

I dedicate this work to our Holy Father Francis,  
in my prayer for his successful ministry.

I dedicate this work also to you, my dear reader.

May this work help you to value the importance of human relationships and the  
personal union of love of Mary (and every faithful disciple) with Jesus  
and with the Most Holy Trinity, the God of Love.

“My Love, the world is beclouded because the world does not realize me as Love,  
God of Love. This is your mission, the most important mission this time and forever  
that my Love will reign in the whole world.”

8/12/1999

## Preface

The careful research of Maria Steidl on *The union of the two Hearts. An inculturated Christological – Marian spirituality* presents the obtained results and several difficulties which sprung from the research, which proposed a Mariological and Marian reflection seeking synthesis and connections, as requested by the letter *La Madre del Signore. Presenza, Memoria, Speranza*, of the Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis on 8<sup>th</sup> of Decembre 2000.<sup>1</sup>

It presents itself as a research on the *boundary*: between grace and human response, between culture and faith, between personal and communitarian, between the Revelation and charismatic-prophetic revelations, between dogmatic theology and the mystical experience which is expressed in tales and symbols, between the Church's liturgy and popular devotions, between symbol and symbolical theology; between the European postmodern culture and the African contemporary culture, and between past, present and future of what is human and faith, emblematically condensed in the person and in the charismatic-spiritual experience of Rev. Fr. Dr. Montfort Okaa, Nigerian and founder of the *Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary* and in 1989 of the *Sisters of the Hearts of Love*.<sup>2</sup>

This research on the *boundary* has its religious-female centre of gravity in the Mother of Jesus, *woman of boundary*: between the Old and the New Testament, between divine Grace and the exemplary answer of the Handmaid of the Lord which has a great theological weight, between Christians belonging to different cultures, places and peripheries, between the Catholic Church and Christian churches, between Christians and the followers of other religions in the world. This broad vision takes into account especially the African Marian sensitivity which evolved thanks to the Magisterial contribution of the Vatican Council II (1962-1965), and the contribution of the contemporary theological research.<sup>3</sup>

Maria Steidl shows well that her theme has these multiple *boundaries*. On the other hand, these are fundamental for a Mariology and a theology which is inculturated and soaked with the

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<sup>1</sup> PONTIFICIA ACADEMIA MARIANA INTERNATIONALIS (PAMI), *La Madre del Signore. Memoria, Presenza, Speranza*, PAMI, Città del Vaticano, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Africae munus*, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation, of the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2011, in AAS 104 (2012) 239-314; COMMISSIONE TEOLOGICA INTERNAZIONALE (CTI), *Theology today. Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, of the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011, in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, EDB, Bologna 2014, vol. 28, n. 514-613, p. 228-337.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria, sintesi di valori. Storia culturale della mariologia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2005; J.-P. SIEME LASOUL, *Le rôle de la Sainte Vierge Marie dans la vie des chrétiens d'Afrique*, in *Miles Immaculatae* 42 (2006), p. 493-523; IDEM, *La presenza materna di Maria nella Chiesa famiglia di Dio in Africa*, *ibidem*, 70 (2008), p. 355-378; IDEM, *Africa*, in S. DE FIORES-V. FERRARI SCHIEFER-S.M. PERRELLA (edd.), *Mariologia. I Dizionari*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2009, p. 24-40; S.M. PERRELLA, *La recezione e l'approfondimento del capitolo VIII della "Lumen Gentium" nel magistero di Paolo VI, Giovanni Paolo II e Benedetto XVI*, in S.M. CECCHIN (ed.), *Mariologia a tempore Concilii Vaticanii II. Receptio, Ratio et Prospectus*. Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in Civitate Romae anno 2012 celebrati, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2013, p. 1-146.

Word of Faith (cf. Rm 10,8) and with the history of man, in this case of the African lands, which can thus be understood as *scientia fidei, docta spes, docta caritas*.<sup>4</sup>

This research has explored these multiple boundaries between history, faith, tradition, theology, spirituality, cult and culture, through the particular entrance door which are the normative and spiritual texts of the charismatic-religious family of the *Hearts of Love*, to which the author chose to belong in the Church, with the Church and for the Church. Some were individuated better, others less. This must not startle the reader, since the most original contribution which a research can give to theology and to the culture does not reside only in the secure points that were acquired, but, even more, in the prospective which is left open or which is even able to be thrown open.

Studying with theological meticulousness the religious charism of the young *Association of the Two Hearts of Love*, the author tried to develop further a relational, anthropological, psychological and religious Mariology.<sup>5</sup> This approach is consonant to the needs of the African culture, as well as to the postmodern European culture. In this context, it was considered how Jesus and Mary reciprocally “influenced” each other in their intimate relationship/union: Mary being guided to the most sublime humanity and holiness, and Jesus being sustained in being the Salvation of the world personified. This view is coherent with the conscience that the redemption, salvation and glorification of human beings is their union with the Father *in* Christ, in a true process of Christification operated by the Holy Spirit. The section which is concerned with the “mediation of Mary” (cf. *Lumen gentium* 60-62; *Redemptoris Mater* 38-41) therefore does not speak of a “transmission of salvation”. Instead, it speaks of Mary as facilitating the encounter of the faithful with Jesus in her role as first redeemed, salvific co-worker and *mater viventium* (cf. Gen 3,20); of making him present and encouraging in a motherly way to embrace the Salvation made Person resolutely and joyfully: that Salvation which the Church *ministra pietatis* celebrates and offers with the *communio Sanctorum*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. B. FORTE, *La teologia come compagnia, memoria e profezia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1987; COMMISSIONE TEOLOGICA INTERNAZIONALE, *Fides et inculturatio*, document on faith and inculturation, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1988, in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, vol. 11, n. 1347-1424, p. 846-895; E. J. PENOUKOU, *Inculturation*, in J.Y. LACOSTE (ed.), *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, Quadriga-PUF, Paris 2007<sup>3</sup>, p. 680-683; M. GAHUNGU, *Le sfide dell'inculturazione in Africa. Riflessione alla luce del sinodo speciale del 1994*, LAS, Roma 2007. On the question of the inculturation of the Marian mystery in general, cf. AA. VV., *L'immagine teologica di Maria oggi. Fede e Cultura*, Marianum, Roma 1996; S. DE FIORES, *Maria, sintesi di valori*, p. 15-38.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. G. RUGGERI, *Per una cristologia relazionale. La fede in Gesù Cristo in una società multiculturale*, in *Synaxis* 17 (1999), p. 38-56; S. DE FIORES, *Paradigma antropologico*, in IDEM, *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, EDB, Bologna 2006, vol. 2, p. 1241-1269. AA. VV., *Maria paradigma antropologico nella teologia postconciliare*, in *Theotokos* 21 (2013), p. 3-166; P. LARGO DOMINGUEZ, *Maria, microcosmo de relaciones*, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 57 (2007), p. 67-100; A. CARFÌ, *Il tema della relazione nella mariologia contemporanea*, in *Theotokos* 18 (2010), p. 127-166. S.M. PERRELLA, *Maria persona in relazione nel magistero dei Vescovi di Roma: da Paolo VI a Benedetto XVI*, *ibidem*, p. 167-255.

<sup>6</sup> On this delicate question cf. the research of O. FRANZONI – F. BACCHETTI (ed.), *In Cristo unico mediatore Maria cooperatrice di salvezza*. Atti del 19° Colloquio Internazionale di Mariologia, Ossimo Inferiore (Bs), 13-15 luglio 2006, AMI, Roma 2008.

A questo costante e materno incoraggiamento appartengono le molteplici esperienze mariane che la teologia fondamentale raggruppa sotto la categoria delle “rivelazioni private”, la cui presenza nel vissuto ecclesiale costituisce un innegabile valore ed esprime il mai compiuto percorso di approfondimento della fede trasmessa ai santi una volta per tutte. Inquadrato in un percorso di ricerca nella branca teologico/dogmatica, il lavoro di Maria Steidl contribuisce a diffondere una fondata ermeneutica di questi eventi nel grande quadro del *munus maternum* subordinato che la Chiesa cattolica non smette di ritenere e di proporre ai *christifideles* come dono e segno della potenza della Grazia nel cuore delle storie degli uomini e delle donne di ogni tempo e luogo.

To this constant and maternal encouragement belong the various Marian experiences which the fundamental theology assigns to the category of “private revelations”, the presence of which in the life of the Church constitutes an undeniable value and expresses the never completed task of studying in depths the faith transmitted to the saints once and for all. Within her theological and dogmatic research, Maria Steidl contributes to make known a well-based hermeneutics of these events in the greater frame of the subordinate *munus maternus* which the Church does not stop to sustain and to propose to the *christifideles* as gift and sign of the power of the Grace in the heart of the life stories of the men and women of every time and place.<sup>7</sup>

I wish the reader all the enjoyment which I had in reading this Mariological research.

Rome, 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2015

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. S.M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio nella storia. Apparizioni e Mariofanie*, Messaggero, Padova 2011.

# THE UNION OF THE TWO HEARTS

## An inculturated Christological – Marian spirituality

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## List of Abbreviations

### 1. Abbreviations of Magisterial documents

AA – ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem* (18/11/1965).  
AG – ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree *Ad gentes* (7/12/1965).  
CCC – *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992).  
CIC – *Codex Juris Canonici*, Code of Canon Law (1983).  
DV – ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* (18/11/1965).  
EA – JOHN PAUL II, Postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (14/9/1995).  
ET – PAUL VI, Apostolic exhortation *Evangelica testificatio* (29/6/1971).  
LG – ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* (21/11/1964).  
MC – PAUL VI, Apostolic exhortation *Marialis cultus* (2/2/1974).  
PC – ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II Decree *Perfectae caritatis* (28/10/1965).  
RM – JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mater* (25/3/1987).  
SC – ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4/12/1963).  
VC – JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata* (25/3/1996).

### 2. Abbreviations of Papal Congregations

CDF – Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, or Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith  
CDWDS – Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, or Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, or Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship  
CICLSAL – Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, or Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes

### 3. Other abbreviations

AAS – *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Romae 1909f  
AD – Anno Domini  
Art. – Article or Articles  
BC – before Christ  
cf. – confer  
chap. - chapter  
CISM – Conferenza Italiana Superiori Maggiori  
col. – column  
CSCO – *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*  
CSEL – *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*  
CSSp – Congregatio S. Spiritu, Holy Ghost Fathers, Spiritans  
DS – H. DENZINGER – A. SCHÖNMETZER, *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*  
ed. – editor(s)/edition  
EE – *Enchiridion delle Encicliche*

esp. - especially  
 et al. – et alii, and others  
 GCS – *Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*, Leipzig 1897  
 LThK – *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Herder, Freiburg 1993-2013  
 MA – Middle Ages  
 n. – number or numbers  
 NDM – S. DE FIORES – S. MEO (ed.), *Nuovo Dizionario di Mariologia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1996<sup>4</sup>  
 NT – New Testament  
 OR – *L'Osservatore Romano*  
 OT – Old Testament  
 p. – page or pages  
 PAMI - PONTIFICIA ACADEMIA MARIANA INTERNATIONALIS  
 par. – parallel texts in the synoptic Gospels  
 PG – J.P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Graeca*  
 PL – J.P. MIGNE, *Patrologia Latina*  
 s. a. – sine auctorem, name of the author not given  
 s. ed. – sine editorem, editor not given  
 SHL – Sisters (or “Sons” or “Society”) of the Hearts of Love  
 SIM – Simposio Internazionale Mariano  
 s. l. – sine locu, place not given  
 s. n. – sine nominem, first name not given  
 TMPM – G. GHARIB et al. (ed.), *Testi Mariani del Primo Millennio*, Città Nuova, Roma 1988-1991  
 transl. – translation/translated

## Introduction

The Holy Scripture, in all its multiplicity, has a focal point of unity in its salvific message: the will of God to realize in Christ an intimate union and personal communion of love with mankind and through man with all creation.<sup>8</sup> The congregational sources of the Sisters of the Two Hearts of Love present this dynamism towards union of all in God as already given in the union of Love of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and as an invitation to join this union.

