

My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 73

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The Only Begotten Daughter, Part II

From a young age, as a child born into Catholicism, my devotional life centered on Mother Mary and the Holy Family. The atmosphere of faith my Irish nuns generated at school, possessed a somber tone that emphasized the sorrows experienced by Mary as she faced the rejection and suffering of her son, Jesus, at the hands of a sinful humanity. When we prayed the Rosary, the Sorrowful Mysteries always carried more weight than the Joyful Mysteries. The sisters' meditation on Mary's enduring pain and profound loss, I have no doubt, helped them digest their own lonely, celibate course in life far from home as missionaries and educators in America. The sisters' sincerity and devotion to Mary became most apparent during the course of the liturgical year as various celebrations served as avenues for the expression of their hearts. The statues of Mary were lovingly bedecked with flowers or greenery, depending on the season.

Though the fine points of Catholic doctrine often escaped us, the deep affection for Mary did not.

We knew we had an intercessor in our Mother Mary, and no matter how wretched we may have felt, the prayers of our Mother would protect us from the fires of Hell (to which the Irish sisters assured us we were destined, lest we behaved). Moreover, our devotion to Mother Mary buttressed our respect and love for our physical mothers, as our young hearts identified (or imagined) shared traits and characteristics.

Later, after I entered Holy Cross Abbey and began to absorb the spiritual culture of the Cistercian Trappists, my Marian devotion deepened. In particular, the assurance of Mary's intercession and love seemed to cushion the rough edges and soften the struggles of celibate men. Though none of us wanted to disappoint our Mother, when we did, we rushed to her maternal embrace. Many of the most beautiful sermons in the Cistercian tradition were extended meditations on Mother Mary. In particular, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, known as the "Mellifluous Doctor," turned his impressive literary skill to the task of Marian devotion. His sermons shaped Cistercian spirituality from the 12th Century onward and to this day are studied both in their original Medieval Latin and in translation. The inspiration of Saint Bernard's spiritual leadership and sincere efforts led to the flourishing of the Cistercians throughout Europe in the 12th Century, as hundreds of new monastic foundations were established. His devotion to Mother Mary in no small part stimulated this unprecedented growth. Dante Alighieri in the third book of his *Commedia*, the *Paradiso*, recognizes the centrality of Bernard of Clairvaux in Catholic mysticism, Marian spirituality, and Medieval literature by casting Bernard in the role of his final guide to the upper reaches of Paradise, the role of guide through Hell and Purgatory having been earlier played by the great Latin poet, Virgil.

After I heard the Divine Principle, and the reality of the course of Jesus, his rejection by his family, and the sorrowfully obstructive role his mother played, I adopted a hardhearted (and very Protestant) posture toward Mary and Marian devotion. The intensity of my new disdain mirrored the intensity of my prior affection. I became unwilling to even consider the positive benefits of many centuries of Catholic Marian spirituality, in the face of clear historical evidence to the contrary.

When my career shifted from law to teaching literature at Cardinal Newman High School, I once again found myself in the presence of Marian devotion. I began to soften my critical stance... though just a little. While I still found the doctrine indigestible, my respect for the positive influence Mother Mary had on the lives of my colleagues gently but perceptibly grew. I could not help but to reconsider the historical impact of Marian devotion within the Catholic Church and broader culture. In particular, as I read the writings of John Henry Newman, our institution's namesake, I began to see how his Marian devotion helped him cultivate a spirituality of the heart, and how Newman's course might be emblematic of Catholicism's.

Very simply, as though "in a mirror, dimly," we can see the traces of God's feminine and maternal love emerging over time through Marian devotion. While the theological descriptions were inadequate and ahistorical, nonetheless, the original natures of Catholic men and women over the centuries were seeking fulfillment through a relationship with Mother Mary. Their longing needed an ideal object, and their original minds perceived the necessity of the feminine. Thus, a more complete relationship of heart developed intuitively through the lives of those devoted to Mary. And naturally, many blessings flowed from this spiritual affection for the maternal--for instance: one can observe the enormously positive impact on family life generations of praying the Rosary has had among Catholics; the cultivation of devotional culture through the centuries, with exalted expressions of heart in liturgy, music, and art; and most importantly, the Sorrow of Mary as understood by generations of Catholics could be used by to awaken in the most perceptive, a sense of the sorrow hidden in the Heart of Heaven.

The motto of John Henry Newman was "cor ad cor loquitur" or "heart speaks to heart." Devotion to Mother Mary over the centuries ought to be seen as a spiritual foundation, a habit of the longing heart, meant to be transferred to our True Mother, the Only Begotten Daughter of God. Historically, Christianity has been prepared by Marian devotion to understand the sorrowful and suffering heart of our True Mother, Hak Ja Han Moon. She alone has walked the substantial course of restoration with our True Father, and has come to embody the Maternal Character of God. Finally, in this New Age, our longing hearts have found their true object and we can plumb the depths of Heavenly Parent's sorrow by understanding, attending, and comforting our True Mother as together we labor to realize Heavenly Parent's original dream.