

PART FIVE: Pervasive Role of Mary

Needless to say, this is the most important part of Fr. Hakenewerth's *A Manuel of Marianist Spirituality*. "(Chaminade) was moved deeply, in a sense beyond himself, by the way God had taken Mary into his love and by the tremendous consequences of this truth for us."

Fr. Quentin makes three points from the teaching of Father Chaminade concerning Mary; as **Spouse**, as **Mother**, and in her **Association with the Mysteries of Christ**.

Part A: Spouse

Father Chaminade's faith brought him deep insights into the relationship between God and Mary. God loved her so much that he took her completely – in absolutely every respect – into his own life. How can one express such a relationship? God's statement in Scripture uses the term "bridegroom" (Is 54:5) to express his love for his creatures. Jesus likewise uses this image to explain his own relationship to his disciples and to the Church (Mt 9:15; 22:1; 25:1). Father Chaminade used the image of "spouse" to explain both the intimacy and the fecundity of the relationship of Mary with God.

In this spousal relationship, God bestows upon Mary, in overabundant measure, his own life and its power. A spouse does not retain for himself or herself alone the use or enjoyment of anything or the exercise of any power. All one is and has is likewise at the disposal of the other. As spouses they live, use things, enjoy, and exercise power together, as one. So God, in choosing Mary, bestowed upon her the fullness of grace – that is, a fullness of God's own life. On her part, Mary was entirely faithful to this spousal relationship, and she belonged entirely to God.

All this is accomplished in Mary with her cooperation, through the work of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Lk 1:35). Mary response, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

The Incarnation, considered in its necessary consequences, is the fruit of the divine espousal of the Holy Spirit and the august Virgin. It is a fruitful yet spiritual espousal that gave life in the natural order to her

son, Jesus Christ, and produced in the spiritual order – that is, by faith – regeneration of life for all people. (MW 2, par.486)

And Chaminade continues:

God's love for Mary is eternal, resulting from his eternal plan for the Incarnation. The accomplishment of this great mystery filled his sacred humanity with that eternal love which he always had for her. What I have been admiring for some time now, and for too short a time, is the fact that Mary became associated at the moment of the Incarnation with the eternal fecundity of the Father by her vivid faith, animated by an inconceivably great love. (MN 2, par.115-5)

Mother

Mary's conception of Jesus was not merely a human act or a mere physical generation. It was an act of faith and of spousal love. Consequently, it embraced much more than giving to Jesus his humanity. Her act of conceiving through faith in the power of the Holy Spirit embraced the entire process of bringing the life of Jesus to anyone who would believe.

When Mary consented to the Incarnation of the Word...she conceived him in his entirety, that is, in his natural as well as his mystical body. She could not separate him from what was to form one with him. And thus, in giving her consent to the...divine maternity, she accepted the twofold distinction of being the mother of Jesus Christ taken as an individual and the mother of Jesus Christ considered in the fulness of the one who fills the whole creation (Eph 1:23). When Mary conceived the savior in her physical womb, she also conceived in her spirit, by her love and faith, all Christians as members of the Church, that is, of the mystical body of Christ. (MW 2, par.482)

Mary's loving act of faith ("faith of the heart") was a necessary part of Jesus' coming to life and growing in us. "Mary's love, which prompted her to cooperate in the birth of the Church, made her the mother, according to the spirit, of the Savior's members" (MD 3, par.7).

Mary's maternal love is united to our own act of faith that produces the necessary condition of the life of Jesus to take root in us. It is in this same way that "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" (Eph 3:1).

If Mary is our mother, then her presence in our life *will have a formative influence*. Her presence will be a most favorable and necessary condition for the life of Jesus to develop in us, and ***she will be an active influence*** in shaping our life in the image of Jesus. Father Chaminade explains this by the fact that the life of Jesus is a life of "influence". The root meaning of influence is "to flow into" something and "to affect it insensibly." The life of Jesus generated by the Holy Spirit in Mary was a life of 'influence' in two ways.

First, it influenced Mary herself. Just as her human nature formed Jesus physically in her own image, so the spiritual presence of Jesus interiorly formed Mary to resemble him. From that moment on, Mary "was associated in all his mysteries, both in their exterior and their interior aspects; so that her conformity might be the most perfect possible, or rather that there might be as much uniformity as possible (MD 3, par.367).

The life of the Spirit in Jesus which transformed Mary interiorly ***is meant to influence us also***. The same kind of transformation will take place in us to the degree of our faith and to the degree that our love allows the Holy Spirit through the mother of Jesus to generate that life in us.

This truth of faith has a tremendous influence in our life as Marianists. The more consciously we live the presence of Mary in our life, the more we allow her presence to form our own interior personality in the image of Jesus. This is more than merely shaping our spirit after an external mode. The model is within, so we generate within us the very virtues of Jesus himself. Our task is to live in the presence of Mary and to be entirely open to the influence of her presence. Any influence she has on us will be in the direction of becoming more like Jesus and one with him. "What a powerful means it is for arriving at likeness to Jesus Christ, to have for our mother the very same mother of Jesus Christ!" (MD 3, par.317).

Another practical consequence is that we take seriously what Jesus said to Mary and to the beloved disciple at the hour of his death on Calvary.

In saying to the beloved disciple, "Here is your mother," Jesus wished to say, "Accept her who bore you spiritually in faith when she conceived me physically in her womb. She is your mother as she is mine, not

indeed in the same matter, yet by the right of generation." (MW 2, par.489)

By the words addressed to Mary, "Woman, here is your son," Jesus seems to say, "You are the new Eve, and you see your first-born son, his mission being accomplished, returning to his father. But this son of your faith and my love has not yet fulfilled his mission. Woman...behold, I confide him to you!" (NW 2m oar,490)

From the moment we understand this grace, we make a place for Mary in our home (John 19:27).

Exercise: Find a quiet spot to be by yourself, your prayer-space, and silently pray the ***Hail, Mary***. Now, imagine a seat next to yourself with Mary sitting there quietly with you, and pray the ***Hail, Mary*** again, slowly and with meaning, directing your pray to her.

Next, reflect quietly again on the above presentation on Mary as Spouse and Mother, especially as our *spiritual Mother*. Call upon her to *form* you into the image of her offspring, Jesus.

Exercise: Commit yourself to Mary's ongoing formation in Jesus from now on, being open to the little things that make a difference in our lives, especially our personality, to be formed as Jesus so as to make a difference in the world around us, *just by our presence*.

I emphasize the above in italics, "just by our presence," to remind ourselves that the First Principle of ***Marianist Spirituality*** is that *...the quality of our presence is more important than our work!* This is where Mary can work with us and our own unique personalities. What is your personality that Mary can help you with, ***the not so good part*** and ***improving the better part?***