

“THE APOSTLE TAKES HER TO HIS OWN”

—*John xix. 27.*

In the *Handbook* it has been stressed that we cannot pick and choose in Christ; that we cannot receive the Christ of glory without at the same time bringing into our lives the Christ of pain and persecution; because there is but the one Christ who cannot be divided. We have to take Him as He is. If we go to Him seeking peace and happiness, we may find that we have nailed ourselves to the Cross. The opposites are mixed up and cannot be separated; no pain, no palm; no thorn, no throne; no gall, no glory; no cross, no crown. We reach out for the one and find that we have got the other with it.

And, of course, the same law applies to Our Blessed Lady. Neither can she be divided up into compartments as between which we may pick and choose what seems to suit us. We cannot join her in her joys without finding that presently our hearts are riven with her sufferings.

Adequate Devotion Means Union

If we want, like St. John the beloved disciple, to take her to our own (John xix. 27), it must be in her completeness. If we are willing to accept only a phase of her being, we may hardly receive her at all. Obviously devotion to her must attend to and try to reproduce every aspect of her personality and mission. It must not chiefly concern itself with what is not the most important. For instance, it is valuable to

regard her as our exquisite model whose virtues we must draw into ourselves. But to do that and to do no more would be a partial and indeed a petty devotion to her. Neither is it enough to pray to her, even though it be in considerable quantity. Nor is it enough to know and rejoice at the innumerable and startling ways in which the Three Divine Persons have encompassed her, and built upon her, and caused her to reflect Their own attributes. All these tributes of respect are due to her and must be given to her, but they are no more than parts of the whole. Adequate devotion to her is only achieved by union with her. Union necessarily means community of life with her; and her life does not consist mainly in the claiming of admiration but in the communicating of grace.

Motherhood—Mary's Destiny

Her whole life and destiny have been motherhood, first of Christ and then of men. For that she was prepared and brought into existence by the Holy Trinity after an eternal deliberation (as St. Augustine remarks). On the day of the Annunciation she entered on her wondrous work, and ever since she has been the busy mother attending to her household duties. For a while these were contained in Nazareth, but soon the little house became the whole wide world, and her Son expanded into mankind. And so it has continued; all the time her domestic work goes on and nothing in that Nazareth-grown-big can be performed without her. Any caring of the Lord's Body is only supplemental to her care; the apostle only adds himself to her maternal occupations; and in that sense Our Lady might declare: "I am Apostleship," almost as she said: "I am the Immaculate Conception."

That motherhood of souls being her essential function and her very life, it follows that without participation in it there

can be no real union with her. Therefore, let the position be stated once again: true devotion to Mary must comprise the service of souls. Mary without motherhood and the Christian without apostleship, would be analogous ideas. Both the one and the other would be incomplete, unreal, unsubstantial, false to the Divine intention.

Devotion to Mary Means Apostleship

Accordingly, the Legion is not built, as some suppose, upon two principles, i.e., Mary and apostleship, but upon the single principle of Mary, which principle embraces apostleship and (rightly understood) the entire Christian life.

Wishful thinking is proverbially an empty process. A mere verbal offering of our services to Mary can be as empty. It is not to be thought that apostolic duties will descend from Heaven on those who content themselves with waiting passively for that to happen. It is rather to be feared that those idle ones will continue in their state of unemployment. The only effective method of offering ourselves as apostles is to undertake apostleship. That step taken, at once Mary embraces our activity and incorporates it in her motherhood.

Moreover, Mary cannot do without that help. But surely this suggestion goes too far? How could the Virgin so powerful be dependent on the aid of persons so weak? But, indeed, such is the case. It is a part of the divine arrangement which requires our co-operation and which does not save man otherwise than through man. It is true that Mary's treasury of grace is super-abundant, but she cannot spend from it without our help. If she could use her power according to her heart alone, the world would be converted in the twinkling of an eye. But she has to wait till the human agencies are available to her. Deprived of them, she cannot fulfil her motherhood, and souls starve and die. So she

welcomes eagerly any who will really place themselves at her disposal, and she will utilise them, one and all; not only the holy and the fit, but likewise the infirm and the unfit. So needed are they all that none will be rejected. Even the least can transmit much of the power of Mary; while through those that are better she can put forth her might. Bear in mind how the sunlight streams dazzlingly through a clean window and struggles through a dirty one.