



*Devotion to the Immaculate and Sorrowful Heart of Mary
according to Father Masmítja,
founder of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*

Friday, June 21, 2019

Imitating the Immaculate Heart of Mary

In founding a religious community named for the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Fr. Masmítja intended devotion to the Heart of Mary to profoundly influence the spirituality of the Institute as a whole and of each individual Sister. Father Masmítja encouraged the Sisters, “I hope that you are and will continue to be true Daughters of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary” (Lozano 51). There are many aspects of devotion to the Heart of our Lady, which we will explore throughout the following nights of the novena. Tonight, we will focus our attention on how a living relationship with our Lady, especially focusing on Her Heart, will lead us to love, imitate, and serve her.

To begin, we must see the need for a living relationship with our Lady through her Immaculate Heart. Do we know Mary? We can know about many things, but to know another person implies a personal relationship with that person, a mutual relationship, a knowledge much deeper than merely knowing things about a person, like facts or figures. Do we know Mary, or simply know about her? Do we know the Heart of our Mother, or simply know things about her Immaculate Heart? See the difference? We need a living relationship that takes us from our head knowledge to our hearts—where we come to know her in a personal way, where she becomes real to us, in our daily lives.

This is the living relationship that Fr. Masmítja intended for the Sisters in founding this religious community. He desired that the Sisters lived





relationship with our Lady could then be taken out to those whom they served, that they could share this relationship with those around them, and in that way spread devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Lozano 41, 52-53). Mary wants this living relationship with each of us, and she always wants to deepen that relationship with us. Today, as we look at loving, imitating, and serving her Immaculate Heart, let's look through that lens: Mary is drawing each of us closer to her Heart. Wherever you find yourself in your relationship with Mary this evening, let us ask her to lead us into a deeper relationship, a deeper knowledge of herself, that we may experience her presence in our lives, if we haven't already, or experience her presence in a more profound way.

As we look at the Heart of Mary, the beginning of our devotion must be a loving appreciation for who she is. In the Vatican Council II document on the Church entitled *Lumen Gentium*, which has an entire chapter devoted to our Lady, true devotion to our Lady is described as “[proceeding] from true faith, by which we are led to recognize the excellence of the Mother of God, and we are moved to a filial love towards our Mother and the imitation of her virtues” (article 67). Notice that love flows from recognizing the gifts given to our Lady, noticing the beauty within her. The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes her as gifted from the moment of her conception more than any other created person. The singular graces given to Her are fitting for Her role as Mother of God, and again, they are entirely God's gift (articles 487, 490, 967, 972). This is even expressed in scripture. At the Annunciation, the Angel Gabriel, upon greeting Mary, addresses her as “Full of grace,” (Lk 1:28) but the original Greek word used by St. Luke might more accurately be rendered “she who has been made full of grace.” So, we see that from the very beginning, we have our Lady presented as one who has been made this way by God.

The Church calls us to appreciate her many gifts, and in this way give glory to God. We offer a loving gaze upon God's greatest creation. As Mary herself says in Luke's Gospel, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord” (Lk 1: 46). Everything within Mary is God's work, so that love and praise of our



Lady leads to the greater glory of God. She is His handiwork (Eph 2:10). St. Louis de Montfort is so insistent upon this point that he says, “We never give more honor to Jesus than when we honor His Mother” (45).

This is where the Church begins in encouraging devotion to our Lady: to praise God’s work within her. It is interesting, at the same time, to note that the Church never stops there. In speaking of singular graces given to Mary by God, the Church always makes note of Mary’s heroic faith and obedience to God’s will. The Catechism states, “By her complete adherence to the Father’s will, to His Son’s redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church’s model of faith and charity” (article 967). Not only are we called to love Mary because of the beautiful work of God within her, but also because of Mary’s cooperation with that work through her faithful obedience to God’s will.

This is what the Sisters have always made a focus of our prayer and meditation. In my own life, I was very blessed to receive twelve years of Catholic education, so I’ve always been well versed in her singular graces. They are taught to us from a very young age. However, if we stop there, and do not take that next step the Church asks of us, to look upon her beautiful obedience, it’s easy for Mary to become like a piece of art in a museum, to be admired from afar. I think many people find themselves in that position, looking upon our Lady from afar. The Church invites us to draw close, to see her simple yet beautiful humanity, and to ponder her daily, unwavering obedience to God’s will, her total receptivity to His grace. It’s here where we see how united she is to us in our own journey of faith, how present to us, how helpful she is to us. This is the knowledge of our Lady that Fr. Masmitjá wanted the Sisters to be able to pass on to all those they encountered.

