



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

*Monday, June 24, 2019*

*The Immaculate Heart of Mary: Interceding for us in Heaven*

As from our talks, our chapel, our habit, it is obvious that we strive to have a deep devotion to our Lady, especially her Immaculate Heart. This is inculcated in us from the very beginning; this devotion is what has drawn young women to us. Even our names reflect this devotion. Students sometimes will ask if we have to take “Mary” as part of our names; a typical response to this question is “why wouldn’t I want to have Mary in my name?” When I was deciding my name, I took it for granted that our Lady’s name would be included; the question came of what form and where it would go in my name.

This devotion spills over into the celebration of her feast days. As we live the liturgical year, we focus on her feasts and how her life was associated with the life of Christ. Typically, we enter, are received into the novitiate, and make our vows on a feast of our Lady or on Saturday. For example, I entered on the vigil of the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God and became a novice, professed my first and final vows on the feast of the Assumption of Mary.

As I was preparing for my reception into the novitiate and my profession of vows, I pondered the nature of the feast of the Assumption. I knew the doctrine associated with the Assumption of Mary into Heaven: at the conclusion of her earthly life, Mary was taken up body and soul into Heaven. I knew that it was a Holy Day of Obligation, a glorious mystery of the Rosary, a Solemnity; it is a big deal in the mind of the Church. Yet initially I did not realize what this feast was all about – why it was such a big deal.





While it is a mystery associated with her Immaculate Conception, it is also associated with her role in our redemption. Since she experienced redemption in an anticipated way, she then was able to receive the reward for her life through an anticipated resurrection and glorification. While it seems to be all about Mary, it is really all about each one of us. This became clear when I took a class on the Theology of the Church. Here I heard a title of Mary that I had not really understood; it is contained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 972. Mary is the “eschatological icon of the Church.” When I first heard the term I thought that it was rather complicated; why can we not say that Mary is in heaven body and soul and leave it at that? Yet this is what helped me to better understand the importance of the feast day of the Assumption. Simply put, eschatological refers to the last things, the end times. Icon means a sign or image. Mary is given this title because she is sign for what we are called to be, both here and in Heaven.

Tonight, I would like to talk about the Assumption of Mary into Heaven as well as her role as Mediator. In addition, I want to look at how this enters into the charism of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a charism understood by Fr. Joaquin Masmitjá. Finally, I want to discuss how all Christians are called to imitate Mary’s role in bringing sinners back to God.

First, I would like to go over the Assumption of Mary body and soul into Heaven. This is important for the Christian to see and understand. Each one of our talks has mentioned key events in the life of Mary. This highlights that Mary lived a life like ours; while there are many things that are different, we encounter many of the same sentiments and expressions she did. She experienced joys and sorrows throughout her life; everyone can find in Mary’s life a connection to his or her own life. We meditate on these mysteries when we say the Rosary. She had joys, moments of light, sorrows and glories. If we understand that we can relate to her in her life on earth, we need to see that we will share what she now experiences in Heaven. She is the first to imitate Christ in his glory.



This is important for us to comprehend; God does not expect us to understand everything from an esoteric distance. He does not leave everything up to our imagination but actually shows us through Mary what he desires for all people, just like his relationship with the Chosen People. The difference here is Mary's complete cooperation. After his own Ascension, his return to the Father, he shows clearly through Mary what he intends for all of his faithful children.

Now I would like to make some comparisons between Christ's Ascension and Mary's Assumption in order that we might have the mind of the early Church who experienced these two realities. When Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after his resurrection, one would think that the Apostles would return downcast to Jerusalem from the Mount. This is not the case; we read in the Gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles that they returned joyfully. "Then he led them [out] as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God" (Luke 24:50-53).

Why are they so joyful? Even though they are separated from our Lord, they know that he has returned to the Father and they have a mission to fulfill. In nine days they will be receiving the Holy Spirit. How do they prepare for this? Luke tells us in his Acts of the Apostles, "All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (1:14). The life of the early Church was nurtured by Our Lady. She had a mission as well, to help the nascent Church; her role of Mother continued as Christ returned to Heaven. She loved her Son and desired to do the will of God. This left her full of joy to be a source of inspiration and support to the early Church.

Her time was very fruitful. She spent time in Ephesus with the Apostle John and it was here that she received her Eucharistic Lord. She knew that at the right time, our Lord would return for her. The



words Jesus said at the Last Supper, “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2), would have been known by Mary. She, of all of Christ’s disciples, knew that she had not been abandoned but had her work to complete on earth.

