

THE KINGSTREE SHRINE: NOURISHING THE HEART

A newspaper published an article on the Shrine of Our Lady of South Carolina – Our Lady of Joyful Hope - entitled “Shrine seeks to train the heart.” Although shrines are intended to influence the heart, as schools form the mind, “training” is not exactly right. The heart is important because it attracts us to goodness and motivates our actions.

A theology professor, when analyzing the episode of Emmaus [Luke 24.13-35], said that one of the two disciples was most likely a woman. He based that judgment on the statement by one of them, “Didn’t our hearts burn when he [Christ] explained the scriptures to us!” - as though the heart was only a feminine concern. Are men, then, to be heartless?

Blessed John Paul II refutes that idea. In his youth, he frequently visited the great Shrine of Calvary near his town. When he made a pilgrimage there as Pope, he said, “Here the Mother of God nourished my heart.” He was a man not only of the head but of the heart as well. His heart was not undernourished. That probably explains his popularity.

The Emmaus episode shows how Our Lord prepared the hearts of his disciples before “the breaking of the bread” – the original scriptural signification for the Eucharist.

In his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Bl. John Paul II stated that he wanted to “re-ignite a Eucharistic amazement” that once permeated many parts of the Church. He concluded this document with the section “At the School of Mary, ‘Woman of the Eucharist’”. In that section he emphasizes our Lady’s singular relationship to the Eucharist and declares that “The Church, which looks to Mary as a model, is also called to imitate her in her relationship with this most holy mystery.”

Blessed Dina Belanger, a Religious of Jesus and Mary in Quebec, Canada [+1928], had a vision in which she saw the Heart of Jesus united to the Eucharist. Rays emanated from the Host, while flames burst from his Heart. Our Lady was perfectly united to Our Lord. Both the rays and the flames passed through her Immaculate Heart. She was also seen leading people to her Eucharistic Son.

From this we are informed that both the illumination and love of the Eucharist come through Mary. It is to her that we should confidently go for true devotion to the Eucharist. Pope Benedict XVI pointed out that Mary gives us the eyes and heart to contemplate Jesus in the Eucharist.

Relevant to this is the experience of Dorothy O’Neill Weimar – The Star of Mary – who died in New Haven, Connecticut in 1974. Her unique spirituality centered on the Mass and the Rosary. In an entry in her journal, dated October 1946, she records, “About this time whenever I was attending Holy Hour... and the priest and people would start the rosary, I would find myself kneeling next to our Blessed Mother. She would place her hand over mine. I would hear her voice sweet, rich. I would kneel unable to move as she told me the story of each mystery... Mary has often asked me to ‘Live Her Rosary’. *‘To all who come to me I will tell the story of my rosary – the Story of the Mass – the life, death and resurrection*

of Jesus.” Here we see our Lady nourishing the heart of Dorothy with the rosary for the appreciation of the Mass.

Pope Leo XIII wrote similarly in 1892: “This sequence of wonderful events the Rosary frequently and constantly recalls to the minds of the faithful, and presents them almost as though they were unfolding before their eyes... impressing and stirring them as though they were listening to the very voice of the Blessed Mother explaining the mysteries and conversing with them at length about their salvation.” Dorothy Weimar is the verification of that statement.

It is easy, then, to think of the rosary as a spiritual umbilical cord. The natural one feeds and purifies the child in the womb. Something similar happens on the spiritual level through the rosary. As the natural umbilical cord unites the mother and child, so the rosary unites the hearts of Mary and her spiritual children. She then becomes the source of the spiritual nourishment and purification. “Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God” [Matthew 5.8]. Purity of heart means the perfection of love. Mary shows how to remove the obstacles to such love and inspires motives for such love by manifesting the love of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus in his devoted life, sacrificial death and glorious resurrection, celebrated in the liturgy of the Church. In the natural state the umbilical cord is cut and the child is no longer united in that way with the mother. The child is independent of her. That should not happen in the spiritual state because independent of Mary’s maternal presence, the person loses that means of that excellent nourishment and purification and is now on its own uncertain path. The rosary must always be in the hands and hearts of her children for the security of their sanctification. And why this emphasis on Mary? Because as St. Luke tells us, “Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart.” Truly, as St. Augustine expressed it, here “heart speaks to heart”.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his 15 June 2010 discourse at the Convention of the Diocese of Rome, trusted in her role as Mother of the Eucharistic People of God, when he said, “May Mary, who in a unique way, lived communion with God and the sacrifice of her Son on Calvary, obtain that we might live ever more intensely, devoutly and wisely the mystery of the Eucharist, in order to proclaim with our words and in our life the love that God has for every human being.” With such hope he stated on 17 November 2010, “I would like to affirm with joy that today there is a ‘Eucharistic springtime’ in the Church... I pray that this ‘Eucharistic springtime may spread increasingly in every parish”.

It is for such reasons that Bl. John Paul II invoked the assistance of Mary: “Let us together ask her to lead believers toward an ever more perfect knowledge of the saving power of the sacrifice of Christ, who is present in the Eucharist.” She can and certainly will fill our empty churches and seminaries with hearts nourished on her rosary.

Reverend Stanley Smolenski, spma
Shrine Director - frss@ftc-i.net

www.ourladyofsouthcarolina.net