### 1. The main theme and the sub-themes

The main theme of this research is the union of the hearts of Jesus and Mary, their personal relationship, as they became together the eschatological sole centre of relationship between all creatures, taking into consideration as sources the Holy Scripture and the tradition of the Church, to which belongs also the congregational sources of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love. The “thesis” of the author is mainly presented in the third chapter of the work: the theological opinion that the modern understanding of salvation as a personal relationship with God can be applied to Mariology, for the understanding of the redemption of Mary, and for the understanding of her cooperation in the salvation of others, favouring their personal relationship with God. This research will present the salvation of Mary as the fact that Christ united her (throughout life) to Himself in an ever more intimate relationship, and that Mary corresponded to this salvific action, assimilating His ways of thinking and acting, allowing herself to be transformed into the perfect image of God and brought into the deepest possible union with God. Thus Mary is able to help others to correspond to the grace of God.

The theme is correlated with some sub-themes: the inculturation in Africa, especially Igboland, the role of apparitions in the Church, the question of the importance of pious devotional exercises, and the anthropological question of the role of men and women in society.

### 2. The historical background of the study

The chosen theme, the union of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which has formed whole generations of Christians, thanks to the work of saints such as Birgitta of Sweden († 1373)<sup>9</sup>, Jean

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<sup>8</sup> According to the conviction of theologians as M. G. MASCIARELLI, *Il cuore. Spiritualità, cultura, educazione*, Tau, Todi 2008, p. 147, referring to Eph 1,9-11.

<sup>9</sup> Born in Sweden in 1302, mother of 8 children, and widow, she entered a Cistercian monastery in 1344. After three years of serious prayers, she went to Rome and received the inspiration to found a new order which had to be an image of the college of apostles and disciples of the Lord: a double-monastery (male and female, coming together only for prayers). It was realized and approved in 1370. Cf. A. LÓPEZ AMAT, *La vita consacrata. Le varie forme dalle origini ad oggi*, Città Nuova, Roma 1991, p. 241. She received “revelations” which her confessors translated into Latin and which had a great influence on the theology and spirituality in the Church. They emphasize the union of the hearts of Jesus and Mary to the point of ascribing the redemption of mankind to the sufferings of both, as Mary says in a message: “Filius meus et ego redemimus mundum quasi cum uno corde”. Jesus added in another “revelation” that ‘My Mother and I redeemed men so to say with one heart, I through my interior sufferings in the heart and through my outward suffering in the flesh, but she through the pain of the heart and through love’. *Revelationes* I, 35 and *Revelationes extravagantes* 3, quoted in F. HOLBÖCK, *Gottes Nordlicht. Die hl. Birgitta von Schweden und ihre Offenbarungen*, Christiana, Stein

Eudes († 1680)<sup>10</sup>, Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort († 1716)<sup>11</sup> and very many others, manifests itself as the main Christological-Mariological element in the congregational sources of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love – Sisters of the Two Hearts of Love. The devotion of the Hearts of Love began in the 70's in Orlu, Nigeria, by Montfort Okaa, then a teenager, as a private devotion among the faithful. As a diocesan priest, he began the Society of the Hearts of Love (SHL) in 1987 as a private pious association of Christ's faithful. The devotion spread to the international field, but especially to Germany, where the founder lived from 1994-2006. The female religious branch of this Society began in Nigeria on 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1997 with the acceptance and the opening of the first female noviciate (7/10/1998) in the diocese of Okigwe. The first set of five Sisters celebrated their first simple profession on 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2000,<sup>12</sup> Easter Sunday of the Holy Year; the date marks the foundation of the Institute. It was approved by His Excellency, Mons. Ayo-Maria Atoyebi O.P., Bishop of Ilorin (Nigeria) on 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2001. The author chose the theme in view of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Institute (23<sup>rd</sup> April 2015) and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society of the Hearts of Love (2017).

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am Rhein 1988<sup>2</sup>, p. 257-258. The image of the two Hearts redeeming mankind together is inviting the faithful to unite themselves with Mary in their daily cross to the passion of Christ. It cannot be used to prove an equality between Jesus and Mary in the redemption of man, because the complete dependence of Mary on the divine Son is underlying. However, the 'revelations' present the participation of Mary in the redemption as important, demanding the gratitude of the faithful. Cf. M. HAUKE, "Geschichtliche und systematische Grundlinien der Herz-Mariä-Verehrung", in IDEM (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung. Geschichtliche Entwicklung und theologischer Gehalt*, Pustet, Regensburg 2011, p. 28. Cf. also S. DE FIORES, "Brigida di Svezia (S.)" in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario. Testimoni e Maestri*, EDB, Bologna 2008, vol. 3, p. 117-165.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. T. MARSCHLER, "Das Herz Mariens in seiner Beziehung zum Dreifaltigen Gott nach der Lehre des hl. Jean Eudes", in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 85-86: Saint J. EUDES was born in Normandy and entered the Congregation of the Oratory of de Bérulle (cf. footnote 24) and de Condren. He founded the female congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge for women with ill-fame who wanted to do penance, with the help of the Visitandines. (These were just founded, in 1616, by St. Francis de Sales, † 1622, bishop of Geneva, author of *Introduction to the Devout Life* and *Treatise on the Love of God*, together with St. Jane Frances de Chantal; the Institute to which St. Margaret Mary Alacoque († 1690) later belonged, who received apparitions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Paray-le-Monial. St. Francis de Sales saw the two Hearts as united. Cf. A. ZIEGENAUS, "Die Herz-Jesu-Verehrung. Geschichtliche Entwicklung und theologischer Gehalt", in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 39.) Eudes founded and joined the Congregation of Jesus and Mary for the education of priests. Pope Leo XIII called him on 6/1/1903 "Author of the liturgical worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Holy Heart of Mary". His last and main work was: "Le Cœur admirable de la Très Sacrée Mère de Dieu ou la dévotion au très saint Cœur de Marie", Caen 1681, in *Œuvres complètes*, Beauchesne, Paris 1908, vol. 6-8, (Vol. 11 contains the texts of the Mass in honour of the Immaculate Heart, on p. 312.) published in <[http://www.jesusmarie.free.fr/jean\\_eudes.html](http://www.jesusmarie.free.fr/jean_eudes.html)>, seen on 27/1/2014.

<sup>11</sup> In the fervour of his youth, he pronounced a vow of 'radical poverty'. His ascetic life was opposed by his spiritual director who humiliated him publicly. The obedience to the director raised him incapable for some exterior responsibilities. At his ordination (1700), the spiritual director saw him at a 'sublime level of union with Jesus Christ.' Grignion saw Mary as the point of encounter between God and man, such that Mary helps to unite with Christ and Jesus helps to unite with Mary, as they are united. Grignion de Montfort became an itinerant preacher in France, preaching especially to the poor, persecuted by people of higher rank, forbidden in several dioceses, and also in great yearnings for the divine Wisdom. He did not bind himself to any group, but collaborated with all in the dioceses where he was accepted. He testified to an experience of 'continuous presence of Jesus and Mary' with him, identifying with the Virgin and receiving from her the freedom of fears in the apostolic action. He combined the 'renewal of baptismal vows' in use in 'missions' to the simple people, and the 'Marian slavery', which many propagated in his time. His pastoral work sought to bring all into the Reign of Christ by inducing them to *give themselves to Christ* in Mary, to *unite with Christ*, ready to carry the daily cross. Thus, he emphasized the necessity of a personal relationship with the Saviour. Cf. S. DE FIORES, "S. Luigi Maria di Montfort" in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 3, p. 440-451, 463, 467. Cf. also B. CORTINOVIS - S. DE FIORES - E. VIDAU (ed.), *Spiritualità Trinitaria in comunione con Maria secondo Montfort*. Atti dell'8° Colloquio internazionale di mariologia. Roma, 11-13 ottobre 2000, Monfortane, Roma 2002.

<sup>12</sup> As written proof there exist only the documents of the formula of vows with date and signature, in the archive of the Congregation.

### 3. The reason for the themes, the objectives

In the beginning of this study the main reason for this research was to make known the charism<sup>13</sup> of the new congregation, in its history, spirituality and dogmatic value, without much hope of offering something new to the science of Mariology. It is only towards the end of the studies that the author discovered the possibility to present the theology of the Hearts of Love as a “relational Mariology”, a Mariology that takes into account human relationships, presenting the traditional Marian dogmas as illustrations of the various aspects of her union with Christ, and through Christ, with the Holy Trinity, the Church, and all creation. It is very important in the society of today to stress the human being as a being in relationship, since individualism and collectivism have proved to be destructive.<sup>14</sup> Personal identity must be seen within a communitarian

