

LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD E. MARTIN, O.P., *DIRECTOR*

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

In our last issue, we were privileged to read the first part of a remarkable reflection on the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts, written by Br. Thomas Aquinas Pickett, a student preparing for Dominican priesthood. As Br. Thomas Aquinas draws his reflection to a close in this issue, I believe you will once again see how well the Western Dominicans have invested the gifts you contribute for the education of our young friars. These men are truly afire with zeal to preach God's truth, and you may be very proud of your part in helping them bring their gifts to God's hungry and thirsty People in the 21st Century.

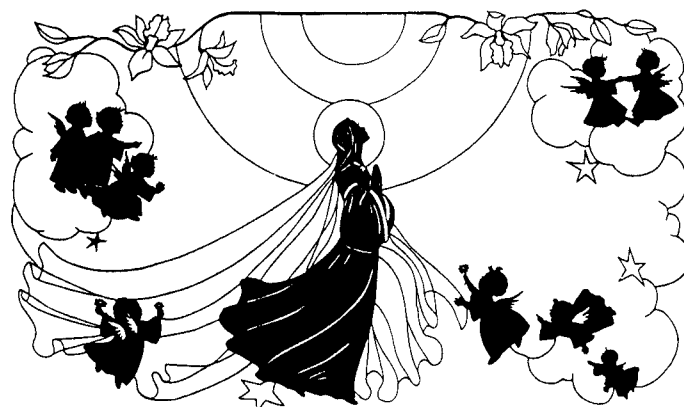


THE POWER OF THE HEART

Br. Thomas Aquinas Pickett, O.P.

To have a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary means to serve God, to grow in love of God, in and through a particular understanding of the relation of sin, mercy, and love as they pertain to the salvific mission of Jesus, and the participation of Mary in that same mission. The devotion to the Sacred Heart, lauded by virtually every Pope since Leo XIII, leads its devotees to a fuller, experiential living out of the mystery of redemption. Devotees serve God through intentional reparation for their sins and those of the whole world. Meditating on the hearts of Jesus and Mary, one marvels at the stupendous love of God for sinful humanity, and, consequently is lead to act as a co-worker (*cf.* 1 Cor 3:9) in God's plan to "draw all things to Myself" (John 12:32).

We are, however, immediately faced with a stumbling block: in the contemporary American world, "devotions" are associated frequently with the superstitious rituals and practices of the uneducated, the uncultured; they belong



ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Sr. Jean Dorcy, O.P.

more to the huddled masses of lowly immigrants than the enlightened throng of middle-class Catholics. Regardless of these biases, devotion itself is largely misunderstood.

However, even a cursory reading of St. Thomas Aquinas' treatise on the Virtue of Religion will point to the absolute necessity of devotion for the Christian. Devotion, for Aquinas, is having the will "to do readily what concerns the service of God" (*ST II-II.82.1co.*). As a devoted husband or wife is ready and willing to do things for his or her spouse, so a devoted Christian is ready and willing to do things for God and his glory. Devotion, for St. Thomas, gives life, meaning, and merit to all Christian worship, and is the root of good actions done in the Gospel spirit. To have a devotion (such as the rosary, lectio divina, venerating icons, etc.) is to be ready and willing to do things for God in and through a particular means.

For Aquinas, the little abuela who lights candles in a Church, even though she might not grasp the fine elements of doctrine, may have more devotion, and hence more merit, than the greatest theologian because she does it for God (*cf. ST II-II.82.3 ad 3*). This fact is crucial for the restoration of Catholicism in the world, since true devotion leads to the charity by which we are saved (*cf. ST II-II.82.2. ad 2*). Devotion means serving a friend, God, out of love.

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

The Ten Commandments: V The Fourth Commandment "Honor Your Father and Mother"

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

THE SECOND TABLET

As we have seen, the first three commandments govern our relations with God. Our *Catechism* observes the fourth commandment "opens the second table of the Decalogue." (#2197) When God gave the commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, He said, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you." (Ex. 20:12) This is a logical progression, and the fourth commandment does indeed oblige us to respect and obey our parents, or those who take the place of parents in our lives.

FAMILY: THE FUNDAMENTAL UNIT

However, the scope of this commandment extends far beyond the bounds of our human families; it lays the foundations not only for the commandments that follow, but for all the exchanges and contacts that characterize human society and the Church. We shall consider these (sometimes obscure) reflections of the family as this meditation unfolds, but we must first explore the immense gift God has given us in the family, and the corresponding responsibilities that accompany this treasure.

God asks parents to care for their children, so parents represent God in their children's lives. This is a vocation to love, so the examples we see of parents' abusing their children are tragic for many reasons. Our human sensibilities are properly outraged when individuals take unfair advantage over the defenseless and young persons entrusted to their care. But our religious scruples should be offended as well, for such behavior is a deliberate refusal to demonstrate and model God's parental and guiding love.

