

**“Two Mothers Show Us the Path to Victory in Christ”
Votive Mass of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Celebrating the Feast Day of the Missionaries of Charity
Plaza of the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption
August 22, 2020**

Introduction

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all here, and especially our beloved Missionary of Charity sisters. It is a great joy to join together in thanking you for all you do and are in our Archdiocese, a debt of gratitude we could not possibly pay back!

Two Mothers

This day on the Universal Calendar of the Church is the Memorial of the Queenship of Mary, but here we are celebrating the Votive Mass of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which is the feast day of our dear Missionaries of Charity. By a special indult, the congregation observes their feast day on this day with the Votive Mass of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, due to the very special devotion that Mother Teresa had to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Therefore, our joy today is doubled because we are honoring two mothers!

The story of Mother Teresa’s special devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary began when she received the inspiration to found a community dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor. When she was still Mother Mary Teresa of the Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto, she had taken a basic nursing course with the Medical Mission Sisters in Patna, India. Her spiritual director at that time, a Jesuit priest, wrote in his diary, “Today, 19 August, 1949, Mother Mary Teresa is leaving Saint Mary’s, Entally, to work in the slums of Calcutta for the poor. For this very difficult task she places all of her confidence in the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”¹ A very daring, a very daunting endeavor, and one based solely on confidence in the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

What gave Mother Teresa cause for such courage? We have to understand what we mean when we refer to Mary’s “Immaculate Heart.” In the biblical sense, the “heart” means the whole person, the most intimate part of the person. Therefore, when we speak of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart, we are referring to “Mary’s intimate and unique being; the center and source of her interior life, of her mind and memory, of her will and love; the single-mindedness with which she loved God and the disciples and devoted herself wholeheartedly to the saving work of her Son.”²

Depths of the Heart

Saint Luke gives us a glimpse into that heart. Recall when Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple after having lost Him for three days. They were going through this distress of having lost their Son and then marveling at the words their Son spoke. Saint Luke tells us that Mary “kept all these things...in her heart.” In her motherly heart, she ponders these marvels deeply as she sees them starting to be fulfilled before her eyes. She sees in her heart the fulfillment of what had been prophesied to her.

¹ Langford, *In the Shadow*, 47; <https://sistersihmofwichita.org/documents/devotions-1/26-blessed-mother-teresa-and-ihm-1/file>.

² Introduction to Mass n. 28 in collection of *Masses of Blessed Virgin Mary*, vol. 1.

Saint Bede tells us that this means that she contemplated Jesus' marvels, "ruminating upon them and diligently scrutinizing them,"³ as only a mother could with her motherly Heart. This is what gave Mother Teresa the confidence to take on such a farfetched ambition (at least as seen from a human point of view).

Mother Teresa had confidence because it was a case of mother imitating Mother. Like our Blessed Mother, Mother Teresa, when she prayed, went into the depths of her being, pondering all in her heart, not in her head. One of her frequent repeated lines was, "In the silence of the heart, God speaks."⁴ She pierced the depths of prayer; she did not flit around on the surface. That cannot be done without silence and without keeping the Eucharist at the center of one's life. Mother Teresa was able to plumb the depths of prayer because of her silence and focus on the Eucharist, and because of her devotion to the poor. That was also what brought her into the depths of prayer and likewise helped her persevere in this devotion, precisely because she probed the depths of prayer in her heart.

And so our dear Missionary of Charity sisters and priests and brothers have continued to observe this charism and continued to observe this devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as their feast day on August 22, maintaining it as the feast day of the Immaculate Heart of Mary as it was according to the old calendar when Mother Teresa first had this vision.

Times of Distress

It was Pope Pius XII who established this feast day on the Universal Calendar of the Church, based on private revelations to the Portuguese visionary, Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa in the 1930s. Pope Pius fixed the feast on this day, the Octave of the Assumption. He decreed this celebration on May 4, 1944, a year and a half after he solemnly consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on October 31, 1942.