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<sup>13</sup> A charism is a gift of grace, given by the Holy Spirit, which enables man to help others to know and/or do the will of God, which is always geared to the up-building of the Church, i.e. the eternal happiness of all souls, and to the praise of Christ. Cf. 1 Cor 12, 3-7. St. Paul gives in 1 Cor 12, 8-10.28; 13,4-7.13 a list of various gifts, which may not be meant to be comprehensive, since Paul has not the aim of describing what the Spirit can do, but the pastoral aim of pointing out that the gift of a “miraculous” charism does not mean that the person who received it is better than others. Everyone has received something. Grace builds on nature: a charism is not only received, but has also aspects of being acquired by human effort as study or exercise in virtue. A personal charism can become the charism of a community that prays for, learns and exercises the charism of a founder.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, “Maria persona in relazione nel magistero dei Vescovi di Roma”, in *Theotokos* 18, 1 (2010) 173-175. Also in Africa the individualism has become a problem. Cf. F. A. OBORJI, “Il cristianesimo in Africa e lo sviluppo della sua teologia”, in *Credere Oggi* 26 (2/2006) 43. Postmodernity is in fact a global phenomenon, cf. W. B. KENNEDY, “Diversity in postmodern context”, in *Religious Education*, 87,4 (1992) 506, quoted in J. C. R. GARCÍA PAREDES, *Teologia della vita religiosa*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2004, p. 132. García Paredes sees in the postmodernity an option for fragmentation. Against the meta-relationships and global interpretations of the modernity, it agrees to the pluralism of ways of thinking. Postmodern people believe that the world and history are too complicated and fragmented to be understood. They feel obliged to destroy what has been built with personal interest, including social structures and traditional “truths” which favour certain groups. Important is not what I can agree to as true, but what “I like”. In order to maintain a possibility of social life, tolerance is of greatest importance. Postmodernity brought about also a rebirth of religiosity, both in new religious movements and sects and in the traditional religions, as something people came to love. The personal experience is the key, but many live a “light” religiosity without allowing themselves to be challenged to definite decisions after an experience, but continue to float by seeking ever new experiences. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 132-136. The postmodernity, as re-acceptance of values (personal experience, beauty, religion) which were seen as irrational in the modern past, the crisis of Marxism, Freudianism, Egoism, Kantianism, Illuminism and Rationalism is given by De Fiores the symbolic year of beginning in 1989, the fall of the Wall of Berlin. Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori. Storia culturale della mariologia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2005, p. 379. Here, it shall be seen to begin in the year 1988, the Marian year with the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by John Paul II, as the event which spiritually made the fall of the wall possible (in the interpretation of Fr. Montfort). The newly accepted values of old are often taken in a deviated sense by the postmodern man: Consumism, tolerating all in a certain indifference, giving value to people according to what they produce, not finding fulfilling religious experiences. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 385. J. Roten contributes an analysis of postmodernity affecting Mariology: modernity tended towards an emancipation from relationships understood as dependence, in order to gain freedom (understood as liberalism). This influenced also Mariology, and there were attempts to dissociate her either “from her historical roots or from her eschatological reality. Absence of relationality with Christ and Church can further be detected in, for example, expressions of feminist and liberation theology.” “Postmodernity rediscovers and retrieves the importance of relationality.” But the present time has a “fixation on inner experience and mythic expansion of consciousness”, leading to a “chaotic relationality”, when someone “consents to dissolve itself in the numinous”. It is coupled with the “moral *anything goes*, from same-sex-marriages to hugging trees. The chaotic self is the result of disorderly and indiscriminate relationality.” In the Mariological area, it is paralleled by “new forms of remythologization” of Mary into a “mother goddess”, one of the universal symbols of vital femininity in the course of history. The theologian finally presents the “new modernity” (Michel Foucault, Wilhelm Schmid), a recent philosophical current trying to overcome the excesses of modernity and postmodernity, teaching a pragmatic “Lebenskunst”, propagating modesty in the realization of self in autonomy, while pursuing “openness of self to the world and the other thanks to a pragmatic style of life in harmony with the laws proper to the human person, nature and interpersonal relationship.” “We may observe a similar movement in Mariology, namely a frequent and explicit reference to the *person* of Mary, the retrieval of the discovery of an integrated figure of Mary, and communality

structure, for every human being is a social being in the modern understanding of man.<sup>15</sup> One of the objectives of this present research is to demonstrate the various aspects of the intimate personal relationship of Mary with Jesus (and in Him, with the Holy Spirit and the Father) – and, therefore, that all human beings can be in an intimate relationship with the Holy Trinity.<sup>16</sup>

As the theme uses texts hailed from the young Church in East Nigeria, the question of the culture of the place and the inculturation of the Gospel was automatically a consideration.

A further theme of this research, popular piety, some years ago seen as obsolete and unnecessary, has strong defenders in our days. They point out that this piety can be seen as the expression of traditionally oriented communities which proved to stand firm against the predominant culture closed in the immanence and with secularizing power.<sup>17</sup> Also, visions and apparitions, which are very often at the origin of new devotions as in the case of the devotion of the Two Hearts of Love, equally have defenders today. Despite the objective difficulty in judging transcendental experiences, some theologians fight against a general rejection of such mystical experiences.<sup>18</sup> This research is to point out the necessity of devotions in general, and of the devotion

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centered on an image of unanimity of Our Lady”, stressing “the idea of a multitude of people sharing in the same theological and spiritual values” J. ROTEN, “Mary and the multicultural challenges”, in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *Mariologia a tempore Concilii Vaticani II. Receptio, ratio et prospectus*, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2013, p. 363-365. Pope FRANCIS, in the sermon of the morning mass at Domus S. Marthae of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2013, said that “in our genetic makeup there is this relationship with God”. In *OR English ed.* 46 (12/6/2013) 11.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. F. MUZUMANGA MA-MUBIMBI, “Persona/relazionalità”, in S. DE FIORES – V. FERRARI SCHIEFER – S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia. I Dizionari*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2009, p. 940-941.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 934-944, esp. p. 935.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Mons. Rino FISICHELLA, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, wrote in a letter to Archbishop Carlo Liberati of Pompei: “Ho potuto toccare con mano la devozione e l’affetto che anima tante persone verso la Santa Vergine di Pompei [...]. Questo mi ha confermato come la pietà popolare sia fondamentale e necessaria per una vera ed efficace opera di Nuova Evangelizzazione.” The letter is published in *Il Rosario e la Nuova Pompei* 128 (2012) 243. Cf. also CDWDS, *Directory on popular piety and the liturgy*, (13/5/2002), n. 36, 41-43, 46, in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccdds\\_doc\\_20020513\\_vers-direttorio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20020513_vers-direttorio_en.html)>, seen on 24/10/2012: pious exercises were an important means of evangelisation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and later, as expressions that permitted inculturation; they helped to promote holiness.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Le apparizioni mariane. “Dono” per la fede e “sfida” per la ragione. Segno, presenza e mediazione della Vergine glorificata nella nostra storia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2007. L. Boriello defined “mystic” as referring to that moment or level or expression of religious experience in which a determined religious world is being lived as interior or immediate experience, or a particular religious experience of unity-union-presence. Cf. L. BORIELLO, “Il linguaggio mistico”, in IDEM (ed.) *Mistica e mistica carmelitana*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2002, p. 153. Asti uses for his definition the term relationship (between God and man): “Il termine mistica [cristiana] richiama una complessa relazione fra Dio e l’uomo in cui sono impegnate tutte le dimensioni umane: memoria, intelletto, volontà, sensi. [...] Il cui] nucleo fondamentale consiste nel rapporto con Dio, in una relazione che storicamente pone due realtà a confronto in un continuo slancio di intendimenti e di abbandoni.” As the intellect is involved, theological studies can be very helpful for a mystical life. Asti underlines that “mystic” is almost synonym to “spirituality”, a term that came into use when “mystic” was seen as in opposition to scientific theology, in the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, “spirituality” points more to ordinary signs, e.g. ways of prayer, while “mystic” points more to extraordinary experiences as stigmatisation, bilocation, vision and pre-cognition, without excluding, however, the ordinary religious experiences as spiritual consolation and “inspirations” for the personal moral life, perceived outside the senses, directly in the “heart” or “intellect”. “Mystical life” is defined by the expert in mystical theology F. Asti as a development originating in baptism and tending to the joy of tasting an intimate friendship with the Holy Trinity, being generated by God in the womb of the Church (cf. CCC, 1213-1284). On p. 238-239 the article abounds in words as communion, embrace, relationship, understanding of one’s person, identity, dialogue, reciprocal openness, love, stable and familiar bond, full adhesion: terms that will be important for the present study. Cf. F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica: Una questione terminologica e di mediazione?” in *Marianum* 72 (2010) 228-229; 232-234, 236-239. The definition of “mystic” in Asti mentions a reciprocal abandonment of God and man, the definition of Boriello mentions communion of man with God. Thus, they mention (only indirectly) the personal character and the character of gift from God that is fundamental in Christian mysticism (authentic mystical experiences are not automatic results of meditation-exercises) and the fundamental importance of human creative response in faith and not just passive reception of the gift.

of the Hearts of Love in particular, a devotion capable of contrasting an egocentric “culture” which even in the African Continent becomes dramatically present, i.e. the non-culture of the destruction of the relationship of man with God and neighbour. The urgency of the primacy of agapic love shall be recalled, insistently stressed by the recent Magisterium. According to the analysis of Pope Benedict XVI, the fall of faith in Europe and other places has exactly its root in the “debasement of human love, [which is an image of the union between God and man according to the Scriptures,] the suppression of the authentic capacity for loving, [...] the systematic closure of a union to the gift of life and, even more, the suppression or manipulation of newborn life.”<sup>19</sup> In the second volume of his meditation on the life of Jesus, he defines true love “as the very process of passing over, of transformation, of stepping outside the limitations of fallen humanity – in which we are all separated from one another and ultimately impenetrable to one another – into an infinite otherness.”<sup>20</sup> This research intends to exemplify this statement in the life and work of Jesus and Mary.

Finally, there is the question of the role of man and woman in the society, intimately connected with the first theme. It is still a hot debate, both in theory and praxis: Are they completely equal in their role and vocation, or are they equal only in dignity, but not in the way to realization of the self? The work will present some voices of the present understanding of the role of the different sexes in Nigeria and in Germany, and then shine the light of the relationship and union of Jesus and Mary on the anthropological question, as a little contribution to the debate.

#### 4. The “status quaestionis” of the main theme

Mariology battles today with the Immaculate Conception (because the original sin is a disputed question) and with the mediation of grace (because the Holy Spirit Himself is the Grace). Several theologians have undertaken a relational approach to the mystery of the Theotokos, and this approach may be able to provide the expressions which can explain these two problems in a convincing way. The relationships of Mary were mentioned by many authors throughout Church history, however without making her being a person in relationship an explicit theme. The 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of “Lumen Gentium”<sup>21</sup> used words such as “vinculum” and “union”, but not the terms

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Mysticism, as a theological science, studies not only the experience, but also the dynamics that can lead to it. Cf. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und „Wunderglaube“. Ein kritischer Beitrag zur spiritualitätstheologischen Valenz der Mariophanie im Kontext humanwissenschaftlicher Fragestellungen*, Pustet, Regensburg 2009, p. 37-39.

<sup>19</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Allocutio quo inauguratur conventus ecclesialis Romanae dioecesis de familia et communitate Christiana*, (6/6/2005), in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/holy-father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2005/june/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20050606\\_convegno-familia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy-father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/june/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050606_convegno-familia_en.html)>, p. 2, 4, seen on 7/10/2012.

<sup>20</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, vol. II, Catholic Truth Society, London 2011, p. 54-55.

