has done for three long years, what had he achieved?

It is not as if it had been other instruments, like John the Baptist or the Beloved Disciple, or Peter, who had taught them. We would more easily have understood that and said: they were mediocre, they themselves were not convinced, or insufficiently convinced of what Our Lord had told them. No, Our Lord was their only teacher. You have been with me so long, and what have you understood? Who sees me, Philip, sees the Father. We may also not forget that Our Lord had said the same thing on a previous occasion: the people do not understand what I say, nor the examples, symbols and parables which I use; but to you it is given to understand all these things. And yet, although they received the grace to understand, how little did they understand. In today's Gospel we heard that he gave this as the reason why he had to go away, why he could stay no longer: I send you the Comforter that you may not be alone. What was the Holy Spirit to do? He will help you to understand me, he will teach you all things whatsoever I have said to you. What does that mean? They had understood hardly anything despite three years of Our Lord's teaching. The Holy Spirit will now introduce you into all that I said to you.

It seems to me as if we are in the same situation. Our Lord promised his Apostles the Holy Spirit before he ascended into heaven, and we are also awaiting the descent of the Holy Spirit. There is only one week to Pentecost, the renewal of the miracle of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descends on us. What does he want? He wishes to preach in the future. He does not wish to tell us anything new, he only desires to lead us more deeply into all that Our Lord has taught us. That is an immense amount. If we wish to narrow it down to our situation, we may say that he wishes to lead us more deeply into all that Our Lord has told us about his and our Mother. We should understand Our Lady better, we should see her position in the Kingdom of God more clearly, and understand her mission better. The Holy Spirit must do that.

He has the final responsibility that we become as like to Our Lady as possible; that we become outspokenly supernatural men, outspoken men of Easter, according to her example, and like her at least as far as possible. That is the man of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit wishes to form us into new men, according to the example of Our Lady, the man who is born in and from Christ, the man of paradise.

I would like to point out a unique law in the Kingdom of God. Grignon de Montfort revealed this law in a most understandable way. He said, 'When the Holy Spirit discovers his Bride, Our Lady in a soul' here I must pause for a moment and add that of course he has first formed Our Lady in this soul he must introduce it to what Our Lord had said; and when he has achieved this with some degree of success, and he truly sees in my soul and your soul an image of Our Lady, the so says the Saint Holy Spirit enters into this soul with all his infinite riches. First he forms Our Lady in us, and when he discovers her in us he enters into our souls with all his infinite riches. He seems to bring his graces and gifts to the extent that the soul has become an image of Mary.

Who of us is such an image of Our Lady? Grignon goes yet further and answers many modern problems. We often experience in ourselves and in our children how few Christians there are today who are heroic Christians. How many of us are unrestrainedly given over to the world? Is it not true that we who come from Europe, who still have sound customs, often feel misunderstood by our children? When we speak of such things, of our customs, our Marian customs, for example, which we brought with us from across the ocean, are we not afraid of being laughed at? And even if we come from the best families, is it not possible that these are considered as out of date? This is not for us? This is even more so when we dealt with a time in which these opposing tendencies heap up, in which there is no longer a religious atmosphere.

Where do we find heroic personalities today among the people, heroic souls who have truly experienced the miracle of grace in themselves. And now: Grignon says we find too few ideal personalities among Christians in whom the Holy Spirit has worked the miracle of spiritual transformation. Why? Because the Holy Spirit

only forms and transforms those souls into heroes where he finds a close union with his Bride. Hence if I have no Marian attitude, if I am not an image of Our Lady, he does not want to do great things to me.

Here we must pause and dig a little deeper. Let us recall the words of the Credo: Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine. In what way did the only begotten Son of God take flesh? Et incarnatus est The answer? We pray it on countless occasions; through the espousal of the Holy Spirit with Our Lady. De Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine. The Holy Spirit took possession of Our Lady et Verbum caro factum est et Incarnatus est. It is the same law whereby we will be born again through the Holy Spirit espousing Mary again Ex Maria Virgine.

Whoever wishes to be an 'alter Christus' in a perfect way and that is the meaning of being a Christian must do so through the Holy Spirit discovering Mary in us, and in and through us forming his Bride anew. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit: Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur Then I see new connections, I look more deeply and do not remain with exterior things. Unless I do this I will never penetrate the laws of the Kingdom of God, and therefore I cannot hear what God wants of me.

