

17. June 2023

Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Isa 51:9-11

Their race will be famous throughout the nations and their offspring throughout the peoples. All who see them will admit that they are a race whom Yahweh has blessed. I exult for joy in Yahweh, my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in garments of salvation, he has wrapped me in a cloak of saving justice, like a bridegroom wearing his garland, like a bride adorned in her jewels. For as the earth sends up its shoots and a garden makes seeds sprout, so Lord Yahweh makes saving justice and praise spring up in the sight of all nations.

The Church rightly sings the praise of Mary and does not want to be silenced in it. She thus fulfils the prophecy of the Virgin: *“From now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me”* (Lk 1:48b-49).

And indeed: everywhere where the Catholic faith is alive, the praise of Mary resounds; everywhere where the true Marian devotion is a living component of the practice of faith, people are usually spared the modern errors; there the “sensus fidei” (The sense of the faithful) is preserved. Conversely, one can say: where Marian devotion is diminishing, faith is often endangered and errors can more easily enter, and the practice of faith often weakens.

Today's feast is connected with the worship of the heart of the Saviour. Just as the love of our Redeemer is praised and we are to understand that we are loved by Him, the mystery of His love in contemplating His Heart opens up to us more and more, so can we contemplate the Heart of Mary.

With Mary we first contemplate her love for God, whose call she willingly and immediately followed and to whom she remained faithful in all adversity. Then we look at the love for her Son in its supernatural and natural aspect. Here we can especially emphasize her capacity to suffer, to carry the cross of her Son and also to give her consent to the suffering of her Son who carried it for the redemption of the world. Added to this is her intimate union with the Holy Spirit in her yes to the will of the Father regarding the birth of Jesus.

We see how much the Virgin lives in the union of love with God! In this context, I remember a painting on the ceiling of the basilica in honour of St. Joan of Arc in Domrémy (France). One sees the image of the Blessed Trinity and around it a circle (as the halos are represented) is drawn. The closest to the Trinity is the Blessed Mother, who projects something into this circle of the Blessed Trinity.

To contemplate the love of Our Lady - and thus her heart - brings us closer to the love of God, but also to her love for God and for us human beings. The latter is also important to perceive, because she has been given to us by Jesus on the cross as Mother (cf. Jn 19:27), so that this love for her Son now extends to all mankind. And this love is very personal: we are meant! We are in her gaze, just as a good mother does not lose sight of her children or her heart.

Finally, two small meditations coming out of the prayer:

“If your heart rests in my heart, if your heart is deeply rooted in my heart, then the enemy will stop at the gates. When you live deeper in my Immaculate Heart, you will be safe from the attacks. In my Immaculate Heart he finds no entrance. You are safe when you close the gates of the will, and you may share in my victory over Satan, the author of evil. My children, have no fear! ...the more you are attacked, the greater is your calling. Pray that you will resist the temptations!”

And:

“Mary is the channel of light. Her heart is a pure and holy place of encounter with God. In her heart all the light shines and becomes a place of special grace. This God-filled heart will triumph in the spiritual battle because the heart of man is at stake. In her immaculate heart the victory of God takes place and this heart offers itself to all hearts, that their hearts may become like this heart through love. This is the victory of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and for this reason men and nations should consecrate themselves to her heart, so that the light of God may also triumph in their hearts.”