

DAY 32: St. Pope John Paul II

Three words summarize what we learned from St. John Paul II: (1) Mother, (2) "Entrust-
acration," and (3) Mercy. Let's ponder each one in turn.

MOTHER

John Paul's teaching on Marian consecration not only carries with it his authority as Pope but also the authoritative weight of an Ecumenical Council, because he repeats and deepens Vatican II's teaching on Mary. Therefore, his teaching actually constitutes the mind and heart of the Church today, and we should pay particular attention to it. So what is the mind and heart of the Church telling us about Mary? It's pointing to Mary's maternal mediation. It's saying she's our mother in the order of grace. It's proclaiming the Good News that God has given us a spiritual mother who prayerfully, lovingly attends to our growth in grace and holiness. This new motherhood of Mary in the life of the Church, in the life of each of one of us, is the constant, consoling, beautiful background to everything we've said about Marian consecration — or what John Paul often calls "entrustment."

ENTRUST-ACRATION

Seeing Mary standing at the foot of the Cross next to his beloved disciple, John, Jesus said, "Woman, behold, your son." Then, to John, "Behold, your mother" (Jn 19:26-27). These words summarize what we already covered in the last point, that Mary is our spiritual mother. But then we read the next verse, "Then the disciple took her into his home." Here is the heart of our response to Jesus entrusting us to Mary as our mother: We are to then entrust ourselves to her by taking her "into our homes." In other words, we're to take her into our inner life, into all that concerns us. We are to let her into our joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, plans and activities.

When we let Mary into our lives, when we entrust ourselves to her care, she intercedes for us, consoles us, and gives us courage and strength to unite ourselves more fully to Jesus' own consecration of himself for the life of the world. In other words, she brings us to the Cross of Jesus, which is the final meaning of Jesus' self-consecration, and she inspires us to spend ourselves for the salvation of the world, to take up our part in the work of redemption. As we take up our cross, as we live within Christ's own consecration, we may become spiritually thirsty, desolate, and tired. That's when Mary carries us to the pierced side of Christ, the Fountain of Mercy, where we find a ceaseless source of strength and holiness.

Thus, to John Paul's mind, entrustment to Mary leads to our consecration to Christ. In other words, one might say it's a movement of "entrust-acration."

MERCY

Ultimately, Marian consecration leads us to Divine Mercy. Acts of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary lead to acts of trust in the Merciful Heart of Jesus. We see this in the story of Fatima and Pope John Paul, and especially in the Pope's homily during his pilgrimage to Fatima in 1982, a pilgrimage of thanksgiving "to the mercy of God ... and the Mother of Christ" for having saved his life.

In that homily, John Paul repeatedly pointed out how Marian consecration leads us to the pierced Heart of Jesus, the Fountain of Mercy. This connection is part of the will of Jesus himself, who said to Sr. Lucia in 1936 that he wills the consecration to Mary's Heart "because I want my whole Church to acknowledge that consecration [that my mother requested at Fatima] as a triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that it may extend its veneration later on, and put the devotion to this Immaculate Heart beside the devotion to My Sacred Heart." Jesus wants to extend veneration and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary because she leads us most perfectly to him and helps us to receive the infinite mercy of his Heart.

Today's Prayer:

Spend the day pondering John Paul's Marian teaching as it is summarized by these three words: Mother, Entrust-ation, and Mercy.