If I wish to know more exactly what the Holy Spirit wishes to show me in detail, we first get a general answer. He should remove the veil and show us the position of Our Lady in the plan of Redemption, above all in our modern world. However, the picture of Our Lady is so universal, there are so many reflections of God's glories, that one cannot imitate them individually. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit, asking him to show us what it means when we say that Our Lady is not only the Mother of God but also our Mother. What should we do? We should pray at least once a day to the Holy Spirit, asking him to descend upon us and take possession of our souls. What should he show us? He should convince us and imbue us with this extremely penetrating truth: Our Lady is in truth and reality my Mother, our Mother, the Mother of Christendom, Mother of Divine Grace, our spiritual Mother.

I would now like to ask two questions:

What do we mean when we say that Our Lady is truly Our Mother?

and if there is time I will then ask:

How do we know that she is truly Our Mother?

1 What do we mean when we say that she is really and truly our Mother? That may sound strange, but when we look deeper we see that it has a deep meaning. We do not say that Our Lady is like a mother, but that she is truly our Mother. How often do we say that somebody is good to us for example, I am sick, my

children are sick, and a neighbour is good to me as a mother. If I say that Our Lady is like a mother, what do I mean? There are three possibilities:

For example, somebody may say that it is mere words, a manner of speaking which I have learnt from childhood? Show me that you are my mother. If I am in trouble, or if that is prayed aloud, then I merely repeat it. It means nothing. I could as well say: show me who will win the test match? It would mean more to me than: show me that you are my Mother.

I do not think that anybody uses the word 'Mother' in such a superficial way. In our Sunday magazine we may often read statements made by various popes, in particular Leo XIII and Pius X. See how deeply they are convinced of this fact thereby they repeat the conviction of Christianity that the attraction to Our Lady is like an outspoken natural urge, a supernatural urge. The Pope once wrote that after her Assumption, Our Lady exerted an almost infinite influence and power over the Heart of God and our Saviour in showing herself as Mother. She has done so much for individuals as well as for mankind in general, that we almost take it for granted that love for Our Lady is to be found in every Christian, in every one who is baptised at least as a tendency that is almost a part of one's nature and it is not so easy to destroy a natural urge. And then he adds it is almost a continuation of what we have heard from Grignon when heresy spreads everywhere, and when Christians start to become lukewarm and superficial, it is Our Lady who descends and educates heroes for Christianity. Thus she is truly our Mother, and we all have a tendency almost a natural urge which sooner or later drives us to Our Lady.

Since we may suppose that we have been baptised, we may also suppose that this urge towards Our Lady will not be so easily killed. It may be that it is not always so outspoken, for today we are so overgrown that this urge can also be overgrown. However, it will take a lot to tear this urge out of our hearts.

On other occasions we have remarked what strange things one can sometimes notice. There are people who wish to have nothing to do with God, and who yet love Our Lady. That is actually nonsensical. How can it happen? It is this mysterious attraction, this mysterious urge which is implanted in our hearts at baptism, and which cannot be uprooted.

I do not think that we have completely extinguished the fundamental attachment to Our Lady from our hearts. I also do not believe that we are one of those who pray to her because we have been told to do so, or because it is a custom here. No. Therefore, we come to the second possibility, which consists in loving Our Lady, turning to her in all reverses and needs. This is because I love her, and feel urged to say she is like a mother to me. Our Lady is not really and truly my mother, she is only like a mother to me. I place her on a level with those who are good to me. Applied to my religious and moral life, it means that she has a natural kindness and perhaps some influence with God. I then suppose that she

is like a mother to me. However, that doesn't touch the heart of the question. We said that Our Lady is really and truly my Mother.

Do we belong to the second group? Probably many of us. We are not deeply convinced that we have a Mother in Our Lady. It is true that she is not our physical Mother, but our spiritual Mother, the Mother of Divine Grace, the Mother of the whole of Christianity. What does it mean when we say that she is really and truly our Mother? If we wish to understand it properly, we will have to draw a comparison between natural and supernatural motherhood.

What is natural motherhood? It means my natural mother who helped God to give me my body. My mother helped God to beget me, so that I could be a person. Just as my natural mother helped God to do this, so Our Lady helped, and still helps the child of God to be born in me.

What does that imply in practice? In what does the supernatural motherhood of Our Lady consist? To be a child of God means that I share in the divine nature. I share in the life of Our Saviour. Our Lady cooperated in order that I might do so, which means:

1 She merited this grace merited in the objective Order;

2 She distributes all these graces; 3 She has the great task to educate the child of God in me to completion, i.e. to the maturity of the life of Christ.