Now we turn to Mary’s Assumption into Heaven. It is interesting to think of the Apostles’ reaction to Mary’s departure. They were filled with joy upon their return to Jerusalem after Christ’s Ascension; what sort of emotions filled their hearts when Mary was taken up to Heaven? While they missed her presence on earth, they knew that her work was not completed; she would serve the Church from Heaven. She, like her Son, did not leave them as orphans; she was still a mother to them.

It is good to reflect upon her assumption and her role in Heaven. Both the fourth and fifth glorious mysteries provide us with an opportunity to enter into these moments and learn what our part in this is as well. “The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians” (CCC §966). Father Masmitja “liked to state that, through her sufferings endured in union with Christ, Mary was associated in the work of our redemption” (Lozano, 1974, p. 28).

In the Hail, Holy Queen, we pray “To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears” and again, “after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus”. We know that this is not our lasting city; we have something better prepared for us. We need to work on making this world a better place but we should not get disillusioned when things do not go as we think they should. Our role is to persevere, to pray, and to trust in God’s plan; He knows what is best, better than we know. We are meant for Heaven, not for this earth.

Her assumption shows what God has prepared for us. Cardinal Ratzinger (1983) in his work, *Daughter Zion*, states that the Church is already saved in her. This is the hope that she instills in us. Sometimes we can get overwhelmed in this “valley of tears”, this “exile”, but we have the hope that God



desires Heaven for us; Mary is there and we hope to be there one day as well. The Council Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote, “In the interim just as the Mother of Jesus, glorified in body and soul in heaven, is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come, so too does she shine forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, as a sign of sure hope and solace to the people of God during its sojourn on earth” (LG §68).

Yes, Mary represents the Church; with her in Heaven, the Church is in Heaven. “But while in the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she is without spot or wrinkle, the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin” (LG §65). She is our hope; if she made it, we have a chance of making it. While this dogma is in praise of Mary, the highest veneration, it does not mean that her role is finished but only just begun (Ratzinger, 1983). As one song states, “Jesus has conquered; to his side he raised her; Queen of the angels, ev’ry saint has praised her. Yet in her splendor, Mary goes on drawing sinners and exiles to their promised glory” (Jabusch, 1977). Her role of intercession which began during the public ministry of Christ continues. She became our Mother at Calvary and her role of Mediator and Mother cannot be separated.

I would like to read to you a quote from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, which expresses so well Mary’s role from her Assumption until the end of time:

Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into the happiness of their true home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix. This, however, is to be



so understood that it neither takes away from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator (§62).

Her role is to lead us to Jesus; she does not point to herself but always to him. As

I reflect back on many of the graces I have received, it is only later that I have come to understand that they have come through Mary's intercession. As a devoted Mother, she has been looking out for me, solicitous for my holiness and happiness. She does not want to draw attention to herself; her hiddenness continues in Heaven.

One of my favorite quotes about Mary is from St. John Vianney; this is a paraphrase: "Mary will not rest until all of her children are in Heaven". She has a mother's heart; this is what Fr. Masmitjá liked to reflect upon. He knew that a mother would not leave her children but would seek to bring them to heaven. This is what he instilled in his daughters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

What does this mean? Mary will do anything to get us to Heaven. Think of the Wedding Feast of Cana. It is here that Mary brings to the attention of Jesus the need of this young couple and Jesus works his first miracle. She was given this opportunity to cooperate with her Son in His mission and He reminds her of what this will mean for her; she will now be the Mother of all God's children. Her response is simple, "Do whatever He tells you" (John 2:5). While there are many points to reflect upon, the one that always strikes me the most is that the miracle was not a matter of life or death in the strictest sense; it was a matter of saving this newlywed couple from the embarrassment of running out of wine and to make this celebration a joyous one.

Applying this to our lives, God desires our happiness; He desires it more than we do. He has given us a Mother to watch over us, to ask for those things that will make us happy, those things that we do not even realize we need. While in the case of the wedding, it was wine but for us it can be something as simple as a more profound peace in our lives, the answering of a prayer we thought forgotten. She is



looking out for us, in both the big events of our lives as well as in the little ones. If God wants us to be happy in this life, He desires even more so happiness for us in the next.

The love of a Mother's heart is most beautifully expressed at Guadalupe. This apparition shows that all are her children, the young and the old alike. Here she has to seek out Juan Diego; I think this is the only apparition where the seer hid from Mary. She says,

Listen, put it into your heart, my youngest and dearest son, that the thing that disturbs you, the thing that afflicts you, is nothing. Do not let your countenance, your heart be disturbed....Am I not here, I, who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, In the crossing of my arms? Do you need anything more? (Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, 1997, p. 200).

