

## My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 78

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### The Only Begotten Daughter, Part VII

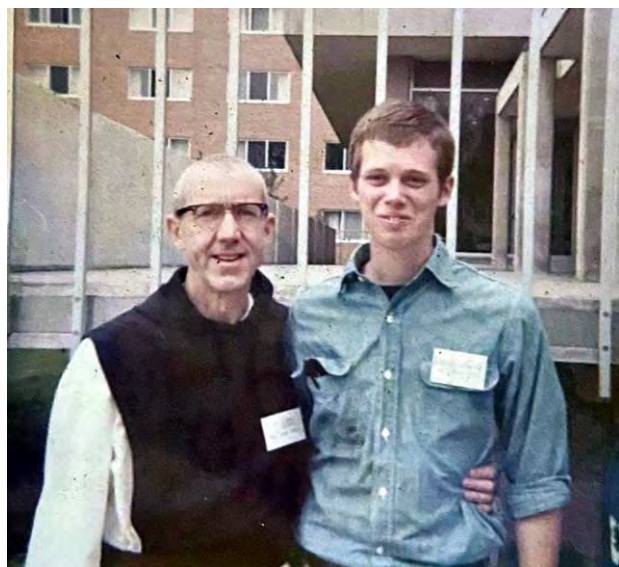
"What we love we shall grow to resemble."  
--Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)



As I have written earlier, devotion to Mother Mary resides at the heart of the Roman Catholic faith and spiritual practice. Central to the development of Marian devotion stands Bernard of Clairvaux, Cistercian abbot, Doctor of the Church, and Catholic Saint. As Thomas Merton writes in his short work on Bernard, "Last of the Fathers," "Better than anyone else, Saint Bernard saw that the love of Jesus and Mary are so inseparable as to be the same. We cannot love Him without at the same time loving her, and our only reason for loving her is that we may love Him better" (88-89). Bernard conceived of Mary as "the Mother of God," for willingly assenting to the birth of Jesus at the moment of the Annunciation. By assuming this role, Mary, both physically and spiritually, became the mediator of Christ to the world.

When I learned of Mary's role in the tragic collapse of the foundation to receive Jesus in Israel, as I have noted elsewhere, I grew dismissive of the powerful part Mary subsequently played in the providence of restoration. Her many appearances and the deep love she inspired in the hearts of Christians for Jesus over the last 2,000 years, evidences her persistent and profound involvement in the work of salvation. Mary actively comforted, inspired, encouraged, and steadied the followers of

her son, Jesus, as they sought to be the hands and feet, the heart and voice of Christ in the world. She raised up many spiritual children to take their place on the front lines of God's cosmic battle against Satan and evil.



It has been my good fortune to witness the truth of Bernard's insight that we "grow to resemble" that which "we love." When, at the age of 20, I spent nearly a year living within the cloister of Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, Virginia, I observed the profound influence devotion to Mary had on the lives of the Cistercian Trappist monks with whom I lived. Most of the monks positively radiated the love of God. Even in moments of sorrow or frustration, their demeanors still shone with a spiritual brilliance, as did Moses emerging from the Holy of Holies, or as Jesus when conversing with Moses and Elijah. Like a child emerging from the darkness of night in awe of the rising sun, their brilliance attracted me and drew me into monastic spirituality. I desired to know what they knew, to see what they saw, and to taste what they tasted.

My initial confessor at the monastery was Father Stephen, the "Guestmaster" for the community. Of Polish origin, Stephen's profound devotion to Mary was nurtured in him as a child through family, parish, and school--though by the time I met him, he was elderly. No matter his activity, Stephen exuded a sense of contemplative recollection. It was as though the eyes of his heart were always looking upon Mary and Jesus in Paradise. He witnessed to me without words, but when he did speak, his words carried a spiritual authority originating in God's love.



Father Edward was the abbot when I lived in the community. He grew up in South Africa and entered monastic life at 18 years of age. He barely slept. I would find him in the chapel at all hours, deep in contemplative prayer. A friend of the famous Trappist monk and author, Thomas Merton, his traditional Catholic formation had been seasoned and informed by Merton's more eclectic spiritual journey. Thus, it was Edward who introduced me to Yoga and the Zen writings of Shunryu Suzuki, as well as to the sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux. Every morning after Matins and meditation, we would sit in silence together in the monastic library and read scripture or the

Church Fathers. Occasionally, we would be distracted, watching a lone spider saunter across our table. Edward's spirit often served to soothe the rough waters of monastic relations--brothers sometimes squabble--and manifested a comforting and nearly maternal presence derived from his devotion to Mary, particularly her appearance as Our Lady of Guadalupe.



Father William was the prior of the abbey. He lived most of his days in a hermitage at the far edge of the 1200 acre monastic property. I would disrupt his solitude and the two of us would have Mass together; there were moments of shared mystical experience between the two of us and Jesus. William seemed entirely self-forgetful and lost in a joyful dance with God. We still share a connection of heart, though he ascended to join his ancient Cistercian brethren two decades ago.

Like the writer of Hebrews, "What more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of..." Brother Stan and Brother James, Father Francis and Father

Matthew, Brother Stephen and Brother Michael, Father Robert and the many monks who lived together in the community at Berryville. Many were veterans of World War I or World War II, and many had come to monastic life with a vocation to pray for the demise of communism, to speed the Second Coming, and to bring Christ's peace to the world. No matter their background, they all claimed their spiritual inheritance as the children of Mother Mary and brothers of Jesus.

As I reflect on the lives of these extraordinary men, who "though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised" (Hebrews 11:39), I feel moved to proclaim and witness to the extraordinary providential moment in which we live. We have emerged from the shadows of symbol and metaphor into the light of truth and know in substance what the children of Eve could only long for in hope. We have been reborn through the Blessing and grafted to the lineage of our True Parents. We have sacrificed and labored with our True Parents to build the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, and even now, we can live and breathe and serve together with our True Mother, the Only Begotten Daughter of God.

Generations of my Cistercian brothers and sisters looked to Mother Mary and longed for this day. As vigorously as Mary labored, she could never fulfill the role of True Mother, never convey the grace and blessing which are the merit of this age. Nonetheless, the words and examples of our religious forebears can teach us. As Bernard of Clairvaux wrote of Jesus and Mother Mary, the love of True Parents is inseparable: to love True Father we must love True Mother; to love True Mother we must love True Father. And, as we love the True Parents, we will come to resemble them. Now is the time for us, the blessed children of True Parents, to offer our hearts in filial devotion.

And for this reason, the entire spiritual world envies our bodies.

We can join with True Mother to complete the work of our True Father. We can share her heart, her tears, and her labor on behalf of the lost sons and daughters of our Heavenly Parent. We can do this with substantial bodies animated by the love and sorrow of Heaven. In our True Mother, we possess a model of faith and filial devotion that will not disappoint or betray us. And like the monks, we will radiate the love of God and our demeanors will shine with a heavenly brilliance--even in silence we will proclaim the sacred mystery in our hearts, and a multitudes of spirits, the veritable "Communion of Saints," will support our salvific mission. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us..." (Hebrews 12:1).