<sup>21</sup> Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (21/11/1964), in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_dogmatic-constitution\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_dogmatic-constitution_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)>, seen on 1/3/2014. The document comprises in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter the first systematic Magisterial treaty on the role of Mary in Christ’s work of redemption and in the Church, overcoming the classical opposition of christotypic and ecclesiotypic mariologies. Cf. G. L. MÜLLER, *Katholische Dogmatik für Studium und Praxis der Theologie*, Herder, Freiburg 1995<sup>2</sup>, p. 478. In the antepreparatorial phase of the Council, when the bishops, superior generals, rectors of Catholic universities and the Curia Romana was requested to send proposals of arguments for the Council, the Marian theme occupied a major place with 600 Fathers proposing, of which most requested the definition of a dogma or the decision in a Marian controversy, or a summary on the Church’s teaching on Mary, while a good number requested caution and a review of Mariology, mainly because of ecumenical reasons. The document on Mary was debated at length and often changed. In order to avoid the impression of a divinised Virgin high above the Church, it was included in the *De Ecclesia* (LG), adding to the title (*De Beata Maria Virgine*) “in the mystery of Christ and the Church”, with the

“relationship” or “related” (which talk of the human process of becoming united). Pope Paul VI mentioned it in his comment about LG: Maria has a “singulares prorsus cum Christo”, and “ad Deum et ad Christum Iesum [...] totam spectare”, Mary has a special relationship with Christ and is completely related to God and to Christ.<sup>22</sup> De Fiores quotes this comment of Paul VI in his recent history of Mariology, dedicating a chapter to the “personalistic model” of Mariology, which sees Mary as the “type” of relationships and the “icon” of the Holy Trinity.<sup>23</sup> Pope John Paul II<sup>24</sup> wrote encyclicals in the form of meditations, in which he involved the reader, presenting and building up a relationship between the reader, himself as witness, and God. This is valid also in his Marian encyclical, which he basically wrote personally, accepting only few suggestions from theologians.<sup>25</sup> There he came much nearer than LG to a “relational” Mariology which considers the reciprocal relationship between Mary and Jesus and Mary and the Church. In RM 39, he speaks of a reciprocal donation of self between Mary and God. In RM 40, he shows the “specialis nexus” which begins to form under the cross between the Church and Mary. Equally, the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger,

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proclaimed intention to preserve both the ecclesiotypic and the christotypic Mariology, and to bring Mariology back to a Biblical language. Cf. C. ANTONELLI, *Il dibattito su Maria nel concilio Vaticano II. Percorso redazionale sulla base di nuovi documenti di archivio*, Messaggero, Padova 2009, esp. p. 35-55, 517, 519. The first chapter of LG tries to explain the mystery of the Church as bride and body of Christ. The second chapter presents the “people of God”. The third chapter discusses its hierarchical structure. The fourth chapter dwells on the dignity and duties of the laity. The fifth chapter deals with the universal call to holiness. The sixth chapter presents the religious as special members of the Church in their function to witness to the universal call to holiness. The seventh chapter explains the veneration of the saints in the Church as a communion of the pilgrim Church with the Church in heaven.

<sup>22</sup> PAOLO VI, *Allocutio a chiusura del terzo periodo del Concilio* (21/11/1964), in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, vol. 1, n. 308\*, 315\*, p. [184]-[185], [188]-[189]. This allocution will be mentioned again in this study, as the Supreme Pontiff here gave some hints on aspects which appeared in the discussions and which were not taken up in sufficient clarity in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of LG.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 471-483. In the chapter, the known mariologist sees this type of Mariology based on the “personalistic” philosophy of P. Ricoeur. After quoting Paul VI and saying that only since 1988 the theme is being treated, first by two Spain authors, Mercedes Navarro and Xavier Pikaza. The same were requested to write an article on “person” and on “Trinity” for the Spanish edition of the Mariological “new” dictionary of De Fiores and S. Meo. According to the quotations in *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 472, the relationships of Mary are treated mainly in general terms. M. Navarro underlined that relationship belongs to the personal identity of Mary. X. Pikaza takes up the (new) philosophical principle that the human person “is relationship”, and deduces from the privileged relationships of Mary with the three divine persons that she is the ‘first person of humanity’. Cf. also B. FORTE, *Maria, la donna icona del mistero. Saggio di mariologia simbolico-narrativa*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1989, with the stress on the “relationality” of Mary on p. 37. The half page dedicated by De Fiores to the relationship of Mary with Christ underlines only that Mary is witness and guarantee of the Incarnation (p. 478-479). In the same work, on p. 366-365, De Fiores says that feminist theologians want to overcome the idea that Mary is ‘almost not a woman, almost a goddess’, want to stress her faith (which this research is trying to do), but also avoid the theme of Mary as “bride” and “being in relationship” (which this research will not avoid at all).

<sup>24</sup> Karol Woityła, Pope from 1978 to 2005, who had at the centre of his teaching the inseparable union of Jesus and Mary: loving the Son leads to venerating the Mother, seeking Mary leads to finding Jesus. His spirituality was formed by S. Louis M. Grignion de Montfort. He gave special attention to her motherhood and to the fact that her presence in the salvific event is the reason for her presence also in the liturgical action of the Church. Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Giovanni Paolo II” in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 3, p. 320-321, 325-331, 335.

<sup>25</sup> IOANNES PAULUS II, *Litterae encyclicae Redemptoris mater* (25/3/1987), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 79 (1987) 361-433, in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031987\\_redemptoris-mater\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater_en.html)>, seen on 14/12/2010. The notice of the genesis of the document was given by Prof. Stefano De Fiores in one of his lectures on Mariology in the Pontifical Faculty Marianum, Rome. On the relationships in the said document, cf. S. M. PERRELLA, “Maria persona in relazione”, p. 201-211. The Encyclical commented the Marian teaching of LG in a narrative and meditative way, inaugurating the Marian year 1987-1988. As stated in RM 48, it is influenced by the theology and spirituality of St. Louis M. Grignion de Montfort. For further introduction to the document, cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre. La Madre di Gesù nel Magistero di Giovanni Paolo II e nell'oggi della Chiesa e del mondo*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2007, p. 132-166, and S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, Centro di Cultura Mariana, Roma 1991, p. 551-568.



in his brief Mariological essays and comments<sup>26</sup>, wrote in a way that A. Staglianò titled: “The personalistic Mariology of Joseph Ratzinger”<sup>27</sup>. Describing Mary as a human person, he showed her as a human person in relationships, using findings from the Bible, tradition and archaeology. This development deepens moreso with Pope Francis.

The Magisterium writes in a pastoral way. It is the duty of Mariology to analyze these relationships of Mary in a scientific way. Bruno Forte wrote in 1989, “si potrebbe precisare il principio di sintesi della Mariologia [...] attraverso la *relazione concreta e personale*, che lega la Madre al Figlio.”<sup>28</sup> In the years 2007 and 2009 the Mariological Interdisciplinary Italian Association (AMI) organized a congress concerning Mary as a “person in relationship”, then published the contributions in the periodical *Theotokos* (2007 and 2010). Going through it, very little space is dedicated to her relationship with Christ.<sup>29</sup> F. Muzumanga Ma-Mubimbi figures as the author of the article “Persona/relazionalità” in the Marian “San Paolo” dictionary of 2009. He presents the theme in the post-Vatican II Magisterium, in the NT, in Thomas Aquinas († 1274),<sup>30</sup> Pierre de Bérulle († 1629),<sup>31</sup> and Grignon de Montfort († 1716), finally in the post-Vatican II

<sup>26</sup> Cf. especially J. RATZINGER, *Die Tochter Zion. Betrachtungen über den Marienglauben der Kirche*, Johannes, Einsiedeln 1977; his part (“Erwägungen zur Stellung von Mariologie und Marienfrömmigkeit im Ganzen von Glaube und Theologie”) of the volume (published with H.-U. v. BALTHASAR) *Maria, Kirche im Ursprung*, Herder, Freiburg 1980; and J. RATZINGER, “Hinführung”, in JOHANNES PAUL II, *Maria – Gottes Ja zum Menschen. Enzyklika “Mutter des Erlösers”. Mit einer Hinführung von Joseph Ratzinger und einem Kommentar von Hans-Urs von Balthasar*, Herder, Freiburg 1987, p. 106-128;

<sup>27</sup> A. STAGLIANÒ, *Madre di Dio. La mariologia personalistica di Joseph Ratzinger*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2010, with a presentation of 16 pages by S. DE FIORES.

<sup>28</sup> B. FORTE, *Maria, la donna icona del mistero*, p. 38. Here shall be quoted also U. CASALE, “La maternità verginale di Maria e l’escatologia. Nexus mysteriorum”, in C. CARVELLO – S. DE FIORES (ed.), *Maria icona viva della Chiesa futura*, Monfortane, Roma 1998, p. 117: “Il discorso di fede sulla Vergine Madre è tutto *relazionale*.” Quoted in P. BARIGELLI-CALCARI, *L’ultimo desiderio nelle religioni. L’Assunzione di Maria: un modello cristiano*, Aracne, Roma 2011, p. 121. The psychologist and mariologist actually expressed her impression that all Marian piety, Mariology and Marian cult always show the Virgin in relationship and union with Christ, Trinity, saints, mankind and the cosmos. This shows how a “relational Mariology” is today immediately assimilated. Cf. also R. LOMBARDI, and her doctoral work on *Maria. Icona della Trinità. Primizia di una umanità nuova*, Pro Sanctitate, Roma 2001, which dedicated ample chapters to Mary in her relationships to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but in a quite uncritical-emotional way.

<sup>29</sup> Apart from the articles which will be quoted in the third chapter of the present work, here shall be mentioned the article of M. MARITANO, “Maria e la relazione in Ambrogio e Giovanni Damasceno” in *Theotokos* 18,1 (2010) 29-83, which contains on pages 34-38 and 61-68 some extended demonstration of the union and relationship of Mary with Christ, but always limited to the understanding of these two Fathers of the Church.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas entered 1244 the 23-years old Dominican order. He was studying, teaching and writing/dictating, until, on 6 of December 1273 during Mass, he had an experience of God in vision and audition which made him to see all he wrote before as “straw”. His biographer Wilhelm of Tocco, however, records the dictation of a comment to the Song of Songs after the mystical experience. In 12 of his works he treated of Mary. In the *Summa theologiae* III, q. 27-35, he looks at the Mother of God in the context of the Incarnation. In his argumentations, he uses also the bonds of relationships in order to prove the rationality of a Catholic conviction. E.g. in the *Summa* III, q. 28, a. 3-4 for the virginitas post partum: Mary would appear very ungrateful if, after such a Son and after her virginity was preserved miraculously, she would have sought the carnal encounter. Joseph would have had the greatest presumption, if he would have asked for it after the revelation he received from the angel in a dream. In q. 29, a. 2 he insisted that Joseph and Mary had a real matrimony, due to the ‘indivisible union of their souls’ and in view of the posterity, Jesus. Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Tommaso d’Aquino (S.)” in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 3, p. 801-806, 812-813.

