

## THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

### The Cordimarian Devotion of

### St. John Eudes

Henry M. Camacho, O.P.

That graces . . . may flow more abundantly from the devotion to the Sacred Heart, let the faithful strive to join it more closely with the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God. . . .

Pope Pius XII

*Haurietis Aquas*, May 15, 1956.

**T**HIS issue of *Dominicana*, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, would not be complete without some consideration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The fullness of love linking the Hearts of this Mother and Son demands their mutual study. For Mary is the Mother of God; “. . . her life is most closely linked with the mysteries of Jesus Christ, and there is no one who has followed in the steps of the Incarnate Word more closely and with more merit than she: and no one has more grace and power over the Sacred Heart of the Son of God and through Him with the Heavenly Father.”<sup>1</sup> All of Mary’s unique privileges are derived from her Divine Maternity. She is the unique Coredeмпtrix, the unique Dispensatrix, and the unique Mediatrix of all graces because she is singularly related to God as His Mother. Cordimarian devotion—devotion to the Heart of Mary—likewise stems from her Divine Maternity.

#### ST. JOHN EUDES

St. John Eudes is without question the outstanding promoter, the great precursor, of public devotion and veneration of Mary’s Immaculate Heart. The Church has designated him as both “Au-

thor of the liturgical worship of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary" and "Father, Doctor and Apostle of this devotion."<sup>2</sup>

Born in Ri in Normandy, he received his elementary education from his parish priest, Jacques Blanette, and at the age of fifteen entered the Jesuit Royal College of the Mount at Caen. Desiring to be a secular priest, he received the tonsure at Seez in 1620 and pursued his theological studies at the University of Caen. In 1623 he entered the Oratory of Jesus, an association of secular priests, founded by Pierre de Berulle in 1611. The young seminarian was anxious to escape the impiety of the age and to advance in Christian perfection, and Berulle's express purpose was to re-establish the dignity of the secular priesthood. Ordained in 1625, St. John Eudes remained an Oratorian for twenty years, in the course of which he was trained in the spiritual life by Berulle and his successor, Charles Condren; "he always remained faithful to the principles he received from them . . . accordingly, in all essentials his (spiritual) teaching is that of the Oratory (commonly known as the French School of spirituality)."<sup>3</sup> In 1641, under the patronage of the Sacred Heart, he founded the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity dedicated to the care of fallen women. From this congregation there later sprang a branch of extraordinary vitality, the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (The Good Shepherd Sisters) under the providential leadership of St. Mary Euphrasia Pelletier. St. John Eudes left the Oratory of Jesus in 1643 to establish the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, commonly known today as the Eudist Fathers. This congregation is engaged chiefly in giving missions and conducting seminaries.

St. John Eudes always fostered a tender devotion to Mary. He even attributed his birth to the special intercession of the Blessed Mother, for his parents, long childless, had made a vow to Our Lady of Ransom that if they were blessed with a child, they would offer the infant to Our Lord and Our Lady. When he was only fourteen, he personally made a private vow of chastity in Mary's honor. At eighteen, while studying with the Jesuits at Caen, he was received into the Sodality of Our Lady. Convinced that all the graces he received came through her mediation, he made a formal vow of perpetual servitude to Our Lord and Our Lady in 1624. All through his life he considered himself a child of Mary's Heart and felt towards her the tenderness of a son. Imbued with this spirit, he invariably chose her feast days to undertake important duties and in 1668, as a further sign of his stead-

fast loyalty and love, he drew up his "contract of spiritual marriage" with Mary.<sup>4</sup>

### CORDIMARIAN DEVOTION

St. John Eudes was convinced that "a man is not a true Christian if he has no devotion to the Mother of Jesus Christ and of all Christians . . . conversely, it is impossible for anyone to perish upon whom she looks with favor."<sup>5</sup> The Saint realized, however, that the human will is moved to love only when the intellect presents what is worthy of our respect and esteem. He therefore wrote his incomparable devotional classic, *The Admirable Heart of Mary*, a compendium of praise to the Mother of God culled from Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Fathers and theologians of the Church. In this volume, he distinguished a trinity of Hearts in Mary: the Corporeal, the Spiritual, and the Divine.

The Corporeal Heart of Mary, her heart of flesh, is not the dominant aspect in his devotion to the Heart of Mary. The real, yet subordinate role he assigns to Mary's physical heart harmonizes well with the corresponding doctrine on the Sacred Heart recently clarified in the encyclical *Haurietis Aquas*.

The Spiritual Heart of Mary, the superior part of Mary's soul, includes her intellect, memory and will, but primarily and principally her love and charity. This "furnace of love," symbolized in her Corporeal Heart, mirrors her love for God and her charity for mankind.

