

**CARDINAL MANNING**

ON THE

**LESSON FROM OUR LADY'S LIFE.**

This sermon was delivered some years ago by that learned Prelate, Cardinal Manning, but which we here reproduce for its singular beauty and force, and as being very appropriate during this month, when the whole of Catholic Christendom is honoring the Mother of God:

The text was taken from the 19th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark, "Woman behold thy son." His Eminence said:—We are come to the last of the four reasons which I gave in the beginning for the love and veneration—the devotion—which we owe to the blessed mother of our Redeemer—the sanctifying power of this devotion upon ourselves, that is, the reflex action upon the minds and hearts of those who love and venerate her. The first of these reasons were derived from the substance of the faith and sanctification and the glory of her own person; this is personal to ourselves. The greatest saints have always loved the Blessed Virgin most; and in proportion as we are sanctified, we shall love her more; and in proportion as we love her more, we shall be more sanctified. This is what I propose to consider to-day. The words I have taken for my text were the words of Our Divine Lord Himself, as you will remember, upon the cross. He said to His Blessed Mother, "Behold thy son," meaning thereby the beloved disciple, St. John, who stood at the foot of His cross, and he went on to say to His disciple "Behold thy mother." These words are not a mere deed of grant; they do not signify that Our Divine Lord, gave, by a metaphorical expression, His Mother to be our mother; but He revealed what the mystery of the Incarnation had accomplished, namely, that there are living relations between God Incarnate and us, whereby He becomes our brother, and so by the adoption of grace His Father our Father, and therefore His Mother our Mother, so that there is a supernatural consanguinity of our manhood in the Incarnation, whereby we are as truly the sons of the second Eve by grace as we are sons of the first Eve by nature. From this it follows that there are living relations, perpetual and eternal, between us and her, and that these living relations are the sources of living and personal duties now and for eternity; and in the measure in which we practise these duties and cherish these affections, in that measure we, ourselves, shall be sanctified. I have pointed out before, how this love and veneration springs from the very substance of the faith itself; therefore this devotion perfects the faith in the hearts of those who believe; the tendency of it is to complete and to preserve the life and consciousness of faith in those who love and venerate the Mother of God. The mystery of the Incarnation, as it was from all eternity before the divine mind of God, is the perfect image of the Mother and the Son, the union, in one person, of Godhead and manhood and the mother from whom He derived it—the Second Adam and the Second Eve. Upon the unity of that mystery depended the perfection of our faith. We cannot separate it, we cannot divide it, we cannot diminish any part of its perfect circumference without destroying the perfectness of our faith. The devotion—the love and reverence to the Blessed Mother of our Redeemer—turns round about that mystery of the Incarnation, a circle and a circumference of defence and of perfection. In the whole history of the Church the manifestation of the glory of the Incarnation has been at the same time, the manifestations of the glory of the Blessed Virgin. The doctrine of the Incarnation has never been assailed by heresy, and therefore defended by the divine authority of the Church, without, at that same time and in that same action, the glory of the Son and the glory of the Mother becoming at the same time more manifest. When those who denied the true substantial manhood of the Son, and taught that the body in which he appeared was a phantasm—when they were condemned by a declaration that the manhood of Jesus Christ was true and substantial like ours, in that declaration His Blessed Mother was declared to be the source from which that substance of our manhood was assumed, and in the assumption of it was deified. When the Arians ascribed to the Son of Mary Godhead in every sense but one, Godhead in perfection save in that of co-eternity of the Son with the Father, when the Church in the Council of Nice declared that the Son was not of a like substance, but of one substance with the Father,—in that moment the glory of the Mother of God was manifested. When the Nestorians affirmed, indeed, that the Godhead was perfect in its proper sub-