<sup>31</sup> Card. de Bérulle had a Jesuit formation and was the founder of the “Oratory”, a “society of common life without vows”, nowadays counted among the Societies of apostolic life, for the reformation of the priesthood in France, in 1611. Cf. A. LÓPEZ AMAT, *La vita consacrata*, p. 377-378. He was equally the founder and leader of the École Française de Spiritualité, which influenced France in his time and after. The “Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin” of St. Louis Grignon de Montfort can be called a popular expression of this spirituality which the founder expressed in more mystical language. Cf. F. M. LÉTHEL, “La maternità di Maria nel mistero dell’incarnazione e della nostra divinizzazione secondo San Luigi Maria Grignon da Montfort e il Card. de Bérulle”, in *Theotokos* 3 (1995) 429-430, who quotes on p. 430 as important studies on Bérulle P. COCHOIS, *Bérulle et l’École Française*, Paris 1963,

theology, and then in a systematic reflection, all in 9 pages. He himself exhorts that Mariology must deepen this theme.<sup>32</sup> It is still very rare to find a theologian that applies the dynamics of human relationships to the relationship of Jesus and Mary to the point of postulating in Jesus a new conscience of self through his relationship with his mother. Highest in studies is found the idea of the socialization of the child Jesus in the Jewish culture.

The synthesis of Mariology in the view of her relationship with Jesus is still an open field of research. This research is an attempt to enter into this field, since it is very consistent with the congregational sources of the Society of the Hearts of Love and could be called a “Mariology of the Hearts of Love”.

## **5. Division of the work**

The work is not divided into the various themes. The first chapter investigates the foundational context of SHL in Nigeria, presenting an African concept of unity. It then offers a view of the ecclesial situation in Nigeria and in Germany, in which various situations of disunity can be discovered. It finally outlines the person of the founder and the beginning history of the Society. The role of man and woman in society and the acceptance of devotions are given some attention, while the beginning history of the Society of the Hearts of Love gives an impression of the uniting power of the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

The second chapter analyses the congregational sources, especially the Constitutions, as a spiritual plan for union. It discusses Jesus and Mary in the religious life, the vows, the apostolate of the Sisters, contemplation and experiences in prayer, and the many characteristic elements of the foundation. This chapter defines the charism of the Congregation, thus presenting the view of Father Montfort on how to build a positive relationship with God and neighbour, in following Jesus and Mary.

The third chapter elaborates upon the Marian element in the congregational sources of SHL, i.e., the union which God actualized in the hearts of Jesus and Mary, with the “preamble” of being to explain the meaning of the symbol “heart” and investigates in anthropology, i.e. in the social aspect of a union of hearts. The Marian dogmas and theological themes are ordered and explained as a steady growth of the human relationship and union of Jesus and Mary, from the conception of Mary till her final glorification. Finally, there are some comments on sacred arts concerning the union of the Two Hearts, and on the value of Marian devotions and “consecration” to God.

The three chapters are bound together by the research on the topic which is the aim of all theology and of all true religion: the union of all creatures in God.

## **6. Method**

As to philosophy, in a conscious way, only Jean-Luc Marion had some influence on this research. Philosophers who did not take into consideration the divine revelation were used most to

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and S.-M. MORGAIN, *Pierre de Bérulle et les Carmélites de France. Histoire d'une querelle*, Paris 1995. Léthel observes on p. 436 that the Berullian spirituality has a Trinitarian christocentrism: “Jesus” is not taken first of all as a human name, but means “one of the Trinity” (without denying his true incarnation), not emphasising in Jesus his humanity.

simply borrow a well-coined term from them or to refer to them as those who brought about misunderstanding of the Christian faith. For the relationship with Scripture, the method used here is the one adopted by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical letters, which Cardinal J. Ratzinger called the real “theological interpretation”<sup>33</sup>, in which the Bible is being treated as the work of a single author (the inspired people of God), thus passages of one book of the Bible can be used to interpret the text of a different book of the Bible; various biblical images and symbols can be looked at together in order to come nearer to the mystery which is not expressible. In regard to the Magisterium, it was evaluated according to the diplomatic value of each document, its nature and background. The spiritual and liturgical tradition of the Church was also taken into account. The spiritual experience of many Catholic saints and also of Fr. Montfort Okaa play a major role in this research. The research has a pastoral intention.

Further it is to be annotated that the first part deals with history, but it does not always follow a chronological order, neither does it have a presumption of completeness. It follows a systematic-selective method: the analysis of the cultural and ecclesial surrounding of the foundation gives privilege to aspects which either have some impact on the foundation or which can be useful for a better inculturation of the Gospel in Africa. The life-history of the founder and the beginning history of the Society are presented in a narrative way since there are almost no published sources to which this research could refer. In the first chapter the themes of this research are treated under the aspects of history, culture, the meeting of cultures, and inculturation of the Gospel.

The second chapter reads the Constitutions, and other basic texts and testimonies from the foundation in a charismatic and theological way. The constitutional texts and the proper spirituality of the Hearts of Love are analysed in the light of the teaching and tradition of the Church on Marian spirituality and on religious life, profiting also a little from the light of the historical - cultural context of the foundation of the Society.

The third chapter tries to re-interpret the Marian mysteries in view of the union of the Two Hearts. For this purpose, it uses a logic-systematic method. This applies especially to the nucleus of the whole work, sub-chapter 3.3., in which at each point the opinions of theologians are presented first, then the Magisterial confirmation is sought, and, thirdly, the voice of the founder is added and commented upon. The nexus mysteriorum of Mariology with the other mysteries of faith, and the principles of ecumenism and openness “ad gentes” are being respected.<sup>34</sup>

It should be noted that single inverted commas ( ‘ ’ ) mean that the word or phrase was quoted only approximately, e.g. when it was translated into English by the author. (The single inverted commas are also used to specify a quotation within a quotation.) If a footnote is placed after the comma or full stop, the content of the footnote refers to the whole sentence or half sentence. If it is placed in the middle of a sentence or before the comma or full stop, it refers only to the last couple of words or term.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. F. MUZUMANGA MA-MUBIMBI, “Persona/relazionalità”, p. 934-944, esp. p. 941.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, “Hinführung”, p. 107-108.

<sup>34</sup> For this method in reading the Bible, cf. M. M. MASINI, “‘Lettura secondo lo Spirito’ dei testi biblico-mariani. Orientamenti metodologici”, in E. M. TONIOLO (ed.), *L’ermeneutica contemporanea e i testi biblico-mariologici. Verifica e proposte*. Atti del XIII Simposio Internazionale Mariologico (Roma 2-5 ottobre 2001), Marianum, Roma 2003, p. 353-383.

## **7. Difficulties and limits**

Scientific critical secondary literature was difficult to find for the cultural background in Nigeria, for the actual ecclesiastical situation in Germany and for the history of SHL. The sub-chapter on the culture in Nigeria and the one on the Church in Germany builds mostly on single voices which are on the level of testimonies rather than scientific research. The history of the founder and the Society is founded almost completely on personal testimonies, since critical secondary literature does not exist. Some pertinent documents are in Episcopal archives not attainable to the author. Thus, the history of the founder and the Society does not claim scientific historicity. It is a first attempt of a comprehensive presentation. Since the author belongs to the SHL, the history inevitably has the view of the Society itself. As the history of the founder and the Society had to be presumed to be quite unknown to the reader, it had to be presented at some length. Very few sources of the congregation are already published; thus, it was necessary to append some basic sources along with this research, in an additional second part of this publication. Many sources (almost exclusively sermons of the founder) are still waiting for publication in electronic archives and handwritten booklets.

For the sub-chapter on the nature and role of Constitutions in the religious life, literature often used very general terms and a lot of repetition. As the latter is of little importance for the themes of this research, the small size of the sub-chapter seems unlikely a disadvantage. It thus became a brief introduction to the contents of the Constitution and other congregational sources concerning the themes of this research. The second chapter is an unconcluded study due to the fact that the founder is still alive. The congregational sources are not yet complete and the charism is expected to develop further.

Elaborating on a “Mariology/theology of the Two Hearts of Love” (the third chapter) proved very difficult because the presentation of the union of the Two Hearts of Love in the (Original) Constitutions follows the narrative way of mainly traditional pious convictions and does not offer anything “new” at first sight. The approved Constitutions do not contain even these narrative Mariological articles, but rather call Jesus and Mary united and exhorts the members to live Marian devotions. The author had to take a further step of digging out the underlying Mariology of intimate and positive relationship.

The dogmatic part, the most important part of this research, has the methodological limit of lack of deep investigation in the field of theological sources since the Marian themes are already extensively treated in many manuals and studies. This research concentrated on putting them into a new order, thus underlining the relationship of Mary – Jesus and Mary – Church, or the relationship of the Two united Hearts with the Church, neglecting to develop expressively the relationship of Mary with God Father, with the Holy Spirit, with non-Christians, and with the angels and all nature, since these relationships are consequent on the first ones.

## **Chapter I. The foundational context of the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love” and its beginning history. The human research for the union of hearts**

The human family lives in interactive relationship. To understand well any person or movement, its origin, capacity and ways to react to experiences, it is important to know the cultural background of the person or group of persons. The main historical and cultural context of the “Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love” is Nigerian. Thus, the cultural context of the foundation in Nigeria will be elaborated as an African concept of unity. Religion belongs to the culture of a people; therefore, the history and pastoral work of the Church could be treated along with it. As this chapter looks at the human research for unity in God, the Church has a special importance. Also, since the Society of the Hearts of Love is a Catholic movement, the local Church has a special influence. It is necessary to investigate the stand of the local portion of the Catholic Church in a more profound way: the ecclesiastical context will be its own sub-chapter, looking especially at the problem of inculturation and reception of the Vatican Council II. As the foundation expanded to Germany after some years, the Catholic Church in Germany will also be analyzed.

After the preliminary investigations, the founder, in his personal family background, shall be presented, and then the beginning history of the foundation, with the obstacles encountered on the way, and with its own historical research for union of all hearts in God.

### **1.1. The cultural context in Nigeria, particularly Imo State: an African concept of unity**

Nigeria stretches from the coast of the Atlantic Ocean to the edges of the Sahara desert, bordered on the East by Cameroon, on the West by Benin State, and on the North by Niger and Chad. Nigeria counts roughly 394<sup>35</sup> peoples and languages. The major ethnic groups are: the Hausa (ca. 32%, mainly Moslemic<sup>36</sup> people in northern Nigeria), the Yoruba (ca. 25%, a people of ancient culture in western Nigeria, half Christian, and half Moslemic), and the Igbo<sup>37</sup> (ca. 22%). Although English was adopted in Nigeria as the national language, the tribal languages, and thus a good part of the original cultures, always remained alive, especially the three major tribal languages, which are official languages by national law.<sup>38</sup>

In 1960, together with 16 other African countries, Nigeria became an independent Republic and knew five and a half years of “democracy”<sup>39</sup>, then years of military dictators of the Hausa or

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. the number with question mark in the report of UNESCO-information in A. I. SOW – M. H. ABDULAZIZ, “Language and social change”, in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, Currey/UNESCO, Oxford/Paris 1999 (General History of Africa, vol. 8), p. 543. Most languages have a share of less than 1% of the population each. In 2012, Nigeria counted 155 million inhabitants.

<sup>36</sup> Islam in Northern Nigeria has an important movement combining Western education with Islamic and Arabic studies. It also has its anti-modernist radical movement. Cf. T. TSHIBANGU - J. F. A. AJAYI – L. SANNEH, “Religion and social evolution”, in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 512, 515. Moslems in Nigeria are in great majority Sunnites.