The Divine Heart ordinarily means the Incarnate Word, Jesus living in her, the gem in its setting: the Divine Son in the Heart of the Virgin Mother. He incorporated this beautiful concept in the Invitatory of the Office of the Heart of Mary which he wrote for his spiritual sons and daughters: "Jesum in Corde Mariae regnantem, venite adoremus." But sometimes he assigns the name, the Divine Heart, to the Holy Ghost or to the complete Trinity as is evident from the doxology which ends the hymns for this same Office of the Heart of Mary: "O Sacrosancta Trinitas, Aeterna vita cordium, Cordis Mariae sanctitas, In corde regnes omnium."

However, it is in his most famous work, *The Kingdom of Jesus*, that we find the most precise elaboration of the principles governing devotion to Mary as he conceived it.<sup>6</sup>

He taught first of all that we must not separate Jesus and Mary but unite them in our devotions. "Jesus and Mary," the

Saint writes, "are so closely connected that he who sees Jesus sees Mary, and he who loves Jesus loves Mary; he who has devotion to Jesus has devotion to Mary. Jesus and Mary are the two chief foundations of the Christian religion, the two sources of all our blessings, the two subjects of our devotions and the two to whom we must look in all our actions and devotions."<sup>7</sup> The Saint speaks of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary as "one" Heart by reason of the intimate union existing between them, a most perfect union and conformity of spirit, of will, and of feeling. The Heart of Jesus is of course distinct from that of Mary and surpasses it infinitely in excellence and holiness. Yet God has so closely united these two Hearts that there has never been and never will be a closer union. "Thus the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the Heart of Mary. These two Hearts are but one Heart . . . which was given to us by the Blessed Trinity and by our Blessed Mother, so that we, the children of Jesus and Mary, might have but one heart with our Heavenly Father and our holy Mother and that we might love and glorify God with the same Heart, a Heart worthy of the infinite grandeur of His Divine Majesty."<sup>8</sup> Thus as Mary and Jesus are inseparable in life, they also ought to be inseparable in our devotion.

The second principle he proposes is that we ought to honor Jesus in Mary and Mary in Jesus. "You must see and adore her Son in her and see and adore Him alone. It is thus that she wishes to be honored, because of herself and by herself she is nothing but her Son Jesus is everything in her, her being, her life, her sanctity, her glory, her power and her greatness." In truth, this is why Christian tradition has honored Mary. Jesus is Mary's reason of being. Mary's reason of being is to give Jesus. "Do you not know that not only is Jesus resting and dwelling continually in the Heart of Mary but that He is Himself the Heart of Mary . . ." As Father Llameras, O.P., writes: "St. John Eudes made the object of this devotion (Cordimarian) not only the Physical and Spiritual Heart of Mary but also her Divine Heart, that is Jesus living in her, Who being the life of her life is the Heart of her Heart. In this way, Cordimarian veneration has reverted into homage of Jesus, according to the Saint's formula appearing in the Invitatory of Matins of the liturgical Office of the Heart of Mary: *Jesum in Corde Mariae regnantem, venite adoremus.*"<sup>9</sup>

Thus whoever yearns for Jesus seeks Mary and whoever finds the Heart of Mary beholds Jesus reigning fully. Through

the Heart of Mary souls penetrate into the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the veneration of Mary's love grows into adoration of the infinite love of Jesus. The love St. John Eudes lavished on the most pure Heart of Mary is love for Jesus Himself. He sings with one single hymn, *Ave Cor Sanctissimum*, of this love for the Admirable Heart of Mary and for the Adorable Heart of Jesus. Nor does this indicate any confusion in his mind of the honor due to Mary (hyperdulia) and the supreme honor due to her Divine Son (latria). St. John Eudes rightly understood that all honor rendered to the Blessed Virgin and to the saints implies homage to the Person of Jesus and ultimately to the Blessed Trinity: "O Sacrosancta Trinitas . . . In Corde regnes omnium."<sup>10</sup>

A third principle inculcated by St. John Eudes is that we ought to model ourselves on Jesus in the practice of devotion to Mary. "As you must continue the virtues of Jesus and keep with you His sentiments, so also you must continue and maintain in your hearts the love, tenderness and devotion that Jesus cherished for His Blessed Mother. He loved her most perfectly and accorded her the very highest honor in choosing her to be His Mother, giving Himself to her as Her Most Beloved Son, taking from her a new being and life, becoming subject to her, following her guidance in outward things during His Childhood and hidden life, afterwards crowning her Queen of heaven and earth, glorifying her and causing her to be glorified by the whole world." The Saint accordingly urges us to "honor her first as the Mother of God, then as your own Mother and Queen. You must thank her for all the love, glory, and perfect service she has rendered to her Son Jesus Christ our Lord. You must refer to her, after God, your being and your life, subjecting yourself entirely to her as her slave, imploring her to direct you in all your affairs and to assume full power over you, as over something belonging entirely to her and to dispose of you as she pleases, for the greater glory of her Divine Son. You must beg her to employ all your actions to honor the infinite works of her Son, and to associate you with all the love and praises which she ever gave Him and ever shall give Him throughout eternity."<sup>11</sup>

