

## His Last Testament

A solemnity attaches to last words even though they are uttered in turmoil or weakness. What then is to be thought of Our Lord's final injunction to the apostles: what has been called his last will and testament, delivered at a moment more awesome than that of Sinai – that is as the completion of all his earthly law giving and immediately before his Ascension? As he speaks, he is already clothed with the very majesty of the Trinity: 'Go ye out into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature' (Mk 16:15).

Those words supply the Christian keynote. Faith must strain after all men with inextinguishable ardour. Sometimes that essential note is missing. People are not sought after, neither those in the fold nor those outside it. But if that Ascension commandment be disregarded, it will be at a price – the price of loss of grace, of diminution and decay, even to the extinction of faith. Look round and see how many places have already paid that awful price.

## **The Gospel for All**

When Christ said all, he meant ALL. Actually he had before his eyes each individual one – ‘for whom he had worn the Crown – and borne the Cross, the nails, the lance – the rabble’s ignominious glance – unnumbered griefs, unmeasured woes – fainting and agonising throes – and death itself on Calvary.’ Labour so great must not be thrown away. The Precious Blood must now be touched to everyone for whom it was so prodigally shed. That Christian commission drastically drives us out to all men everywhere – to the least ones, to the greatest ones, to those near, to those remote, to the ordinary people, to the wickedest men, to the farthest shack, to all afflicted creatures, to the diabolical types, to the loneliest lighthouse, to the Magdalene, to the leper, to the forgotten sort, to the victims of drink and vice, to the dangerous classes, to the dwellers in caves and caravans, to those who hide, to the avoided places, to the human wreckage, to the lowest den, to the sun baked desert, to the densest jungle, to the dismal swamp, to the uncharted island, to the undiscovered tribe, out into the absolute unknown to find if there is someone living there, right on to the ends of the earth where the rainbow rests! No one must evade our search lest the gentle Jesus frown upon us.

## **The Legion Must Approach All**

The Legion must be, so to speak, obsessed by that ‘global commandment’. It must, as a first principle, set out to establish a contact of some sort with every soul around it. If this be done – and it can be done; and if the Legion be made to exist in all places – which soon will be; then the Lord’s command will be moving towards fulfilment.

Our Lord, it will be noted, does not order that every creature be converted, but only that approach be made to everyone. The former may be beyond human possibility. But it is not impossible to make the approach. And if that all embracing, indiscriminating contact be made, what then? It is certain that there would be an aftermath. For Our Blessed Lord does not order unmeaning or unnecessary steps to be taken. When that comprehensive approach to men has been effected, at least the divine command has been obeyed; and that is the important circumstance. What happens next might well be the renewal of the Pentecostal fires.

### **Mobilise – Organise**

Many earnest workers believe that by labouring to the limits of their strength, they have done all that God expects of them. Alas, such single handed effort will not carry them afar; nor will the Lord be satisfied with a solitary striving; nor will he make good what they leave unattempted. For the work of religion must be set about like any other work which exceeds the individual power, that is by mobilising and organising until the helpers are sufficient.

This mobilising principle, this effort to join others to our own efforts, is a vital part of common duty. That duty applies not merely to the higher ones of the Church, not merely to the priests, but to every legionary and every Catholic. When the apostolic ripples proceed from every believer, they will add up into a universal deluge.

‘You will find that your powers of action will always be equal to your desires and your progress in faith. For it is not in heavenly as it is in earthly benefactions; you are stinted to no measure or boundary in receiving the gift

of God. The fountain of Divine Grace is ever flowing, is subject to no precise limitations, has no fixed channels to restrain the waters of life. Let us encourage an earnest thirst after those waters and open our hearts to receive them and as much will flow in upon us as our faith will enable us to receive.' (St Cyprian of Carthage)

## The Legionary and The Holy Trinity

It is significant that the first corporate act of the Legion of Mary was to address itself to the Holy Ghost by his invocation and prayer, then proceeding by the Rosary to Mary and her son.

Similarly significant is the fact that when the Vexillum was designed some years later, the same note was unexpectedly struck. The Holy Ghost proved to be the predominant feature of that emblem. This was strange, for that design was the product of artistic and not of theological thinking. A non-religious emblem, that is, the Standard of the Roman Legion, had been taken and adapted to the purposes of the Marian Legion. The Dove entered in by mode of substitution for the Eagle; and Our Lady's image was in substitution for the image of the Emperor or Consul. Yet the final result portrayed the Holy Ghost as using Mary as the channel to the world of his life-giving influences, and as having taken possession of the Legion.



And later, when the Tessera picture was painted, it illustrated the same devotional position; the Holy Ghost broods over the Legion. By his power the undying warfare accomplishes: the Virgin crushes the head of the serpent; her battalions advance to their foretold victory over the adverse forces.

### **Red – The Legion Colour**

It is an additional picturesque circumstance that the colour of the Legion is red, and not, as might be expected, blue. This was determined in connection with the settling of a minor detail, that is, the colour of Our Lady's halo in the Vexillum and in the Tessera picture. It was felt that Legion symbolism required that Our Lady be shown as full of the Holy Spirit and that this should be denoted by making her halo of his colour. This drew with it the further thought that the Legion's colour should be red. The same note is struck in the Tessera picture, which depicts Our Lady as the Biblical Pillar of Fire, all luminous and burning with the Holy Spirit.