These are important words for us to reflect upon; so often we can get anxious and distressed about events. Mary wants us to know where we stand in relationship to her. To encounter someone we love who is feeling anxious, our first desire is to put that person at ease; we do not want them to be distressed. All mothers seek to do this for their children, even more so our Heavenly Mother. We need to remember to turn to her.

For Father Masmitja, he loved calling Mary the "good Mother", the "kind Mother" or "Most Holy Mother". This led him to see her heart as a "motherly heart". One commentator on Father's devotion states,

It is therefore evident that in the religious experience of the Founder the maternal function carried out by Our Lady emerges with a particular relevance. He felt himself to be a son of the Virgin Mary. It can be affirmed that his relationship with the Mother of God was the model he wanted for his Sisters when he gave



them the title of Daughters of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary

(Lozano, 1974, p. 30).

Many times, we do not know what to ask for or we are too distressed. Dante wrote, “Often thou art nearest when our voices fail”. Being able to turn to her with our desires is important; she does not require eloquent words but a heart that wishes to love God.

Why does Mary want us in Heaven? Her longing is to lead us to her Son. Mary stood at the foot of the Cross to cooperate in the redemption of the world. This story does not end at the cross; it does not even end at the Resurrection. The goal is Heaven. She looks for any desire on our part; just as the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, we have a Mother who will meet us halfway.

Father Masmítjá noted in his letters how much our Lady favored the institute. While the community has had its shares of sufferings, it has also had its shares of joys. While our examen each day should focus on the graces that God has given us, let us not forget that these graces come to us through the hand of our Lady. For she, as a good Mother, wants to take care of us. She knows what is best for us and will make sure that we have all that we need.

This does not mean that we can sit around and do nothing; we need to heed Mary’s reminders at Lourdes: pray for sinners; at Fatima: pray for the conversion of poor sinners; at Paris and the Miraculous Medal: pray for sinners. It is repeated over and over so that we would not think that it will be automatic. St. Peter speaks of being prepared for the Lord’s coming; our Lady does as well. While it might seem that he has forgotten about us, it is an opportunity for repentance. “The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard “delay,” but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Father Masmítja felt a special call to found a community dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, one that truly followed the example of their patroness. He knew the importance of Mary’s role, especially under the title of her Immaculate Heart, and wanted others to realize this as well. He told the



Sisters, “Endeavor to make God's love and the devotion to the Most Pure and Immaculate Heart grow in your hearts” (Lozano, 1974, p. 28).

As previous talks have focused on particular elements of the Sisters’ charism, I want to highlight the role each Sister and really all Christians have to living out the apostolic aims of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Ultimately, what does Mary teach us from her place in Heaven?

Mary teaches us from Heaven how to reflect upon the mysteries of her Son’s life. While it might seem most important that she answer our prayers and watch over us, it is most important that we turn to her in Heaven and ask her to teach us to pray, ask her to teach us how to ponder the mysteries of Christ in our own heart. If we ask her to help us in this, she will not fail us for her main objective is to keep us in close relationship with her Son and help us to recognize our identity as beloved of the Father.

As a Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I am called to be concerned for the salvation of all; just as Mary’s heart desires all to be saved, so should my heart desire that no one reject God’s offer of everlasting life with Him. Our community is devoted to the Immaculate Heart of Mary; this is our title but also our mission. “It can be said...that its apostolic spirit and educational mission derives from the contemplation of the Heart of Our Lady cooperating with Christ in the redemption of man” (Lozano, 1974, p. 23). It is a great act of charity to teach others the faith and share with all God’s love. This is the evangelization Fr. Masmitjá had in mind.

Again, *Lumen Gentium* says this,

Hence the Church, in her apostolic work also, justly looks to her, who, conceived of the Holy Spirit, brought forth Christ, who was born of the Virgin that through the Church He may be born and may increase in the hearts of the faithful also. The Virgin in her own life lived an example of that maternal love, by which it



behoves that all should be animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church for the regeneration of men (§65).

Mary teaches us how to apostolic minded. When we feel that we do not know how to act in a particular situation, we turn to Our Lady.

One of Fr. Masmitja's biographers noted,

Her intercession has a unique value. Father Masmitjá sees Mary's intercession as a reflection of her charity, as something flowing from her Heart. For this reason, following the spirit of the Archconfraternity, the invocation of the Immaculate Heart is an essential element of the apostolic prayer he assigns as an aim to his community. Devotion to the Immaculate Heart receives an apostolic inspiration and the apostolate of prayer blends with this devotion (Lozano, 1974, p. 22).

Let us be inspired to turn to Mary, our Mother and Intercessor, in all our needs; then let us share this care and concern with all those we encounter.



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