Those who approach her with this childlike trust and confidence of St. John Eudes will find that Mary is truly our heavenly mother. She consoles us when we are sad, reassures us when we are afraid, guides us when we wander from the right path, strengthens us in timidity, encourages us when weakness overwhelms us, gives us fresh confidence in our hesitation, guards

us against the attacks of Satan and teaches us to follow the way of the Cross. Through Mary Jesus comes to us; through Mary we come to Jesus. She who was His Mother in the flesh becomes the spiritual mother of us all. It was filial knowledge of this spiritual kinship which prompted the Saint to pray: "Omnipotent God, Who didst will the Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the sanctuary of the Divinity, the throne of every virtue and the treasure of all sanctity, grant, we beseech Thee, through the merits and prayers of this most Holy Heart, that we may unceasingly bear the likeness of her in our heart; so that, in imitation of her, by accomplishing all that is most pleasing to Thee, we may merit to become eternally conformed to Thy Heart. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."<sup>12</sup>

Thus Cordimarian devotion honors the Blessed Mother under the symbolism of the Heart as it reflects her love and sanctity. It is universally accepted as the most excellent of devotions to Our Blessed Mother.<sup>13</sup> It is not simply another Marian devotion. It is rather the crown, summation, and synthesis of all other particular Marian devotions. The consideration of Mary's Heart, of her great love for God and for man, awakens a desire in the hearts of her children to return that love by acts of consecration and reparation to her Immaculate Heart.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (Nov. 20, 1947), N.C.W.C. Vatican Library translation, p. 58 (par. 169).

<sup>2</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Decree of Veneration* (Jan. 6, 1903)—"Auctor liturgici cultus. Cordium Jesu et Mariae."

Pope Pius X, *Decree of Beatification* (April 25, 1909)—"Hujus suavissimae religionis tum Pater . . . tum Doctor . . . tum denique Apostolus."

<sup>3</sup> Lebrun, Charles, *The Spiritual Teaching of St. John Eudes*, London, 1934, p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> Eudes, St. John, *Letters and Shorter Works*, New York, 1948, p. 318.

<sup>5</sup> Eudes, St. John, *Kingdom of Jesus*, New York, 1946, p. 271.

<sup>6</sup> Lebrun, Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>7</sup> Eudes, St. John, *Kingdom of Jesus*, p. 271.

<sup>8</sup> Eudes, St. John, *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, New York, 1946, p. 110.

<sup>9</sup> Llameras, O.P., Marceliano, *Fatima: The Rosary and the Heart of Mary*, Washington, Thomist Press, 1950, p. 477.

<sup>10</sup> Eudes, St. John, *Admirable Heart of Mary*, New York, 1948, p. 24 (footnote).

<sup>11</sup> Eudes, St. John, *Kingdom of Jesus*, p. 272.

<sup>12</sup> Eudes, St. John, *Admirable Heart*, p. 348 (Prayer for the feast of the Heart of Mary).

<sup>13</sup> "The Rosary ought to be Cordimarian, because the mysteries are Cordi-

marian. The Cordimarian devotion communicates to the Rosary a greater penetration and intimacy. The Rosary can be a most excellent Cordimarian devotion, because it is the history and theology of the Heart of Mary and completely fuses souls with it, and it incites acts of Cordimarian veneration. Since the true Cordimarian devotion requires a knowledge of the Heart of Mary and an intimate union with her sentiments, it would be difficult to separate it from the Rosary without weakening its solidity. The history of the Cordimarian devotion confirms the penetration of the two devotions. The Message of Fatima is essentially Rosarian-Cordimarian. Of itself, the propagation of one of them aids the other. In conformity with theology and history and with the explicit desires of the Blessed Virgin they ought to be propagated together.

"Both devotions ought to be spread so universally that they will be practiced assiduously by all souls. Their universal utility and the earnest recommendation which they have received from the Blessed Virgin and the Church demand it." Llameras, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 526.



"It is, then, highly fitting that after due homage has been paid to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Christian people who have obtained divine life from Christ through Mary, manifest similar piety and the love of their grateful souls for the most loving heart of our heavenly Mother." (POPE PIUS XII, *Haurietis Aquas*)