Now think about what was going on in the world at that time. The Second World War was in its darkest moment. "German troops under General Rommel had conquered strategic parts of North Africa while advancing towards the Suez Canal, and in Russia fighting continued against an expanding German invasion."⁵ Pope Pius foresaw that only Mary's intercession could save the situation. And this turned out to be the turning point of the war: shortly after this Act of Consecration, "in the battle of El Alamein, British forces achieved a major breakthrough," and continued victorious in all their battles henceforward. Meanwhile, "[i]n the Pacific, the Japanese defenders were decisively beaten during the Guadalcanal Campaign, as part of the larger land and sea battles in the Solomon Islands Campaign, within a few days after the consecration. [And t]he downfall of Stalingrad began a few days later as well with the encirclement on November 19, 1942. Stalingrad surrendered on [another] Marian feast day, February 2, 1943."⁶

Pope Pius understood the dire consequences of the situation, not just material, but moral; not just economic, but spiritual; not just temporal, but eternal. In his prayer of consecration, when he entrusted the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, he prayed to her with these words: "Look with compassion to all material and moral destruction... Look at the many lives

³ *The Great Commentary of Cornelius a Lapide, The Holy Gospel According to Saint Mark, The Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke*, p. 303.

⁴ Langford, *In the Shadow*, 54; <https://sistersihmofwichita.org/documents/devotions-1/26-blessed-mother-teresa-and-ihm-1/file>.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Pius_XII_Consecration_to_the_Immaculate_Heart_of_Mary.

⁶ *Ibid.*

cut down in the flower of youth. So many bodies torn to pieces in brutal slaughter. So many souls tortured and troubled. And in danger of being lost eternally.”⁷

Living the Consecration

This sounds like a prayer written for our own time. There is likewise so much destruction in our own time, certainly moral, but increasingly material. The two go together; the one drags down the other. We see so many lost souls, so many lives cut down, especially morally, and again, dragged down materially, cut down, especially in the flower of youth, with all of the deceptions and deceits of the evil one in our time.

We need, then, to turn once again to Our Lady, to follow the example of the mother who imitates our Mother, going into the depths of prayer in the silence of our hearts. For us here in our Archdiocese, it means renewing our consecration to her Immaculate Heart, since I had the great grace to consecrate our Archdiocese three years ago to her Immaculate Heart in response to a request of some of our faithful.

Thus, we focus on continuing to live our consecration. Indeed, we need to live it out in our lives if this consecration is going to really make a difference: obeying Our Lady, our Blessed Mother, and what she always asks us to do, with prayer, adoration, and penance; praying especially the rosary – our living of the consecration means praying the rosary every day. We need all of our priests and people and consecrated religious to pray the rosary every day. We need our families to pray the rosary together as a family at least once a week.

Our Lady always calls us to adore her Son in the Blessed Sacrament. We need to take at least one hour each week to adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I’m grateful to the pastors who have been able to continue adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in their churches and other pastors who have been able to keep their churches open for people to go in and pray before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Avail yourselves of this great grace.

And we need to do penance, especially through fasting. We must continue to preserve Friday as a day of penance, as it always has been in Christian tradition. Friday is a day of fasting: fasting from meat, fasting from other food. Traditionally, fasting means only one meal during the day. I’ve asked our priests, and I also ask all of our people, to observe that: at least to abstain from one meal on Friday, and more if your health allows for it. This is what Our Lady always asks of us, and this is what our mother, Mother Teresa, modeled for us.

Thanks

Of course, here in our Archdiocese, we have another added advantage: we have Mother Teresa’s daughters among us, who continue to live this charism and to model it for us. My dear sisters, this is what continues to give you the grace to serve. I will not say “to serve the poor, to give the poor something they need,” but as you know better than I, to serve *Christ in the poor* and to give the poor the greatest gift that you and all of us have to offer them: the love and saving grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for your witness, your presence, the great blessing it is to us.

I also wish to utter a word of thanks to so many priests who have come to join us today to offer multiple Masses on the Plaza – twelve Masses today on the Plaza – as we celebrate with our dear Missionary of Charity sisters. I also thank the staff and volunteers here at St. Mary’s Cathedral who attend to the innumerable logistical details to make this happen.

⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

Yes, we do find ourselves in a spiritual battle in our time. Victory in this spiritual battle in which we find ourselves may seem daunting, overwhelming, maybe even impossible; but so it was for Mother Teresa when she began to pursue her vision of a community dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor. But she did so with full confidence in the Immaculate Heart of Mary because she lived, without compromise, what consecration to Mary's Immaculate Heart means. And so it will be for us if we do likewise – just as Pope Pius XII prayed in the closing words of that Act of Consecration of the world to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart on October 31, 1942:

May Your love and patronage hasten the victory of the Kingdom of God,
May all nations, at peace with each other and with God, proclaim You Blessed
And sing with You from one end of the earth to the other,
The eternal Magnificat of glory, love and gratitude.
To the Heart of Jesus, in which alone,
They can find Truth, Life and Peace.⁸

⁸ Ibid.