

DAY 20: A Consecration Covenant

Yesterday, I said we need to get ready for our consecration to Mary by learning to recognize all the blessings that will start pouring in. Today, we'll be shifting gears a bit. We'll be preparing for Consecration Day by reflecting on how serious a commitment Marian consecration really is. This is an important part of our preparation because the more seriously we take it, the more seriously the Mother of God will take it. Mother Teresa will be particularly helpful to us today; for she took her consecration to Mary very seriously.

Part of the reason Mother Teresa took her consecration so seriously has to do with her roots in Albanian culture. A key word in this culture is "*besa*." Literally translated, this means "faith," but its more complete meaning is "word of honor" and "to keep one's promise." Mother Teresa explains:

[*Besa*] means even if you have killed my father and the police are after you, if I have given you my word, then even if the police kill me, still I will not disclose your name.

In other words, to the mind of Mother Teresa, if you give your word to someone, you give yourself. Indeed, *besa* has a sacred character like a vow, oath, or covenant. Let's reflect on that last word, "covenant." This is how Mother Teresa described her consecration to Mary. It's a word that has rich, biblical meaning: It describes the bond of relationship between God and his people throughout salvation history. Such a bond is more than a contract, as scripture scholar, Scott Hahn, explains:

[A] major difference between contracts and covenants may be discovered in their very distinctive forms of exchange. A contract is an exchange of property in the form of goods and services ("That is mine and this is yours"); whereas a covenant calls for the exchange of persons ("I am yours and you are mine"), creating a shared bond of interpersonal communion.

Another feature of a covenant is that it usually entails certain rights and obligations. For example, in the marital covenant, a husband and wife have the right to enjoy one another in the spousal embrace of self-giving love, but they also have the obligation to care for and support one another "in good times and bad." Mother Teresa also understood her "Covenant of Consecration" with Mary as having certain rights and obligations, and she communicated this Marian spirituality to her religious family, the Missionaries of Charity.

Fr. Joseph Langford, MC, inspired by Mother Teresa's teaching on the Covenant of Consecration, spells out the details of a Missionary of Charity's rights and duties in her relationship with Mary, listing 12 corresponding rights and duties. The list begins, significantly, with Mary having the duty to give "her spirit and heart" and ends with each Missionary of Charity having the "right" to enter into Mary's heart and share her interior life. So, the two bookends of this covenant with Mary are Mother Teresa's two prayers that we learned about earlier: "Lend me your heart" and "keep me in your most pure heart." Everything in between is simply the terms of the relationship.

Let's conclude, then, by pondering the Missionaries of Charity's Consecration Covenant with Mary, beginning with its introductory paragraph:

Moved by an ardent desire to live in the closest union with you possible in this life, so as to more surely and fully arrive at union with your Son; I hereby pledge to live the spirit and terms of the following Covenant of Consecration as faithfully and generously as I am able.

MARY'S DUTIES

1. To give of her spirit and heart.
2. To possess, protect, and transform me
3. To inspire, guide, and enlighten me.
4. To share her experience of prayer and praise.
5. Responsibility for my sanctification.
6. Responsibility for all that befalls me.
7. To share with me her virtues.
8. To provide for my spiritual and material needs.
9. Union with her heart.
10. To purify me and my actions.
11. Right to dispose of me, of my prayers and intercessions and graces.
12. Total freedom in and around me, as she pleases in all things.

MY DUTIES

1. Total gift of all I have and am.
2. Total dependence on her.
3. Responsiveness to her spirit.
4. Faithfulness to prayer.
5. Trust in her intercession.
6. Accept all as coming from her.
7. Imitate her spirit.
8. Constant recourse to her.
9. Remembrance of her presence.
10. Purity of intention; self-denial.
11. Right to avail myself of her and her energies for the sake of the kingdom.
12. Right to enter into her heart, to share her interior life.

Today's Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.

Help me to ardently make a Covenant of Consecration with Mary.