stance and the manhood perfect in its proper substance, but that there were two persons—the Eternal Son and the Emmanuel, united by some mysterious economy to the Eternal Son—thereby denying the truth of the Incarnation of God altogether, and thereby denying the redemption of the world, for the blood that was shed on Calvary would have been no longer the blood of God but of man, the Council of Ephesus, in giving to her the title of Mother of God, affirmed this precise truth—that the Divine infant whom she bore into the world was a Divine person, and, if in a truly Divine person there was no human personality, there was a Divine person clothed with human nature, but no human personality, because two persons could not so exist in the mystery of the Incarnation; it would not be the Incarnation of God. I might even go further—the faith itself has hardly been touched—but directly or indirectly the glory of the Blessed Mother of God has been made more manifest. When St. Augustine laid down against the heresy of the Pelagians the doctrine of original sin, he declared, in speaking of the universality of original sin, "I say nothing of the Blessed Virgin out of reverence for Her Divine Son;" and the Council of Trent, in like manner, when it made a decree—the first decree that a General Council of the Church ever made on the subject of original sin; for until then that doctrine, which is the foundation of our whole faith, rested upon the definitions of a provincial council in Africa—with the confirmation of the Roman Pontiff thereby becoming an infallible definition—in declaring the universality of original sin of mankind, it does not include the Blessed and Immaculate Mother of God. I may say, therefore, the glory of Mary has been manifested concurrently with the glory of her Divine Son; and the Faith itself is so intimately related to the mystery of her sanctity, that whenever any of the doctrines of the faith have been touched directly or indirectly, some reference to her has been made, and her singular and pre-eminent sanctification and glory have been manifested. Now let us take a contrast. There was a time when England was full, from sea to sea, of this undivided mystery of the Incarnation, when the glory of the Son and of the Mother was in the heart and on the lips of every man and every child. Three hundred years ago in every cathedral and abbey and parish church there were Our Lady's altar and Our Lady's chapel, her feasts, her litanies, the "Hail Mary," her memory venerable and dear in the heart and upon the lips of all who believed in Christianity. Then came a separation; the glory of the Son was isolated, and men thought to adore Him with divine worship and to leave His Blessed Mother in the shade without so much as invocation. What has followed? You see the condition of religion in England at this day. I know not how many millions do not believe even in Jesus Christ: I don't know how many who profess to believe in Jesus Christ deny his Godhead; I don't know how many there are who believe in the Incarnation, nevertheless deny to her the title of Mother of God. And if they believe her Divine Son to be the co-eternal Son, how can they deny that she is the mother of a divine person? Does it not show that a latent, if it be only a subtle and unsuppressed, thought of Nestorianism runs through the mind even of those who profess to believe in the mystery of the Incarnation? What would the Council of Ephesus have said to these numbers of Christians in England of every kind who refuse to give to the Blessed Virgin the title which the Council gave—"Mother of God"—one of the Four General Councils which we are told the Anglican Church receives and makes the foundation of all things, like the Four Gospels, and by which heresy is to be tried in the tribunals of the land? The Council of Ephesus would say, Why any man who denies that Mary is the Mother of God is a heretic, either implicit or explicit, conscious or unconscious. I might carry matters further. The instance I have given is enough to show this—you cannot obscure the glory of the Mother without at the same time in some degree diminishing and destroying the fulness and the perfection of the Faith. If I were to give other examples, I might refer to Poland, to Switzerland, and to Germany, where Socinianism and Rationalism have devoured not only doctrine after doctrine, but the whole Revelation of God, not only the leaf but the fruit, not only the fruit but the branches, not only the branches but the trunk, not only the trunk but the root. It is all gone. And where did it begin? With that same intellectual rising against the divine authority of the Church called the Reformation, the first sign of which was the rejection of the loving veneration of the Blessed Mother of God. I remember

some years ago seeing a map, drawn by pious and well intentioned men no doubt, describing the state of the Christian world.—Those vast countries, nations, and regions over which the Vicar of Jesus Christ holds spiritual sway were painted in deep black; those other portions which were liberated by the Reformation as hope and light in bright colours. When I looked upon that map, I said to myself, "In those lands of light there is not a 'Hail Mary' said, but neither is the Godhead of Jesus Christ believed, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is rejected, and Christianity is abolished and gone up from the earth like dust; but in those dark lands there is no man, woman, or child, unless they are among the units who have fallen away, who do not believe in the Ever-Blessed Trinity, in Jesus, God and man in one person, and who do not say the 'Hail Mary' every day after they had said the 'Our Father.'" I think then I have not said too much in affirming that the loving veneration of the Mother of God has been the circle of circumference round about the Faith itself. As it preserves and amplifies the consciousness of Faith, so does it preserve and amplify the habit of Charity. More perfect Faith, more perfect love; the one is the commensuration of the other. Do you believe that any man can love the Mother without loving the Son? Do you believe that anyone believes Mary to be the Mother of God without believing Jesus to be God? Do you think it possible for anyone to love the Mother of God and not to love Jesus as the Divine Lord and the Redeemer of the world? Why should anyone love the Mother except in and through the Son? How can they know the Mother unless they know the Son? They are co-relative terms. How can they know the dignity and the sanctity of the Mother unless they know the Godhead and the manhood of the Son? It is from the Son that they have knowledge of the Mother; it is through the Son that they love her, and their act of love to the Mother of Jesus is an act of love to Jesus Himself. Charity is like the light of heaven; you cannot take it and subdivide it by a prism in the human soul. Where Charity exists, it exists in one gift of God. Do you think it possible for any man really to love the Son and consciously to refuse to love the Mother? I do not believe it. I believe there are millions in England who do love our Lord Jesus Christ, and who do not love His Blessed Mother. That would seem to be a contradiction of my words, but it is none.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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