<sup>37</sup> Other spellings can be found in literature (of non-Igbo authors): Ibos, Eboes, Ebus, Hebus.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. A. I. SOW – M. H. ABDULAZIZ, “Language and social change”, p. 543.

<sup>39</sup> Nigeria was a British colony, suffering the exploitation and a very destructive discrediting of African dignity and science in health care, agriculture, metallurgy, fermentation, making of dyes and soaps. (Cf. A. A. MAZRUI et al., “Trends in philosophy and science in Africa” in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 639, 641.) The British

Yoruba tribe. The Igbo attempted to constitute a secessionist state of Biafra in 1967. A 'world war' was unleashed, demonstrating the incorporation of Africa into global rivalries.<sup>40</sup> France, Israel, South Africa, white Rhodesians and China supported Biafra; Great Britain, Egypt, the Organisation for African Unity and the Soviet Union supplied the federal Nigeria with weapons. The civil war raged from 27/5/1967-12/1/1970 and killed ca. 1 mill. people, especially in the big northern cities of Igboland: Nsukka, Enugu and Onitsha. The war ended at Uli airport, a town which now belongs to Orlu diocese, and the Biafran army surrendered their weapons. In the rest of Igboland there were many minor battle places, attacks from planes and a serious famine during the three years, caused purposely by the federal army in the isolated land of Biafra, and contrasted partly by the International Caritas rushing planes with food supplies to the Uli airport.

With the politically unjust and unstable situation,<sup>41</sup> and the disappearance of fear of the ancestral spirits, and a feeling of a never known religious freedom caused by education and missionary activities of Moslems and Christians of different denominations in disunity<sup>42</sup>, and with the discovery of an oil bonanza in 1973<sup>43</sup> and the high interest of rich companies in it, Nigeria became known as a most corrupt nation.<sup>44</sup> The country, adopting the free enterprise option, pushed ahead after 1973 the industrialization started in 1950 with incentives for the processing of raw materials and became able to substitute the importation of various processed goods.<sup>45</sup> But, as Chinweizu denounced, "with its oil billions, with its 100 million population able to provide a large internal market, with its large pools of administrative and technical manpower, with its large areas

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brought to Nigeria their laws, (cf. J. I. ELAIGWU - A. A. MAZRUI, "Nation-building and changing political structures", in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 445.) and they built up schools in Nigeria which had the same standard as European schools. Nigerians helped the Allies in the Second World War. Cf. J. SURET-CANALE - A. BOAHEN, "West Africa, 1945-60", in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 163. Britain made effort in the development of infrastructures. "Compared with the French and Portuguese territories which surrounded them, the four British colonies were notably more developed." *Ivi.* After the Second World War, European countries gave millions for the industrialisation of their colonies, in order to increase production; in British colonies a lot of aid went into social investments. Cf. C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, "Economic changes in Africa in the world context", in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 297-298. But and in 1990, the literacy rates in countries like Ghana and Kenya are better than in Nigeria, which reaches just 50,7%. Cf. the UNESCO (1990) *Compendium of Statistics on Illiteracy*, n. 31, quoted in A. HABTE - T. WAGAW - J. F. A. AJAYI, "Education and social change", in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 701. From 1960-1979, three out of six presidents were assassinated. Cf. A. A. MAZRUI, "Introduction", in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 6. "Nigeria operated a federal system of government, originally based on three regions. The aggressive ethno-regional politics of Nigeria led to the emergence of strong regions under powerful regional premiers, and a weak centre in the context of a parliamentary system. [...] Threats of secession by regions in the period 1950-66 were rife in the polity." J. I. ELAIGWU - A. A. MAZRUI, "Nation-building" p. 451. In the past, USA, USSR and also China were in rivalry offering financial aid, technical assistance, teaching programs for acquiring technical skills, thus trying to get access to this consumer market, spreading their ideologies and building up a world leader position. Cf. I. D. THIAM - J. MULIRA - C. WONDJI, "Africa and the socialist countries", in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 814-815, 817, 824. Nigeria could itself be a leading country, if more citizens would have dedicated themselves to scientific studies and investments in one's country in production areas.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. A. A. MAZRUI, "Introduction", p. 12-13.

<sup>41</sup> Elections in Nigeria brought about killings and riots in the past. It is quite impossible to reach a consensus in politics, as long as each person and tribe accepts leaders only of one's extended family and tribe, and each leader tries to use funds first for his own village or tribe.

<sup>42</sup> In a message of the Nigerian Bishops of Oct. 1960, this disunity among Christians is already decried. Cf. P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches. Stand of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria on issues of faith and life*, Gaudium et Spes, Asokoro 2003, p. 45.

<sup>43</sup> A. A. MAZRUI - J. F. A. AJAYI, "Trends in philosophy", p. 675.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the accusation of the Catholic bishops in Feb. 1989, of "corruption and incompetence among the leadership". P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 109.

<sup>45</sup> P. KIRPÉ, "Industrial development and urban growth, 1935-80", in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 367.

and its mineral and agricultural potential, Nigeria had the ingredients and the opportunity to develop”<sup>46</sup> to a much higher level.<sup>47</sup>

Today, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is politically divided into 36 States (and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory). Imo State (capital Owerri) lies east of the River Niger, north of its delta on very fertile land in the tropical rain forest area, having palm oil as the main crop for export<sup>48</sup>.

Imo State is inhabited in a vast majority by people of the Igbo tribe; the Igbo language and culture dominates. The culture of the Igbo, which has a lot in common with other African sub-cultures, shall be analysed here in many of its elements, especially those which are important for the Church in Imo State and for the Constitutions and the spirituality of the Two Hearts of Love, and for understanding the African theology of union of all that exists. There shall be a look at language, wealth, land and purity, at the hierarchical structure of the society, at the understanding of death as the last step of initiation/belonging to the society, at the importance of heart/blood/life, three closely connected concepts, at the importance of unity and peace among men and at the traditional Igbo African concept of God, spirits and prayer. All these elements are important to the Igbos, because they constitute bonds of union within their society.

### 1.1.1. Importance of language, wealth, land and purity

The first tangible sign that unites a tribal people and helps each person recognize a “brother” is the language. The Igbos are usually fiercely proud of their language and proverbs. They encourage foreigners to learn some Igbo and they expect them to respect it when they speak their language.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> CHINWEIZU (without name), “Africa and the capitalist countries”, in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 789.

<sup>47</sup> The development did not produce enough effect, because sometimes it went aimless: e.g. in the sanitary field. Traditional medical knowledge in Nigeria was very successful, especially in broken bones, and the country produced a world famous psychiatrist. Cf. A. A. MAZRUI et al., “Trends in philosophy”, p. 638. Also Igbo herbalists had great knowledge, cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith and morality of the Igbo Christians of Nigeria*, Tabansi, Onitsha 1992, p. 35-36. But the traditional medical knowledge was not supported by the new culture. A health care was established where everything needed to be imported, studies had to be effected in overseas, and thus, the Nigerian health-care is always behind the European standard. Another example is the film-production. Nigeria has produced feature films since 1972. By 1986 one-fifth of the population watched TV daily, and the government spent large sums on infrastructure for TV, wishing to build a national culture. But it would have been too costly if the whole program would have been original, stations had to use also foreign serials, and television “has become the single most important source of alienation.” J. VANSINA, “Arts and society since 1935”, in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 628, cf. *Ibidem*, p. 622, 626-627. TV not only alienated Nigerians from their culture, but also from reality. Through it, postmodern mentality and attitudes have entered into the life of Nigerians and Nigerian religious. Sister M. C. IDAHOSA sees this mentality in the tendency of younger sisters to look for pleasure, having difficulty with accepting long-term commitments. Cf. “The modern challenges that confront women religious in Nigeria and the need for education”, in *The Catholic voyage*, 5,1 (2008) 38.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. M. OWUSU, “Agriculture and rural development since 1935”, in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 353.

<sup>49</sup> The prayers over the cola-nut, the sign of high welcome, must be said in Igbo, since the “god of Cola does not understand any other language except Igbo”. The cola-nut, *cola acuminata*, in Igbo “Oji”, is very important in every traditional Igbo assembly. It contains caffeine. According to oral tradition, it was Eri, ancestral father of the influential Nri-kingdom in the north of the Igbo nation, who found out the impact of cola-nut. It helped him to rescue his flooded farm without breaking down, and he began worshipping the nut as a giver of strength. He began offering it to all visitors and established it as a ceremony among his children. The wife has to bring the nut(s) on a wooden plate, bow or genuflect before the husband, who announces the presence of the Cola. It will then be shown to the visitor, who has to approve of the presence, without taking the nut. A man will be asked to break the Cola-nut. Before breaking it, he has to pray in Igbo over the Cola, while sitting and raising the nut with the right hand. Everybody has to keep quiet in the presence of the Cola. The sharing of the nut to all those present can be done by any male person. Cf. A. C. IDIGO, *Oji*.

The Igbos are known for their pride, their enterprise and the importance they give to wealth. A wealthy person becomes a centre of unity because he is in the position to help others.<sup>50</sup> Social prestige is grounded only on possession (and children); it is not used to encourage creativity and productivity.<sup>51</sup> Some of the much-quoted Igbo proverbs propagate pride, quest for material goods and egoism as the right thing.<sup>52</sup> Positively speaking, the Igbos are a race to be reckoned with. They generally have great ambition to learn,<sup>53</sup> to work and to achieve something; they abhor begging. Unlike some other African sub-cultures, their culture is not static, but always ready to adapt to new situations and new information.<sup>54</sup>

The Igbos are traditionally farmers and traders in the rainforest area. To own land is very decisive for an Igbo because the land is one of the factors constituting an Igbo as part of his tribe: he is *Onye ala anyi*, a person from our land, or *Nwa di ala*<sup>55</sup>, child (son) of the soil. Not to be buried in Igboland is a terrible disgrace for any Igbo, even today. While keeping the ownership of land in the respective home village, very many Igbos follow the general trend of urbanization and emigration<sup>56</sup>, hoping to return home wealthy and happy.

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*Cola Acuminata – Oji Igbo. The cornerstone of Igbo traditional ceremonies*, Snaap, Enugu 2002, p. 13-14, 18-21, 24-26, 29-30, 55-56.

<sup>50</sup> The communitarian life in Africa demands (often with pressure) of a wealthy person to make higher contributions for funerals, feasts and the support of poor children (their school), widows, jobless persons, handicapped, sick or aged persons, and to grant hospitality to visitors, not only of the near family, but of the extended family or the village. In 1989, roughly half of the people who had a job in big towns as in Lagos used/were forced to use more than 60% of their income for such contributions. Cf. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine: solidarité dynamique ou tragique? Essai d'une herméneutique morale chrétienne*, Extract of doctoral thesis, P.U.U., Rome 2012, p. 176, quoting F.R. MAHIEU, "Transferts et communauté africaine", in *Stateco* (1989) 122. What the person receives in exchange for his generosity towards the community is honour, an early recognition to be an "elder" in the village, and thus, receiving influence and power in the community. This recognition was in the times of the belief of African Traditional Religion joined to the hope to become a powerful ancestor after death. The Traditional Religion was a strong stimulation and pressure to be generous, good and chaste. The Christian religion should even more stimulate people to be generous towards their fellow human beings, not in order to gain earthly power or out of fear of vengeance of the ancestors, but having charity, the love of God and the desire to be in union with him as the only reason, hoping for the heavenly reward. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 175-177.