We see the reality of Mary’s obedience in Sacred Scripture, in how she describes herself. How does Mary describe who she is? At the Annunciation, in response to the message of the angel, Mary says, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). Mary



describes herself as “handmaid of the Lord.” This is her self-proclaimed identity. What is the song of her Immaculate Heart that flows forth from this identity? “May it be done to me according to your word.” Fiat. “May it be done.” This one word is the defining word of Mary’s heart, and it is this that allows us to know the heart of our Lady. Mary said “yes” to God. It is so simple. If you want to understand who Mary is, if you desire to love her, then contemplate the simple beauty of her heart. She said yes, fiat, to whatever God desired of her, in every moment of her life. In the book *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, Jean Pierre de Caussade describes Mary’s fiat as “the basis of her spiritual life... which governed all she did and thought. No matter what her jobs were—ordinary, commonplace, or seemingly more important ones—they revealed to [Mary]... the activity of the Almighty and were an opportunity for her to praise God” (22-23).

It is only by her fiat, at every moment of her life, that Mary could receive all that God desired to give her. She truly is the living reality of God’s generosity. In reading the Bible, the Old Testament especially, we hear over and over again God saying to His people things similar to what we hear in Psalm 81, “O, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways.” Then the Lord promises them blessings, safety, prosperity, triumph over enemies. Every description we find of the covenant in the Old Testament is very similar in that the Lord asks them to obey His commandments and statutes so that they may live, that they may have life and have it more abundantly. Over and over again, God is practically pleading with the people, to do as He asks, that they may have life, that He may bless them. It is only in opening our hearts to God by a trusting surrender to His will that we can receive all He desires to give us, rather than hardening our hearts by distrust and disobedience. Mary, Immaculate, without sin, always said “yes” to God perfectly. She is the living image of how God desires to bless all of us, if only we would allow Him. This is God’s delight, to bless us. The book of Acts describes King David as “a man after [God’s] own heart; he will carry out [His] every wish” (Acts 13:22). Mary’s only desire was to please the One she loved with all of her heart; as handmaid of the Lord, she sought to do all He asked.



Here is one who would receive all that God desired to give. This may help us understand the gratitude and the love the saints often express when speaking of our Lady, when speaking of her fiat. Here is one who loved God as He ought to be loved; here is one who said “yes” full of trust and love. How refreshing Mary’s “yes” is, in the midst of all our sinfulness.

The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in meditating on Mary’s fiat that she lived daily, offer this reality to those whom they serve. It’s the way of seeing how real Mary is to us. It is in this that we can imitate her most perfectly.

In our relationship with Mary, our love for her should naturally move toward an imitation of her. It is in her fiat that the Immaculate Heart of Mary is so very imitable. Pope Benedict XVI, when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, actually describes devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as embracing the attitude of her Heart, the attitude of her fiat. One must, he writes, “make the fiat— ‘your will be done’— the defining center of one’s whole life” (Ratzinger 228). It is precisely in making fiat the defining center of our life that we most fully imitate our Lady. This is a prayer that the Sisters make their own every day. There was only one word of her Immaculate Heart that was the source of all of her actions. Fiat. Was this not the same as the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who came only to do the will of the Father, who sought to please the Father in all things, whose very food was to do the will of the One who sent Him? (See Jn 4:34; 6:38; 8:29). Imitating our Lady in her fiat is what allows us to more perfectly imitate Christ; this is what the Sisters strive to do every day, and the means they use in instructing others in their devotion to the Heart of our Lady as well.

Within our everyday life, what will our fiat look like? It may be helpful to note what Mary’s fiat looked like, how simple it was. In the Bible, we see her at the Annunciation, given her vocation as Mother of the Messiah, yet not knowing how exactly God would fulfill His will in her. Yet she answers fiat, let it be done, full of trust even as she walks forward in a darkness of faith. We see her at the Visitation, serving the needs of those whom God has placed in her life, simply doing the good she can to those around her,



even at the cost of her own comfort and convenience. Fiat, let it be done. At the Nativity, she adores God made man, the greatest gift given to us in the most unanticipated way; fiat. She presents Him at the Temple, He who is the love of her Heart, only to hear words of his suffering and rejection, for the sake of our redemption; fiat, let it be done, even in hearing that she will share His sorrow with Him. Throughout the hidden years in the home of Nazareth, in her life of poverty, the daily routine within the home found her fiat sung at each mundane task. What the world would not consider worthy, she offered to God each day with love that transformed every simple task into an act of adoration: fiat, let it be done. Throughout Jesus' public ministry, she accompanied Him, listening to His words, watching His works, pondering all that is He in her heart. She watched as the tension mounted, as antagonism grew, as the contradictions foretold engulfed many; she was there with Him, ever faithful in her fiat. Finally, her fiat culminated as she stood beneath His Cross. As He poured out His life for our redemption, there she was, standing with Him, giving her fiat. May your will be done.