So, when the Legion Promise was composed, it was consistent – though initially causing some surprise – that it should be directed to the Holy Ghost and not to the Queen of the Legion. Again that vital note is struck: it is always the Holy Spirit who regenerates the world – even to the bestowing of the smallest individual grace; and his agency is always Mary. By the operation of the Holy Ghost in Mary, the Eternal Son is made Man. Thereby mankind is united to the Holy Trinity, and Mary herself is placed in a distinct, unique relation to each Divine Person, such that without her we would not know or approach that Person. That threefold place of Mary must at least be glimpsed by us, inasmuch as an understanding of the

divine arrangements is the choicest sort of grace, one which is not intended to be out of our reach.

### **Devotion to Each Divine Person**

The saints are insistent on the necessity for thus distinguishing between the Three Divine Persons and for rendering to each one of them an appropriate worship. The Athanasian Creed is mandatory and strangely menacing in regard to this requirement, which proceeds from the fact that the final purpose of Creation and of the Incarnation is the glorification of the Trinity.

But how can so incomprehensible a mystery be even dimly probed? Assuredly by divine enlightenment alone, but this grace can confidently be claimed from her to whom, for the first time in the world, the doctrine of the Trinity was definitely intimated. That occasion was the epochal moment of the Annunciation. Through its high Angel the Holy Trinity thus declared itself to Mary: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' (Luke 1:35)

In this revelation all the three Divine Persons are clearly specified: First, the Holy Ghost, the Operator of the Incarnation; second, the Most High, the Father of him who is to be born; third, that Child who 'shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High'. (Luke 1: 32)

The contemplation of Mary's different relations to the Divine Persons helps towards distinguishing as between the Three, and enables a distinctive worship to be offered to each one of them.

## **United With God the Son**

To the Second Divine Person, Mary's relation is the one nearest to our comprehension, that of mother. But her motherhood is of a closeness, a permanency and a quality infinitely surpassing the normal human relationship. In the case of Jesus and Mary the oneness of souls was primary, and of flesh secondary; so that even when separation of flesh occurred at birth, their union was not interrupted but went on into further incomprehensible degrees of intensity and association – such that Mary can be declared by the Church to be not only the 'helpmate' of that Second Divine Person – Co-Redemptrix in salvation: Mediatrix in grace – but actually 'like unto him'.

## **Co-Worker with the Holy Ghost**

Of the Holy Ghost, Mary is commonly called the temple or the sanctuary, but these terms are insufficiently expressive of the reality, which is that he has so united her to himself as to make her the next thing in dignity to himself. Mary has been so taken up into the Holy Ghost, made one with him, animated by him, that he is as her very soul. She is no mere instrument or channel of his activity; she is an intelligent, conscious co-operator with him to such degree that when she acts, it is also he who acts; and that if her intervention be not received, neither is his.

The Holy Ghost is Love, Beauty, Power, Wisdom, Purity, and all else that is of God. If he descent in plenitude, every need can be met, and the most grievous problem can be brought into conformity with the divine will. The man who thus makes the Holy Ghost his helper (Ps 77) enters into the tide of omnipotence. If one of the conditions for so attracting him is the understanding of Our Lady's relation to him, another vital condition is that we appreciate the



Holy Ghost himself as a real, distinct, Divine Person with his appropriate mission in regard to us. This appreciation of his will not be maintained except there be a reasonably frequent turning of the mind to him. By including just that glance in his direction, every devotion to the Blessed Virgin can be made a wide-open way to the Holy Ghost. Especially can legionaries so utilise the Rosary. Not only does the Rosary form a prime devotion to the Holy Ghost by reason of its being the chief prayer to Our Lady, but, as well, its contents, the Fifteen Mysteries, celebrate the principal interventions of the Holy Ghost in the drama of Redemption.

### **Daughter of the Father**

Mary's relation to the Eternal Father is usually defined as that of daughter. This title is intended to designate:

- a. her position as 'the first of all creatures, the most acceptable child of God, the nearest and dearest to Him' (Newman);
- b. the fullness of her union with Jesus which makes her enter into new relations to the Father, thereby entitling her to be mystically styled the daughter of the Father;
- c. the pre-eminent resemblance which she bears to the Father, which has fitted her to pour out into the world the everlasting Light which issues from that loving Father.

But that title of 'daughter' may not sufficiently bring home to us the influence which her union with the Father exerts on us who are his children and her children. 'He has communicated to her his fruitfulness as far as a mere creature was capable of it, in order that he might give her

the power to produce his son and all the members of his Mystical Body.' (St Louis-Marie). Her relation to the Father is a fundamental, every-present element in the flow of life to every soul. It is the requirement of God that what he gives to man must be reflected in appreciation and co-operation.

Therefore that life-giving union must be made a subject of our thoughts, and so it is suggested that the Pater Noster, which is often on the lips of legionaries, should take particular account of that intention. This prayer was composed by Jesus Christ Our Lord, and therefore it asks for the right things in the ideal way. If recited with the right advertence and in the spirit of the Catholic Church, it must accomplish perfectly its purpose of glorifying the Eternal Father and of acknowledging his every-flowing gift to us through Mary.