<sup>51</sup> This can be called a general African problem. Cf. J. KI-ZERBO, et al., "Nation-building and changing political values", in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 492. The possession could originate from corruption or crime, and despite this, the person assembles supporters around himself, who hope to profit from the wealth.

<sup>52</sup> I.e. "If you do not say 'I am (great)!', others will not say 'You are (great)!'" "If the lizard on falling from an Iroko tree has no one to praise it, it has to praise itself." "The pride of the tiger protects it." "Does he feed me?" "What one has eaten is what one has." "You do not prepare a tortoise and keep, unless the elders will come" (and eat it). G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 87-89.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. the fable on the wisdom-seeking tortoise ending with: "The wise man knows that he does not know." M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal. Bridge between Totality and Infinity. A Comparative Investigation of Kant's Transcendental Ideal and Levinas' Idea of the Infinite and a dialogue with the Igbo Concept of God's Transcendence and Infinity - Amama-Amasi-Amasi*, Katholische Universität Eichstätt, Eichstätt 1999 (doctoral thesis), p. 362-363.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven. A modern response to Christianity in North-Western Igboland, 1970-1990*, Snaap, Enugu 1995, p. 21. In this and the following pages, the author, a Catholic Igbo priest, suggests this readiness to change and accept alternatives as the main reason for the great success of the Christian missionaries in Igboland, when the missionaries became able to prove that their religion belongs to a successful culture which offers higher education and knowledge. For this, the author follows and quotes S. OTTENBERG, "Igbo receptivity to change", in W. R. BASCOM – M. J. HERSKOVITS (ed.), *Continuity and change in Africa*, University Press, Chicago 1959, p. 142: "Igbo culture is itself a changing one, and it is particularly adapted to certain aspects of European culture. The Igbo have had constant contact with Europe, first indirectly and then directly, for over three hundred years".

<sup>55</sup> The land-goddess Ala or Ani was one of the most worshipped deities in Igbo Traditional Religion, invoked especially for the grace of children.

<sup>56</sup> For Africa, cf. C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, "Economic changes", p. 314 and 316. The process of urbanization is world-wide. Cf. I. SANNA, *L'identità aperta. Il cristiano e la questione antropologica*, Queriniana, Brescia 2006, p. 134: 1900 only 14% of the world's population lived in towns, in 2002 they are 47%.



The Igbos were in the past traditionally “puritans” who tried to “keep the land holy”. As in every human society, a good morality keeps families and nations united. Unity is a basic value in African societies, thus moral efforts were greatly valued among Igbos more than among some other African tribes.<sup>57</sup> Before sacrificing to their family god, they observed a day of “holy time”, abstaining from any sexual relationship, immoral talk or any crime.<sup>58</sup> To commit a crime, including the sexual sin of the man (sex outside the proper family order, i.e. sex with someone who is not a lawful wife) would destroy the good image of a man in his community. It “polluted the land”, and it was believed to involve a diminution of the quality of his life force, a contamination of his whole family and village and a negative effect on all his activities.<sup>59</sup> The elders were and are expected to uphold and practise the self-control of the ancestors.<sup>60</sup>

### 1.1.2. The structure of the society

The word “Igbo” means “the community of people”.<sup>61</sup> Their small communities are traditionally organised in a way that could be termed democratic. The *Igwe* (literally: “heaven” or “unity”), or *Eze* (the “King”), is the highest leader of a town and has as his counsellors the chiefs of the different villages. This chieftaincy is inherited.<sup>62</sup> They receive ritual respect, and they have the right to convoke the community and to lead assemblies and discussions, thus being a centre of relationship and communication in the village or town. However, the king and the chiefs have little automatic authority over their fellow adults.<sup>63</sup> The chieftaincy is a position of honour and depends on the personal leadership charisma of the individual, for he must have won the respect of the other members of the community by his observance of the traditions, by his self-control and charity, and

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<sup>57</sup> It became known in 1996 that 15000 Nigerian women are prostituting in Italy alone, and such news continued to circulate, with increasing figures. First, the Nigerian Bishops accused traffickers of violence and emotional torture of the women; in the statement of 2002 they then saw that there are “also the many cases of women and girls who take to prostitution of their own volition.” Cf. P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 180-186. These Nigerian prostitutes are usually from *one* area, which is known for having a high percentage of men who are unfaithful to their wives. There is also still a high percentage of neither Christians nor Moslems in the tribe, while fear of ancestral spirits has vanished.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. A. C. IDIGO, *Oji*, p. 53-54.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 77-78, 85, 87-91, and C. C. OSUJI, *The concept of salvation in Igbo traditional religion*, Excerpt of doctoral thesis, P.U.U., Roma (unpublished thesis) 1977, p. 47-48, 51, 58.

<sup>60</sup> The most honoured elder of each extended family held the “Ofo”, a short staff made out of a certain incorruptible wood, which was a family insignia and the symbol of its link with the ancestors, who were believed to dwell in it. It was sculptured and like all pagan African sculptures it carried some religious messages, e.g. a man and a woman emanate from the hand of God; or five big fingers tight together symbolize the family bond and remind one of the proverb that one finger soiled with oil will dirty the other fingers also. In the middle finger, there was a small hole like an injury. It was hemmed all around with white paint, recalling the purity and self-control of the ancestors: injury must be rectified with caution, not with violence. Cf. C. A. DURUJI, “Ofo na Ogu in Igbo Traditional Religion: the meeting point of Christianity and Igbo Ancestral Religion”, in T. I. OKERE (ed.), *Religion in a world of change. African ancestral religion, Islam and Christianity*, Assumpta, Owerri 2003, p. 83.

<sup>61</sup> C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue, Igbo culture and the message of Christ*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2007, p. 7.

<sup>62</sup> The title usually falls to the first-born male, unless he is seen as unworthy.

<sup>63</sup> Okaa asserts: “The Igbo do uphold the individuality of persons and autonomy of reason. They value independence in thinking. [...] This is such that it is a common saying in Igboland that *Igbo enwe eze - the Igbo have no king*.” M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 347. The role of an Igbo “king” as centre of communication could be compared to the *social* role of Christ in the Church, (leaving out of view his divine role as creator, owner, saviour, as the receiver of consecration and praise) and would befit very well a Catholic bishop according to the *communio*-model of Vatican II and according to the exhortation of BENEDICT XVI to the bishops in Africa to “Love and respect your priests! [...] Imitate Christ! He created around himself a circle of friendship, fraternal affection and communion”. Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae munus* (19/11/2011), n. 101 and cf. n. 100-107, all addressed to the bishops; in French in AAS 104 (2012) 239-314.

also by his wealth and many descendants. No “child or youth or elder does anything without the consent of the kindred group”<sup>64</sup> or the age/grade group. The community can confer a (different) title of honour (and, thus, special audience in assemblies and certain leadership) to those men who have also proven to be worthy.<sup>65</sup> An Igbo wishes to belong to the body of the elders, to be able to make his own contribution to the life of the community.<sup>66</sup> “Democracy” has its limit in the cultural rule that old age must be given a special respect.<sup>67</sup> As in every African traditional society, authority was in the hand of the elders,<sup>68</sup> who have life experience (the “school” of olden time), and who mediate the wisdom and life of the ancestors. Since Igbo welcome scholar education at a very broad level, and not all those who are now elders had the possibility to attain a higher level of education, also some younger, highly educated adults that have good morals, are prone to charity, have posterity, and some wealth are often made chiefs in Igboland.<sup>69</sup>

The fact that human beings are related and connected with each other, bound together in a community where one conditions the other, is very important in the African traditional cosmology.<sup>70</sup> Igbo society, like other African societies, has a strong institution of the family (a man with his wife or, in pagan surroundings, wives, and his children/grandchildren) and the extended family/kindred (“Umunna”, “Children of the father”, i.e. of one ancestor, i.e., generally the community of a village) and is hierarchically structured. To change from one group to a higher one is accompanied by initiation rites and prayers.<sup>71</sup> Each Igbo in traditional religion had to be registered to an age/grade group. Each group was very devoted to the moral education and

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<sup>64</sup> G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 33. This “synodal” and communal spirit in the African society seems to be in danger to get lost, while it could be the greatest gift Africa could give to the world, the defeat of the temptation to organize oneself to be autonomous.

<sup>65</sup> Women, of course, have other types of titles than men, and can be “leaders” only among the women. A woman who is not a mother cannot receive any title, but lives in deep disgrace (unless she is a religious). The traditional rulers still exercise their function as rulers today, but as before only within their towns. “Today Nigeria operates traditional councils at sub-national state levels. These councils are essentially advisory in matters such as chieftaincy, culture and local government.” J. I. ELAIGWU - A. A. MAZRUI, “Nation-building”, p. 450. MAZRUI observes that “many African peoples [...] had specialists with detailed knowledge of the weather and soil properties. They picked the location of settlements and farming areas carefully [...]. Peoples like [...] the Igbo promoted good husbandry through competition and the conferment of titles on the most successful.” A. A. MAZRUI et al., “Trends in philosophy”, p. 636.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. C. C. OSUJI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 49-50.

<sup>67</sup> The respect to someone who is elder than oneself is demanded with exaggeration in Igboland, also among priests who are one year older in the priesthood, or among religious sisters of one set. Someone who came one month earlier to the noviciate than another sister will vindicate that she is the “elder” sister. The reciprocal respect and the simplicity of mind which is expected to exist among the children of God often suffers loss.

<sup>68</sup> Past tense is used here, as political authority is now in the hand of elected persons. Traditional “chiefs” have influence only on local level.

<sup>69</sup> This avoided some of the generation conflict which G. G. TATA observed in the Yoruba-tribe and other tribes in Benin, Togo and Ghana, where the authority of the elders can be violently rejected by young people. Cf. *L'Anthropologie communautaire Africaine*, p. 111-112, 146.

<sup>70</sup> J. UWALAKA, “The legacy of African Traditional Religious Humanism for the African Renaissance Project”, in T. I. OKERE (ed.), *Religion in a world of change: African ancestral religion, Islam and Christianity*, Assumpta, Owerri 2003, p. 245. Of course, this community bond is strong in the villages, but not necessarily present for those who moved to the big cities. Instead of clinging to his family, one who lives in the city can attach himself more to a worshipping community, a political party, his fellow workers, or others. He can also begin to live in individualism, while in the village he would be punished for an antisocial behaviour.

