

PART 1

At the School of the Word: Lectio Divina on Jn 19:25-27

Readings from the Writings of St. Maximilian Kolbe

We access the heart of Kolbean spirituality and consecration to the Immaculata by placing ourselves at the school of the Word.

The most emblematic text of Scripture for our purpose is certainly John 19:25-27.

St. Maximilian also referred to this text, admiring the loving plan of God and dwelling on the exuberant gift of God's love, which is represented by the Mother. "Another gift yet..." he wrote, a gift that comes from the pure gratuity of the heart of God in Christ. That's what St. Maximilian said:

"Who would dare to imagine?..."

What could You have given me more, O God, after having offered Yourself to me to become mine? ...

Your heart, inflamed with love for me, suggested to You another gift; yes, yet one more gift! ...

You asked us to become children, if we wish to enter the heavenly kingdom. You well know that a child needs a mother. You Yourself established this law of love. Your goodness, Your mercy, therefore, created for us a Mother, the personification of Your goodness and infinite love. From the cross, on Golgotha, You offered her to us and us to her..." (KW 1145).

Let's read with St. Maximilian the source of this gift, there at Calvary, with Mary and John, to grasp the meaning of this event for us today...

Lectio on Jn 19:25-27

The context is solemn. We are at the culmination of the life of Christ, when Jesus fully revealed His glory. He is on the Cross, the cross that raises Him to heaven and from which He draws all people to Himself (cf. Jn 12:32). It is the fulfillment of our salvation, the heart of the paschal mystery of Christ, the moment of the supreme gift of love: "God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son" (Jn 3:16). The Father manifested that love through the gift of His Son in the Incarnation, and that mystery now culminates in the gift of His life for us.

In this solemn context occurs the gift of the Mother, the penultimate act, we might say, of His giving Himself for our salvation.

At verse 30, the Evangelist tells us: "When Jesus had taken the wine, He said, 'It is finished.' And bowing His head, He handed over His spirit."

In this solemn context, the entrusting is of great value: the gift of the Mother is part of what Jesus was to accomplish. It seems that all is finished after the entrusting of the disciple to the Mother and the Mother to the disciple.

v. 25: We find four women at Calvary, among whom the "Mother of Jesus" stands out, and John refers to her using that title. Also in Cana he calls her by that title.

v. 26-27: In these verses we have what scholars call a "detection scheme": **Jesus sees - He says - Look...** We find this scheme again in John's Gospel, where John the Baptist **sees** Jesus coming and **says**: "**Look**, the Lamb of God" (cf. Jn 1:29-30; Jn 1:36).

This literary scheme reveals the mission of the indicated character. Therefore in the passage of the Cross, Jesus explains to the Mother what her mission is: to be the mother of the disciple.

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But who is the "beloved disciple"?

It is the one who receives the Word and obeys the commandments of Jesus; that is, the one who loves as He loved. Here, then, the disciple represents all the disciples of the Lord. The "beloved disciple" can be you or me: each of us is loved by Jesus.

Mary's motherhood, which began at the Annunciation, assumes at Calvary a universal dimension. Since then, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, Mary takes care of the brethren of Her Son (cf. *LG* 62), who became from that moment her own children.

Yes, from "*that hour*." So it is written in the Gospel of John. It is the hour of the Cross, the hour of the manifestation of the glory of Christ, the hour of salvation, the heart of the paschal mystery of Christ itself.

What happens from that hour on? "*The disciple took her into his home*."

This is the consecration to Mary: Welcoming the gift of Christ!

John takes Mary into his home, among his own things, into his inner life space, as St. John Paul II says (*RM* 45). This gift also concerns us today. Every disciple of the Lord, on the day of one's Baptism, together with the gifts of Christ receives the gift of the Mother.

To consecrate oneself to Mary does not mean, therefore, to "create" the gift, to make up something. The gift is a gift, is free and unmerited and remains so even if we are not conscious of it. Mary always exercises her motherhood, whether we are aware or not. What we can do is accept the gift of the Mother, like all gifts of Christ. To accept her, as John did; to take Mary in our life, to live this mother-child relationship with gratitude and awareness.

As John Paul II continues:

"It means accepting - like John - the one who is given to us anew as our Mother. It also means taking on the commitment to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves at the school of His Mother and allowing her to accompany us" (Ecclesia de Eucharistia 57)

There is another passage that encourages us to take Mary with us. It's a text from the Gospel of Matthew: "*Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.*" (Mt 1:20)

It is the invitation of the angel to Joseph, while he had decided to divorce her quietly. This motherhood comes from the Spirit, it is a gift of the Spirit. This is true of Mary's motherhood of Jesus and of her spiritual motherhood of us.

"She will bear a son...", said the angel to Joseph.

That is what the spiritual motherhood of Mary is: to give birth to Jesus within us.

This is the motherhood of Mary: to form Jesus in us.

St. John Paul II recalled it very well on several occasions, when, speaking to young people, he invited them to take Mary into their lives: "She will discharge her ministry as a mother and train you and mold you until Christ is fully formed in you" (Message, *Behold Your Mother*, for the XVIII World Youth Day, April 13, 2003, n. 3).

St. Maximilian in turn invites us to live the consecration to Mary with this awareness:

"In Mary's womb our soul must be reborn after the form of Jesus Christ. She is bound to feed the soul with the milk of her grace, raise it as lovingly as she nourished, looked after, and raised Jesus. At her knee the soul must learn to know and love Jesus. From her Heart it must draw love toward Him, or even love Him with her heart and become like Him through love" (KW 1295).

St. Maximilian suggested a truly beautiful program.

We should not worry about taking Mary into our lives, if it's about experiencing this kind of motherhood that causes us to conform to Christ, to become similar to Him in love, the only commandment of the Lord!

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IN THE SPIRIT OF ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE**

There is another very inspiring passage from St. Maximilian's Writings that reveals a still deeper meaning of consecration to Mary:

"That is the MI: to let her into all hearts, to bring her into being within all hearts, that by entering those hearts and taking most perfect possession of them, she may there give birth to the sweet Jesus, God, and there raise Him to perfect age. What a beautiful mission! ... Is that not true? ... The elevation of man to the God-Man, through the Mother of God-Man" (KW 508).

This text adds something new. Welcoming Mary in our lives is to accept and experience her motherhood in us with full consciousness, but inside this awareness we find not only the *acceptance* of the spiritual motherhood of Mary, but also the *willingness* to become *collaborators* of her motherhood toward every man. This is the rich and original interpretation of Father Kolbe!

The motherhood of Mary is not just given to us, it is also entrusted to us. Having experienced her motherhood, today we can become her collaborators.

The evangelizing action of the Church is precisely the extension of the maternal mission of Mary.

The MI is "to let her into all hearts" so that she can exercise her spiritual motherhood: "What a beautiful mission, is that not true?" says St. Maximilian!

Question for discussion:

- What is the role of Mary in the history of salvation and in my personal history?

Commitment for our life:

To experience the motherhood of Mary in our daily life.