

LIVING OUR CONSECRATION

In the footsteps of St Louis Marie de Montford, the children of Fatima, Pope St John Paul II, and responding to Our Lady's call through Fr Gobbi, we have all consecrated ourselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

In this meditation, I wish to examine our act of Consecration. I want each of us to ask ourselves just how fully we have integrated the three commitments it calls for into our priestly lives. The Mother of God, herself, through Don Gobbi, has given us this act of consecration. It contains her presentation of our three commitments. She pays most attention to our consecration. Our union with the Pope is presented in just a third of the space of the consecration and our third commitment, bring the faithful to Mary is given in one sentence.

Mary's Titles

The opening phrase contains three titles. Presuming her perpetual virginity, *aeiparthenos*, and our firm commitment to this, our Mother presents herself as "Virgin of Fatima" reminding us that it was at Fatima the MMP began and calling us all to endorse and bring to completion Our Lady's message at Fatima. Mother of Mercy is a title that seems to come from St Odo of Cluny and is the *Mater Misericordia* of the *Salve Regina* (of the Benedictine Bl Hermanus contractus). Mary herself is the great masterpiece of God's mercy and calls us to be merciful.

The *gebirah* or Queen Mother had great power in Israel. Elizabeth probably recognizes Mary as Queen Mother when she exclaims, “how is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me” (Lk 1:43). In spite of telling his mother that he would grant her every request, (1 Kings 2:20) Solomon, for good reasons, refused Bathsheba. We can be quite sure that Jesus refuses no request of his mother, crowned as Queen of heaven and earth. With this title, our Mother is reminding us of her power.

The Consecration: Our First Commitment

“We who belong to the Marian Movement of Priests consecrate ourselves to your Immaculate Heart in a very special way”. Our Mother tells us “you must completely entrust yourselves to me, in a total and everlasting way, that I may dispose of you according to the Will of God. You must entrust yourselves in a manner that is complete, giving me everything; you should not give me one thing and hold on to another for yourselves; you should truly be wholly mine (n.287, mn, Mar 25, 1984).

Mary first reminds us that, theologically, our basic consecration took place in our baptism and ordination.

“Understand, then, how your true act of consecration is your baptism: (n,287,i -- Mar 25,1984). Our priestly consecration conforms us to Christ the head, the bridegroom of the Church. Mary tells us she will help us “realize in your lives the great gift of the priesthood to which you have been called; I will bring you each day to an ever better imitation of Jesus, who must be your only model and your greatest love”. (n. 287,z -- Mar 25, 1984).

Strictly speaking God alone has the right to our total consecration. Consecrations to the saints can be broadly understood as acts of homage done to them as our heavenly protectors. The Church recognizes that the consecration to Mary is different from this. Because of Mary's total union with Jesus, then and now, she is seen as inseparable from Christ in the economy of salvation. It follows that she is in a unique position to unite Christians to Jesus. Dedication to Mary is dedication to Jesus.

The consecration Our Mother requests has **two aspects**. First, she wants that interior conversion demanded by the gospel. "*Metanoieite*, repent and believe the gospel" is Jesus first call to us (Mk 1:15). Secondly, she wants us to entrust our priesthood to her. In Mary's heart, our "metanoia," our interior conversion, goes through four successive stages, Don Stefano tells us, namely "that of accustoming oneself to living with Mary, of allowing oneself to be interiorly transformed by her, of entering into a communion of life, and lastly of reliving Mary" (Introduction XIX). Then we are completely committed to Jesus and his gospel.

Dear brother priests, to study the act of consecration properly would take up the entire retreat. What I propose to do here is to present a quick list of all that Our Lady asks of us in both these aspects of our consecration. We can pray over these during our retreat, especially anything that draws our attention. Then we briefly examine our other two commitments.

Interior Conversion

Our Lady asks us to bring about in ourselves this interior conversion. She wants us to do God's will alone and this means following Jesus and being ready to lose our lives for his sake. We can consider the interior conversion that St Charles de Foucauld undertook after that first confession, from playboy to priest to martyr. Our interior conversion may not be quite so dramatic but Mary will help it to be just as deep. Reliving Mary brings freedom from the following four concerns and, in these exercises, we can examine our consciences on these and the other demands of our consecration.

1. **Ourselves.** "If anyone wants to follow me, let him renounce himself, take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it" Mk 8:34-35). Mary will help us to renounce ourselves and free ourselves of all human attachments to ourselves and our careers.

"it is your attachments which make up the only obstacle which prevents you from being totally mine... I will break them, one by one, so that you will be mine alone (n.69,f, -- Feb 15, 1975)

2. **Our careers.** James and John asked to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus. "Can you drink the cup i.e., do the Father's will?", was Jesus' response. Ps 139:16 tells us "in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me." Mary helps us to be happy with God's providence for each of us.

3. **Our comforts.** Brother priests, we have a wonderful example of not being attached to our comforts in the life and incessant journeying for Mary of Don Stefano. As an Italian he loved his wine and spaghetti. I spent a month in his company journeying around the Pacific. We were not able to offer him much wine and spaghetti in Fiji. He never complained and took what was offered.

