

MARIAN SYMPOSIUM: MOTHER OF THE CHURCH
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, LA CROSSE
MEMORIAL OF SAINT PIUS X, POPE
AUGUST 21, 2010

1 Thes 2:2b-8
Jn 21:15-17

HOMILY

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

By God's Providence, the Memorial of Pope Saint Pius X falls on the day of our symposium dedicated to the deepening of our knowledge and love of the Blessed Virgin Mary as Mother of the Church. In a most striking way, the unfailing maternal love of Mary in the Church is manifested in the heroic sanctity of Pope Saint Pius X who was described as "a man of God who knew the unhappiness of the world and the hardships of life, and in the greatness of his heart wanted to comfort everybody."¹ In the holiness of his life, we see how the Mother of God lovingly drew the heart of the saintly Pontiff to her Immaculate Heart and, thereby, to an ever closer union of heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At the same time, she was inspiring him to bring from the Heart of Jesus divine compassion and love to all men, to the whole world placed by God into his pastoral care.

Surely, Our Lord Jesus Christ addressed mystically to Saint Pius X, the Successor of Saint Peter, his threefold question: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"² Surely, Our Lord drew him to His Heart, to His love, the only font from which to tend and feed the lambs and sheep confided to His pastoral care. Because the challenges of shepherding the flock in a world which has rejected the Good Shepherd and even sought to put him to death are so great, Our Lord asks the question three times. The threefold question makes clear to the one who shepherds in the person of the Good Shepherd that he must steadfastly place his heart anew into the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The true shepherd of the flock must declare three times, with ever more purified and elevated love: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love

¹ *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Complete Edition, ed. Herbert J. Thurston, S.J., and Donald Attwater, New York: Benziger, 1956, Vol. 3, p. 475.

² *Jn 21:15-17*.

you.”³

Even as Saint Peter faced the great challenge of preaching the Gospel and bringing the Sacraments for the first time to a world which had pierced the Divine Heart from which the truth of the Gospel and the love of the Sacraments flow forth into the Church, so Pope Saint Pius X, his successor, faced the great challenge of proclaiming the Gospel and bringing the Sacraments, as if for the first time, to a world beset with the pride, greed and hatred which led to what has been called the Great War because of the intensity of the suffering which it inflicted upon the whole world. What is more, the Church herself, during the time of his pontificate, was beset by dangerous tendencies in the teaching of the faith and morals, and even by heresies.⁴ Fittingly, the saintly Pontiff chose as his motto the words of Saint Paul: “To renew all things in Christ.”⁵

His pastoral charity expressed itself in a new evangelization, a teaching and living of the faith, as if for the first time, with the engagement and hard work of the first disciples and Apostles. He urged the more frequent reception of Holy Communion, made possible the first reception of Holy Communion as soon as one had reached the age of discretion, and decreed the easier bringing of the Holy Eucharist to the sick. At the same time, in order that the communion of love with Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament, might be inspired and accompanied by an ever deeper knowledge of Christ, he urged the daily reading of the Sacred Scriptures.

In connection with his furthering of the devotion to the Word of God, he established a commission for the revision and correction of the Latin Vulgate text of the Bible, and he founded the Pontifical Biblical Institute in 1909. For his own part, each Sunday, he preached the Word of God in the courtyards of the Vatican. At the same time, he provided for the more effective governance of the Church through the codification of the Church’s discipline and the reorganization of the Roman Curia, the offices and tribunals charged with assisting the Roman Pontiff in the shepherding of the universal Church. Lastly, while leading a personal life marked with the greatest simplicity and holiness of character, he carried out works of charity, which were beyond what the world thought possible. His charity was manifested likewise in miracles attributed to him during his lifetime.

³ *Jn* 21:17.

⁴ cf. *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*, pp. 475-476.

⁵ *Eph* 1:10.

Toward the end of his service as Roman Pontiff, the world situation grew ever worse, and he grew ever more generous in his sentiments of pastoral love of the flock. At the outbreak of the First World War, he declared:

This is the last affliction that the Lord will visit on me. I would gladly give my life to save my poor children from this ghastly scourge.⁶

In these words of the saintly Pontiff is found a reflection of the compassion, the suffering with Christ for the sake of the salvation of souls, which he learned at the School of Mary, from the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In his second encyclical letter, written on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Saint Pius X reflected upon the unique participation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation, a participation which is the model of our own sharing in the suffering and dying of Christ. Commenting upon the encyclical letter, Igino Giordani, biographer of Pope Saint Pius X, wrote, quoting the words of the encyclical letter:

Mother of Christ, Mary is likewise mother of the Mystical Body: “It may be said that the Virgin conceived the eternal Son of God not only that He might become man by taking human nature from her, but also that through the human nature taken from her he might become the Redeemer of humankind.” And we, united to Christ, and, as the Apostle says, “*limbs of his body, flesh and bone belonging to him* have come forth from Mary’s womb as a body united to its head. Hence in a spiritual and mystical sense we also are sons of Mary and she is the mother of us all.”⁷

The saintly Pontiff teaches us how the Virgin Mary’s maternity of the Church, that is, her maternal relationship with each member of the Church, is the instrument by which we are one with Christ in our deepest being.

In teaching the truth that Christ only is our Savior, that God the Son Incarnate alone could and did win for us the victory over sin and everlasting death in our human nature, Pope Saint Pius X did not fail to underline the unique participation of Christ’s Virgin Mother in the work of Redemption. His biographer notes, quoting the encyclical letter:

⁶ *Butler’s Lives of the Saints*, p. 477.

⁷ Igino Giordani, *Pius X: A Country Priest*, tr. Rt. Rev. Thomas J. Tobin, Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1954, pp.87-88.

Although Jesus Christ is the only dispenser of the fruits of His Passion, nevertheless “by that communion of sorrow and suffering that exists between Mother and Son, it has been given to this august Virgin to be our uniquely powerful mediatrix and conciliatrix with her Son.” Christ is the source, Mary is the channel. So we do not reach the Son except through His Mother.⁸

Pope Saint Pius X’s personal relationship with the Mother of the Church, and his teaching of the truth of her Immaculate Conception and her unceasing mission as channel of all grace in the Church were surely an essential part of his pastoral charity, restoring all things in Christ Who alone is the Savior.

As we celebrate the memory of Pope Saint Pius X and especially his heroic sanctity of life, on this day when we also are giving ourselves in intense study of the Virgin Mary’s motherhood of the Church, let us not fail to recognize the implications of our study for our life in the Church and the world. The Virgin Mary, through her unceasing compassion for all men, her compassion in and with Christ, inspires us and intercedes for us, in order that we, in accord with our state in life and vocation, become, with her, ever more effective witnesses to her Divine Son, that we restore all things in Christ Who alone is our salvation.

Let us now lift upon our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus. Let us place our hearts into the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, opened to receive us in His Eucharistic Sacrifice. In the Heart of Jesus, may we find the wisdom and strength to imitate Pope Saint Pius X in his devoted study of the doctrine of the faith, in his ardent love of the Sacraments, and in his docile obedience to all that Christ asks of us in the Church, so that He may reign over the world from His Most Sacred Heart.

*Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, have mercy on us.
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.
Pope Saint Pius X, pray for us.*

The Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke
Archbishop Emeritus of Saint Louis
Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.