We have heard this, but are we convinced of it? Let us think again of the Holy Spirit. What should he do? He should introduce us into this truth. Our Lord has told us, although not as clearly as I have now said it, but he did say it. We may look it up, but who of us understands it? Who is penetrated by it? And yet we must be penetrated by it, otherwise who can stand up in life.

I think of all who are here. God be thanked that we all had a mother. What is the relationship between mother and child, seen on a purely natural level? This living union between mother and child is a unique mystery. I speak of natural motherhood. How long does this union last? As long as the mother carried the child in her womb in a mysterious way. Within the womb one and the same blood and life unite mother and child. The child is part of the mother, so close is the union between them.

Involuntarily we ask ourselves: How about the union between Our Lady and myself? I will answer that later. Once the child is born, once it has been forcefully separated, amidst bitter pain, from the womb of the mother, there yet remains a unique spiritual union. The attraction of the mother to her child is inextinguishable, unless the mother is an unnatural mother who has destroyed all her natural urges. Vice versa, the child also has this natural attraction to his

mother, he would like, so to speak, to return to the womb from which he has been born.

Perhaps we will have to say that unfortunately when we think of our child, it seems as if all his childlike needs and urges have been torn from his heart. He hardly wants to have anything to do with us. I must buy myself a house, because I fear that in my old age he will want to have nothing to do with me, since modern man has become so unnatural. The normal longing for this union on the part of the mother, remains until the end of her life, if she has remained more or less normal, and this despite every disappointment in the child. If the child is in need even if he has poked out her eyes, even if he has trodden on her heart who is always at hand? Who is still ready to make the greatest sacrifices, even to give her life for him? it is the mother.

We could quote many examples if only there was more time. Probably all of us have read the story of the 'Lion of Florence'. The lion escaped from its cage and set out to do mischief. Everybody fled. Only a child continued to play in the market place. The people watching from the windows shook with fear at the danger of the child. Suddenly a house door was thrown open, and in danger of death, a mother ran out and fetched the child into the house.

We must realise that we modern man have often become so unnatural in our thoughts and feelings, that we no longer know that it means to be really and truly a mother.

Let us recall expressions used by the popes I think especially of Leo XIII and Pope Pius X how strongly did they not stress: We have been so to speak, begotten in the womb of Our Lady! We have heard how that is with a natural mother. I will repeat it on another occasion. We must hear it again so that we have reason to call: 'Come, Holy Spirit!' Let me penetrate more deeply into the truths which I no longer know. I only play with the truths! She begot me, she begot me in her womb, just as the child in the mother's womb is cobegotten and Our Lady is constantly united with me, and she is always ready to give everything for me. That means, Our Lady is really and truly my Mother.

We know of a young saint, the son of a Polish King Stanislaus Koska. He ran away from home in order to become a Jesuit. He came to Rome, and one day went for a walk with one of the Fathers. He asked him if he also loved Our Lady. 'Of course,' was his astonished answer, 'she is my Mother.' He did not say: she is like a mother, but, she is my Mother.

We know a Father R., a brilliant missionary. He was already an old man, but he was not afraid to say from the pulpit: 'See, I am now an old man, already 60 years old, I am not ashamed to say that I cannot exist without my Mother.' Do we understand what that means?

If it is true that Our Lady is really my Mother, not merely like a mother to me, then my religiousmoral life cannot exist without her. That is not a sham, I must only acknowledge it in all honesty. The divine life within me and the moral values within me, are dependent on the help and grace of Our Lady. Unfortunately I must stop. Today we have only clarified the one conception Our Lady is really my Mother.

Long ago, when many Germans emigrated to America because there was insufficient to eat, a young girl decided to do the same. However, her mother, whom she loved very much, could not bear it. Their farewell at the harbour was a very touching scene. The time came for the ship to sail, and the two still stood together on the shore. When the sirens sounded the daughter had to tear herself away. The mother feared for her daughter's wellbeing in America, and her last call was: 'Child, do not forget your mother.'

I think I should repeat these words to you. We do not know what the future holds in store for us. We must travel over the sea of our modern time. Let me imprint deeply into my soul: Child, do not forget your Mother. I do not forget that Our Lady is my Mother, that she is also the Mother of my children. And even if I can do nothing else, because the children withdraw completely, yet I can still do one thing: through my word and example, I can plant the seed of pure and tender love for Our Lady into their hearts. Child, do not forget your Mother. Come what may, I will never forget Our Lady, then she will never forget me. Amen.