4. **Compromises with the world.** “I do not pray that thou should take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (Jn 17:15-16). Some pastors, Mary complains, have

“become propagators of political and sociological ideologies, rather than messengers of Christ and of his Gospel, thus forgetting the mandate received from him, ‘Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature’ (Mk 16:15) (n.420,f, -- Mar 13, 1990).

Entrusting Our Priesthood to Mary’s Immaculate Heart

Here I just want to itemize what our Mother expects of us with some brief comments.

1. **A spirit of prayer.** Pray always, says St Paul (I Thes 5:17). “Every action of the day can become a prayer when we let the Spirit within us cry out to the Father” (47e, May 20, 1974).

“Prayer. Forget everything else, and form the habit of using nothing but this weapon. The crucial times have come, and there is no longer any time for certain vain and superfluous things. There is no more time for useless discussions; there is no more time for chatter and projects: this is the time for prayer!” (n. 29,qr -- 19 Dec 1973).

Mary calls us especially to pray before Jesus in the blessed Sacrament (n. 360 -- Aug 21,1987)

2. A spirit of penance. We priests must take up Pope St Paul VI’s challenge in *Paenitemini* (1966) to decide our own fasting and abstinence and e.g., make Friday a day of penance and help our people to fast voluntarily. Our fast must be bodily and Spiritual, from sin, a fast of the heart, avoiding inordinate attachments, and of the soul, fleeing sin and its occasions, TV etc. (n. 306 -- Mar 16:1985).

3. The fervent celebration of the Eucharist. Mary tells us that her purpose is

“to make you priests according to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus... Become again perfect adorers and fervent ministers of Jesus in the Eucharist who, through you, makes himself present again, immolates himself anew and gives himself to souls” (176bi, June 14, 1979).

4. The fervent celebration of the liturgy of the hours.
“Let yours be a continual prayer of adoration and of intercession, of thanksgiving and of reparation. Let yours be a prayer which is united to the heavenly song of the angels and saints” (n.360,u -- Aug 21, 1987).

5. The daily rosary.

“Pray above all with the prayer of the holy rosary. Let the Rosary be, for everyone, the powerful weapon to be made use of in these times.

The rosary brings you to peace. With this prayer, you are able to obtain from the Lord the great grace of a change of hearts, of the conversion of souls, and of the return of humanity to God, along the road of repentance, of love, of divine grace and of holiness” (n. 336,mn, -- Oct 7, 1986).

6. The First Saturday Mass for Mary’s intentions. If I remember correctly, Don Stefano was reluctant to take stipends and he offered all his masses for Our Lady’s intentions.

7. A religious and austere manner of life. This is the request to free ourselves to be available for Mary’s plans. It is part of the second Pentecost

“which will descend into hearts to transform them, and make them sensitive and open to love, humble and merciful, free of all egoism and of all wickedness... the Spirit of the Lord will transform the hearts of stone into hearts of flesh” (n.574,f -- May 26, 1996).

8. Loyalty to the Gospel, even to the shedding of our blood. For this we have a wonderful model in our brother Don Nazareno Lanciotti martyred in Brazil in Feb 2001.

Love for the Pope: Our Second Commitment

Dear brother priests, we do not have an option on this. This is a constituent part of the Marian Movement.

“Peter has received from Jesus the task of being the foundation of the Church and of confirming the entire Church in the truth of the Gospel.

The Pope is the successor of Peter in this, his ministry of being the foundation of the unit of the Church and infallible guardian of her truth. Be today, witnesses of love for and unit with the Pope” (n. 514,ef -- Feb 22, 1994).

I live in Fiji, far away from all the controversies that swirl about Pope Francis. Even as a Cardinal, I noted that he tried to live the Jesus of Luke 15:4-7 and went after the marginalized, the lost sheep.

He seems to have upset many by doing this and the media twist all that he says and does to suit their own ideological purposes.

At base, I see him as an astute Jesuit who is a faithful son of the Church. Listen to these papal “one-liners,” quotes that show the true orthodoxy of the Pope:

- **Abortion?**

“It's like hiring a hitman.”

- **Gender ideology?**

“It is the greatest danger, it resembles the method with which the Hitler Youth was trained.”

- **Will there be women priests or deacons?**

"No."

- **Will ecclesiastical celibacy be abolished?**

“I won't do it.”

- **Can gay couples be blessed?**

“People are blessed, not the union, marriage and family are born from a man and a woman.”

- **Euthanasia and assisted suicide?**

“They are practices to be rejected, daughters of the throwaway culture.”

- **And the rented womb? “**

It's modern slavery.”

Our task is to pray for Pope Francis, more and more.

Leading the Faithful to entrustment to Our Lady

“We promise to lead the faithful entrusted to our care to a renewed devotion to you”.

We must help the faithful to live their baptism fully, to bring them to love the Pope and the Church (n.139 -- Nov 9, 1975).

Like ourselves, we must help them to relive Mary and bring about their own interior conversion. We do this most easily in cenacles.

Thus, dear brothers, we must commit ourselves to settling up and leading cenacles, national regional, diocesan and family.

Don Gobbi, pray for us that we may live our consecration as you lived it.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

Donal McILRAITH SSC

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