A POSITIVE COMMANDMENT

The fourth commandment is a positive commandment, directing us to do something good rather than avoid something evil. To honor parents is an essential element of family life, and the family – whether it is composed of those related by blood, or a voluntary organization of individuals who elect to share their lives for the common good – is the social unit which establishes the fundamental basis of all the Church's social teaching. Our *Catechism* teaches

The fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal. It likewise concerns the ties

of kinship between members of the extended family...Finally, it extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administers or govern it.

This commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents [and]...those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons. (CCC, #2199)

A UNIVERSAL COMMANDMENT

The fourth commandment sounds very simple, but fulfilling it affects every aspect of our social lives and dealings with one another. However, each of these relations begins with the family, which sets the pattern for our life in the world and our life in the Church. We see this very clearly in the New Testament, where St. Paul compares a husband's responsibilities to those of Christ's, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...." (Eph. 5:25), and where he urges, "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged." (Col. 3:21)

A REFLECTION OF THE CHURCH

Because the family presents so vivid a picture of what the ideal society ought to resemble, "...it can and should be called a domestic church...a community of faith, hope and charity....a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit." (CCC, #2204, 2205) The vocation of marriage calls women and men to give themselves to one another in love, and to share that love with their children. The security and stability of such love enables children to grow without fear and experience the freedom and harmony that characterize life in God's Kingdom. The family, thus, becomes the classroom in which we come to know and love God, and to embrace the moral values that are necessary for productive social life and essential for our Christian life.

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS

We find these ideas echoed in *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Apostolic Exhortation our Holy Father, Pope Francis issued on November 26, 2013. He observed,

...the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also

the place where parents pass on the faith to their children, Marriage now tends to be viewed as a form of mere emotional satisfaction, that can be constructed in any way or modified at will, But the indispensable contribution of marriage to society transcends the feelings and momentary needs of the couple. As the French bishops have taught, it is not born “of loving sentiment, ephemeral by definition, but from the depth of the obligation assumed by the spouses who accept to enter a total communion of life.” (#66)

TO LOVE & TO SHARE

In his first letter St. John writes, “We love, because he first loved us...And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.” (1 Jn 4:19-21) God’s love enables us to love God in return, and then to love God’s creation. Our *Catechism* applies this principle to the family and states, “*The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task.*” (#2205)

This is because no gift is ever given simply to enrich the one who receives it; gifts are given to enrich the entire community. Families enjoy the company of their members, but the greater the wealth these members bring to the family, the greater the responsibility the family has to share those blessings. “*The family should live in such a way that its members learn to care and take responsibility for the young, the old, the sick, the handicapped, and the poor.*” (CCC, #2208) Justice demands no less.

SOCIETY’S OBLIGATIONS

And while social institutions must take care not to impinge on the rights of families, they must also be alert to guarantee the necessary elements and services families may not be able to provide for themselves. The *Catechism* turns to a document of the Second Vatican Council, which expresses this quite succinctly,

Civil authority should consider it a grave duty “to acknowledge the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality, and to promote domestic prosperity.” (CCC, #2210, Gaudium et Spes 52.2)

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

When families function properly, children grow to see elements of their own families in the world. In their peers they see reflection of their brothers and sisters, and in each person they see an individual who is a child of the God who has revealed Himself as Our Father. Thus, the “neighbors” we pray for are not faceless, anonymous “others,” but become individuals with hopes, dreams and needs – deserving respect, compassion and care.

The duties of children toward their parents finds a parallel in the duties of parents toward their children, and the *Catechism* points out, “*The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.*” Such education must involve more than the rudiments of

reading and writing; “... [It] must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation...” (CCC, #2221)

Parents...bear responsibility to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery – the preconditions of all true freedom. (CCC, #2223)

We take into the world the values and lessons we cultivate at home, so we should not be surprised to learn “*God’s fourth commandment also enjoins us to honor all who for our good have received authority in society from God.*” (CCC, #2234) It likewise reminds those who govern that their exercise of authority is a service. Jesus told his disciples, “*Whoever would be great among you must be your servant,*” (Mt. 20:26) and this should remind those who hold power that all power has its origin in God, and must be directed toward the common good.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Needless to say, this presents a picture of an ideal society, in which citizens and their leaders share moral values that enable them to agree on common goals and cooperate on the means to achieve them. What are Christian citizens to do in those unhappy times when they find themselves at odds with their leaders? Our *Catechism* is unambiguous in its reply

The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teaching of the Gospel. Refusing obedience to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s....” (CCC, #2242)

LOOKING AHEAD

October 11, 2012 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and bishops of the world gathered in a Synod, or General Assembly, to consider the challenges the Church faces in the 21st Century as it seeks the most effective ways to proclaim the Gospel. They studied a document titled, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*.