This ever-faithful prayer of her heart is to be our own—in our vocation, in letting God lead us even when we don't understand, in all the mundane events of our life, in serving those around us, in forgetting ourselves, in pondering our Lord, in our sufferings and trials. We say with our Lady—fiat, may God's will be done. This is why imitating the Immaculate Heart of Mary is really, quite simple. Simple does not mean easy, but it is very simple.

Our Lady herself wants to help us do this. She sees so clearly the blessings God wants to give to us, and she offers us the grace of her own Heart, the gift of her own fiat, to help us repeat with her each day: fiat, let it be done to me, may God's will be done. She wants to help us, so let us ask her.

As we have been seeking a living relationship with Mary's Immaculate Heart by a deeper love of her and a more complete imitation of her, this relationship culminates in offering ourselves in service to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. You might be wary, thinking "Sister, you've just spent a great deal of time talking about doing God's will... Why should we give ourselves to Mary and to Mary's will?" If we



remember the attitude of Mary's heart, that the resounding word of her heart is always may God's will be done, we know there is no danger in giving ourselves to Mary. Her will is to help us do God's will. She herself says, "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5). St. Louis de Montfort describes the union of wills between Jesus and Mary as such: "So intimately is she united to [Christ] that it would be easier to separate light from the sun and heat from fire" (63). St. Louis de Montfort uses very powerful language in speaking of the service we must give to our Lady. He describes himself as a slave of Mary. He explains that God Himself desires it by establishing Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth (68, 74-76). Mary's Queenship is no mere sentimental imagery, but a reality. We even see the foundations of this in sacred scripture. In the Davidic kingdom of the Old Testament, we see that it is the mother of the King, not the wife of the King, who is in fact Queen (1 Kgs 2:19). When God the Father chose to send His Son into the world, born of woman, giving the King a mother, He was establishing Mary as Queen as well. In the early Church, those first generations of Christians would have understood this; most of them were converted Jews. Mary is Queen. It is a reality; it is not just a pretty picture we see. Serving Mary is no obstacle to the will of God, because it is in fact the will of God that we serve our Lady. Because of this, Louis de Montfort states, "honor and power given to the Queen is honor and power given to the King" (76). We even see this desire of God in the apparitions of our Lady of Fatima. At the beginning of every apparition, when Mary would appear, Lucia would always begin their conversation the question: "What do you want of me?" (Silva 75, 86, 97, 128, 139). On June 13, 1917, our Lady answered Lucia, "Jesus wants to use you to make me known and loved. He wishes to establish devotion to my Immaculate Heart throughout the world" (Silva 86). Jesus desires that Mary's Immaculate Heart be known and loved. What better call could we have to serve the Immaculate Heart of our Lady? We can make Lucia's question our own and ask our Lady: "What do you want of me?" It may be very simple, but I have no doubt that our Lady has plans for each one of us if only we offer ourselves to her.



This service of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is the necessary culmination of our love for her, and our service must flow from a loving imitation of her in order to be effective. We cannot lead others to love her if we do not love her ourselves. We cannot give what we do not have. Greater still, in imitating her, we make the life and love of our Lady visible. What greater means do we have to draw souls to our Immaculate Mother than by loving and serving those souls with the grace and love of her own Heart? It is in the foundation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary that Fr. Masmitjá wanted to make Mary visible, for the Sisters are to be living images of our Lady in order to draw others to love her Immaculate Heart. But this is not something that is limited only to our Sisters. It's in imitating her Heart that all of us are able to make her visible to those in the world around us.

As we conclude this evening, aware that Mary does desire to draw us closer to her heart, I leave you with two short aspirations, prayers that you can make your own. The first, "Mary, make fiat the word of my heart." It's a very simple prayer that many of the Sisters pray. I know that I myself find it very helpful offering just a short aspiration to our Lady, asking for her help, in making us more like herself. Second, I really do encourage you to make Lucia's question to our Lady your own. Simply, "Mary, what do you want of me?" May our love for our Lady lead to the greater glory of God.



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