The Immaculate Heart of Mary

June 20th 2020

After the consecration of the world to the most sweet and motherly Heart of Mary in 1942, many petitions were sent to the Roman Pontiff asking him to extend to the whole Church the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary that already existed in some places. Pius XII agreed in 1945. In that year he wrote:

> *We are certain to find in Mary's most loving Heart ... the safe haven in the midst of the tempest that everywhere assails us.*

Think about the times in which the Holy Father wrote:

> *We are certain to find in Mary's most loving Heart ... the safe haven in the midst of the tempest that everywhere assails us."*

The most devastating war in human history was coming to a close, and the rise of communism that would blanket Eastern Europe, enshrouding millions under its evil ideology was spreading.

What a timely and hope-filled Feast Pope Pius instituted to follow the day of Jesus' most Sacred Heart. For on this day we honour Mary's most Immaculate Heart.

"The tempest that everywhere assails" was not unique to 1945. "The Hail Holy Queen", that has been part of Catholic devotional life since the early 13th century has us pray:

> *Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears.*

It is into this world of sorrow which found a poignant expression in 1945 that this Feast Day became universally acknowledged. When we consider the tempest that everywhere assails us, I find it comforting that Scripture records these words of the Immaculate One:

> *Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety."*

Here we see a dimension of Mary's heart that is so human, the anxiety experienced when we feel lost because the one dearest to us is nowhere to be seen. Much of our human suffering results from this kind of worry, uncertainty that can result in us wondering, "Jesus why are you treating us this way?" But notice as well, Mary's heart is able to hear Jesus speak tenderly to her:

> *Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?*[1]

Here Jesus is able to reassure Mary's heart so that as they return to Nazareth, Luke says for the second time in this chapter: "His mother treasured all these things in her heart." I can imagine

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[1] *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. (1993). (Lk 2:49). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

that Mary thought deeply about Jesus' answer to her while in the temple. What does this all mean? Mary's Immaculate Heart was a treasure trove that Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium* described this way:

The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world.

Centuries earlier, St. Augustine, who died in 430, said something very similar:

Mary conceived the Word to whom she gave birth according to the flesh first of all in her heart according to faith.

This is how Mary's Immaculate Heart can inspire us. Before she gave birth to the word according to the flesh, she gave birth to the word according to faith. In other words the practice of cultivating a pondering heart was essential to Mary living an immaculate, holy life.

This Feast is an invitation to us to grow in considering the events of our lives in light of Mary's example of the pondering heart. For through the symbol of her heart we venerate in Mary her most pure and perfect love for God and her motherly love for each one of us. In that heart of hers we can find a refuge in the midst of all the difficulties and temptations of life, the tempest that everywhere assail us, and we ask her to prepare for us the safe way by which we will soon reach her Son as we pray:

Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus, O merciful, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary! Amen.