The text remarked parish communities are among the logical places to begin and sustain these evangelization efforts. By encouraging the vocation of the laity, the Second Vatican Council engaged an immense and (until then) largely-untapped resource. The New Evangelization is an example of charity beginning at home, and parishes are an essential element in its success, as they offer the resources to reach out to and welcome back individuals who have drifted away from

the faith, as well as the resources to awaken the faith in those who have not yet heard the Good News. (#85)

One section of the text, "Transmitting the Faith," remarked our Catholic faith is under siege from a number of external cultural forces, with the sad result that we often end by living our faith in an isolated manner. The remedy is both private and communal – a renewal of common prayer in parish Eucharistic communities, and embracing private prayer and study.

The new *Catechism* is an ideal text for beginning these activities, and individuals equipped to lead them are an essential element in the Church's grass-roots evangelization effort. But even before individuals enroll in parish study programs, the family is the model for the nurturing and teaching Church. And the document clearly states that because families undertake so much on the Church's behalf, the Church – particularly its local, parish incarnation – must be "...accepted and listened to...*The commonly shared goal is to give the family an increasingly active role in the transmission of the faith.*" (#111)

The world's bishops, led by our Holy Father, are calling us to discover within ourselves and our parishes the seeds that can be cultivated into flourishing missionary activity. The family sets the pattern for this activity, and the fourth commandment provides the necessary insight that will enable us to share our gifts, and encourage others to share theirs.

THE TREASURE OF MARY

And in all these undertakings we find Mary, whom Pope Francis calls "the Mother of the living Gospel," to provide an example, of encouragement and hope.

Mary let herself be guided by the Holy Spirit on a journey of faith towards a destiny of service and fruitfulness. Today we look to her and ask her to help us proclaim the message of salvation to all and to enable new disciples to become evangelizers in turn...

There is a Marian "style" to the Church's work of evangelization, Whenever we look to Mary, we come to believe once again in the revolutionary nature of love and tenderness, In her we see that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong who need not treat others poorly in order to feel important themselves... We implore her maternal intercession that the Church may become a home for many peoples, a mother for all peoples, and that the way may be opened for the birth of a new world. ■

THE POWER OF THE HEART

Continued from page 1

When we speak of a "heart," we often symbolically speak of a person's will, rather than the actual fleshy organ that pumps blood. The will, as we learn from St. Thomas, is the intellectual appetite: it is our human, rational ability to move towards what is good, and to withdraw from what is evil. Jesus, as God and man, has both a human and a divine will (*cf.* the heresy of Monothelitism); that is to say, as both God and man, Jesus is moved towards the good that he

apprehends. As God, this movement is indistinguishable from his immutable nature as the Word through whom all things live, move, and have their being (*cf.* Col 1:17, John 1:1-14); as true man, this movement towards the good is manifest in his coming to die for sinners. If there were nothing good in us, nothing worth redeeming, Jesus would not have willed to come to save us. But, as the facts stand, that is exactly what He did. God, the ineffable I AM, became man to save us, because he saw that there is something fundamentally good in mankind (*cf.* Gen 1:31). The human, physical nature of Jesus loved us through a painful death, and continues, hypostatically united to the Word, to love us through the offenses of our sins. God's love and mercy are seen in no better way than in considering the heart of Jesus, loving his own in the world (John 13:1) to the point of death, and loving us today in spite of the hardness of our own hearts (Rom 2:5).

But what of Mary's Immaculate Heart? We understand that the closer a person draws to Christ, the more like Christ they become, as objects become warmer the closer they come to fire. Since Mary is Queen of Heaven and Earth, forever united with her Son, we understand that she shares in Jesus' will to love and save the human race. Mary's heart, therefore, likewise shares in the desire that all will come to know, love, and serve her Son. This desire dwelling in Mary's heart, endured the sword of her Son's passion (Luke 2:35), and grieves when men and women reject the One whom she bore and raised. Since all devotion to Mary passes on to love of Christ, the consideration of Mary's heart naturally leads us closer to the loving will of the Redeemer.

When we consider the hearts of Jesus and Mary, we consider the unspeakable condescension of God's love for us. As a result, these devotions encourage us to not stand by idly in the light of salvation history, but to take an active part in reparation, that is, in repairing, the damaged relation that sin causes between ourselves and God. The devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Immaculate Heart challenges us to respond to God's love and mercy; this challenge is timely since, without such a response, without repairing the damage that sin, both personal and social, does in the world, we ultimately risk running our earthly course in vain (Phil. 2:16). These devotions offer us a potent solution to the grave errors and failures of our era; our task then, is to avail ourselves to them, trusting in the grace of God that works all things towards the better (*cf.* Rom. 8:28) for those who love Christ and seek to do his will. As Pope Pius XII wrote in his encyclical *Haurietis Aquas*,

moved by an earnest desire to set strong bulwarks against the wicked designs of those who hate God and the Church and, at the same time, to lead men back again, in their private and public life, to a love of God and their neighbor, We do not hesitate to declare that devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the most effective school of the love of God; the love of God, We say, which must be the foundation on which to build the kingdom of God in the hearts of individuals, families, and nations" (123). ■