<sup>71</sup> About initiations, cf. also G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 18-25, 39, and cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 102-105, 111, 112: in former times, the initiation-ceremonies were linked with different sacrifices to the pagan deities and ancestors. While eliminating these sacrifices, the presence of the “dibia” (native doctor), uniting the naming ceremony with baptism, the traditional marriage with the sacrament of “Church marriage” and blessing the ankle strings and the white feather of elders with holy water, the Catholic Church encourages its Igbo members to continue their traditional rites.

formation of the members. The groups and initiation rites exist still today but their social importance is declining.

In the olden days, the naming ceremony shortly after the birth admitted a newborn baby into the village community, socializing it. In Igboland, male children were circumcised. The family tried also to individuate the ancestor who “lives” in the child<sup>72</sup>. The naming ceremony with its prayers for many virtues in the child was done by the male head of the family, who holds the “Ofo”. (He is the “Okpala”, who presided over all family meetings and family religious ceremonies. He had to be consulted before any major decision is taken in the family, and he is still of great importance today.)<sup>73</sup>

Physical puberty attained, boys and girls were initiated into the group of the youth and received deeper knowledge about womanhood and manhood, preparing them to found their own family. They learned the whole moral codex handed down from the ancestors, continued to develop their sense of community life and personal discipline, and they were stimulated to try to be useful to the group.<sup>74</sup>

Boys can then be initiated into the masquerade rites.<sup>75</sup> This cultic dance is today mainly a means of self-enjoyment, but originally it was believed that the masque and the dance conveys to the masquerader the qualities of the ancestral spirits of power, speed, knowledge, justice, honesty and a good morality. The groups performing cultic dances are also called “secret societies”<sup>76</sup>, as it is

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<sup>72</sup> Some Africanologists introduced the word “reincarnation” for the phenomenon, a word which was not used by the Africans. The Igbo call it “ino uwa”: “coming back to the world”. It is a belief that exists in many or all tribes of Black Africa. According to Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia, Professor for African Traditional Religion in Rome, the belief of reincarnation in Africa cannot be compared with the Hindu belief. The African sees the earthly life as something unique, he has no concept of evolution of himself and he has a vivid contact with the souls of the deceased dear ones. Cf. M. NKAUFU NKEMNKIA, “La visione tradizionale Africana della vita”, in *Religioni e Sette nel Mondo* 2 (1997) 111-127. The child in whom a certain ancestor is believed to have returned, is still be seen with his proper personality, but the human dignity of the child is upheld by the mere fact that a part of the vital force of the ancestor dwells in him, that he has become the carrier of life that comes down from the ancestors. The child possesses the spirit of the ancestor as tutelary spirit, and receives names that evoke the character of that deceased person. Cf. also G. G. TATA, *L’anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 102-105. This “ino uwa” (or “ilo uwa”) is not forced by the gods on the ancestral spirit, but it is a free decision, born out of the love he has for his family. Parrinder expresses it in the following way: It is not “the ancestral spirit that is reborn, but the child comes under his protective influence and receives some of his vitality.” OSUJI agrees with PARRINDER and adds: the “vital influence of the dead mother is preserved by the existence of the little girl, since it [some of the characteristics of the mother] is inherent in her very existence.” C. C. OSUJI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 38, with the quotation of E. G. PARRINDER, *African Traditional Religion*, S.P.C.K., London, 1961, p. 60, on the following p. 39. This African type of belief in “reincarnation”, as well as the belief in (and experience of) possession by spirits, and the belief in the influence of spirits on men is still strong in many baptized Igbo Christians. Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 6. If the spirits (souls of deceased human beings, angels, devils) are understood as acting under the guidance and permission of God for the salvation of all souls (even the devil serves the plan of God, though against his creatural will), i.e. if this belief is free from fear, it belongs to the Catholic faith. The SACRED CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP issued on 26 June 1975 a long document, *Les formes multiples de la superstition*, in English in A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican Council II. More postconciliar documents*, St. Pauls, Mumbai 2000 (Vatican Collection, vol. II), p. 456-485, reminding Catholics of the existence of the devil.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. C. A. DURUJI, “Ofo na Ogu”, p. 83.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. G. G. TATA, *L’anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 109.

<sup>75</sup> Judging according to the height of masquerades in Igboland, it is only elder boys, young adults, who can enter this stage. At Umuduruanyehie village in Orlu, in December (dry season), there is a cultural dance (not masquerade: the faces and bodies of the boys are visible) reserved to adolescent boys, who will dance with sculptured images of what gives identity to the village on their heads, and on stilts which can be 1 m high. Those who dance well receive a reward from the adults and elders. Thus, it has a character of exercise and competition (reserved to boys) as various sports have all over the world. Probably, in former times, the sculptured images and the dance were believed to have an influence on the dancers, e.g. initiating them spiritually into the village community of adults.

<sup>76</sup> In Nigeria, there exist different types of “secret societies”. Some take root in the traditional masquerade, some have foreign origin. An “Oath of secrecy” binds the members not to reveal anything, often under penalty of death. These

part of the process of gaining membership to pronounce a solemn oath of silence about the knowledge gained in the initiation. There are singing masquerades, which can expose the bad deed of a certain person, and in former times they could destroy the hut of a murderer, compel people to join in some communal work, extract fines and seize (unjustly acquired) property by force. An initiated person is expected to be disciplined, courageous and be able to keep secrets.

A very old woman and good mother could be initiated into Igbo male cults. Thus she became a “*nne mmanwu*”, mother of masquerade. These women were then treated like male elders.

Another initiation rite is marriage, introducing the spouses into a new status in the society. The girl is expected to be a virgin bride. The final traditional marriage rite is the (palm-) “wine carrying ceremony”. As all over Africa, marriage is seen as involving the whole family: two families enter into a covenant through the espousal of one of their children. If a crisis arises between the couple, the whole community tries to re-unite them according to the prescriptions of “*Omenala*”, the traditional norms. Only after many vain communitarian efforts, the parties will be separated (and freed for another marriage), while the covenant among the two families is indissoluble.<sup>77</sup> If the problem is the infertility of the couple, or there is no male issue, the traditional society permitted polygamy<sup>78</sup>, as the primary end of marriage was children.

A married man and woman of morally good conduct, of at least modest wealth and with at least one male issue will be called (even today) into the group of titled men (the wife takes part in the honour given to the man), who (in the last century) quasi-represented the ancestors and God on earth. At the initiation for receiving the “*Nze*” or “*Ozo*”-title (while the wife becomes “*Lolo*”), the chosen men paid a sum of money which was distributed in the village. They took the oath to speak henceforth with caution and promised to avoid at all cost moral failings and to uphold the purified status of the ancestors. As a sign of purity, they wore the white feather of the eagle fixed to their caps. They were empowered to participate in the decision-making among Igbo; on the village level they still have great importance today.

### 1.1.3. Understanding of death

Death was the 6<sup>th</sup> “initiation”, often seen as a great tragedy<sup>79</sup>, and always thought to have an unnatural cause (poison/magic from an “enemy”, influence of evil spirits,<sup>80</sup> the call of God of a

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secret societies exist frequently among university students and school children, but also among government members and elsewhere. They are often reported to use criminal methods and mafia-like violence in order to get good school results or by stealing public money. Those leading these societies are said to indulge in demonic cults and human sacrifice. Cf. the catechism of G. E. M. ADIBE (ed.), *Living our faith*, Snaap, Enugu 1997, p. 93-96. Originally, the secret societies were meant to educate the members, by asking them to get up in the middle of the night, do heavy work, exercise the memory by learning things by heart, learn obedience to the elder (military submission towards even unjust decisions), learn not to revolt against offences. Cf. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 110.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 113, 115-116, 121: they are to help each other in moral and material ways, and in rendering services.

<sup>78</sup> Another reason for polygamy can occur when a man inherited the wife of a deceased brother, with the duty to raise children for him. Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 105.

<sup>79</sup> Especially to die young was seen as a disaster, because the youth was regarded as a time when one can hardly avoid offending the ancestors and the villagers, while old age was the time to make reparation and to become the noble and self-controlled person which is the ideal of Igbo tradition, and who alone can hope to become an ancestor. Cf. A. C. IDIGO, *Oji*, p. 33. They also held the opinion that the social status in the spirit world is the same as the social status of the person just before death, and can never change. Who is honoured in the village community, will be honoured in the respective ancestors' world; who has never built up something in life, remains a nobody forever. Cf. C. C. OSUJI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 24.

good person in good old age...). As the supernatural (or preternatural) interfered in such a grave way in the community, the life of the group had to be suspended: there will be reclusion, stop of work, abstinence and continence. Rituals of purification and reconciliation after the burial were to prevent another such destruction and disorder.<sup>81</sup> It was believed that the spirit of a person who just died remained near his<sup>82</sup> house and the places he knew, until the burial. With the burial his journey began 'through seven lands, seven seas and over seven hills', towards the abode of the ancestors, a place of happiness similar to the happiness of a comfortable earthly life, where they are free to come back to the world of the living in a newborn child of their family.<sup>83</sup> The earth, who, in traditional religion, was a goddess and source of sustenance for the living, was held as this abode.<sup>84</sup> Titled men who did not break any taboo were to receive an elaborate burial, and till today the burial of a person considered good or important is held with detailed preparation and feasting.<sup>85</sup> The widow and other relations shave off their hair. If the children should fail to bury an elder with the proper honours, the deceased was believed in pagan time to cause problems to the family who failed to fulfil this important religious obligation. Unmarried people received shorter funeral rites.<sup>86</sup>

The Igbo thanatology is not outspoken about deceased women, youths and children. Usually they were not called ancestors, but neither did they disappear completely. Good mothers were believed to "come back" to the world in a female child of the family, in the same way as men (ancestors) were believed to do. Probably the youths were believed to become minor spirits, in communion with the ancestors: the "Igbo Communitarian [sic] life extends to the abode of the dead".<sup>87</sup> Generally, Africans deeply feel the necessity to maintain communion with the deceased

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 126.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 127. The post mortem rites help the community to consolidate, regulate problems of inheritance and re-enforce the sense of community. In the case of the death of an elder, death has the symbolic value of binding the whole community anew to the ancestors. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 135. G. G. Tata comes from an area in Africa, where the belief in spirits and the practice of Voodoo is still much alive. Such rituals are in Igboland actually only a far remembrance.

<sup>82</sup> Some may expect here the double pronoun his/her, but for the sake of simplicity, the male pronoun should be understood as including the female.

<sup>83</sup> This possibility was not a punishment for purification, and not an endless lot, but rather the glimpse of the idea that the spirit of a good man or beloved woman cannot just die and disappear. The saying goes, that there is seven times the possibility to "come back to the world". Cf. A. E. AFIGBO, "Ancestral Igbo Religion and Cosmos and the idea of world religion", in T. I. OKERE (ed.), *Religion in a world of change*, p. 179. Seven is the number of fullness and completeness among the Igbo, the journey is thus described in a narrative way as very long and completing life. Cf. A. C. IDIGO, *Oji*, p. 14-15.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. C. C. OSUI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 24. According to other traditions, it was the town Nri for northern Igbo groups and the town Amaigbo in Orlu area for the southern Igbos. These towns were probably first settlements of Igbos in the ancestral time and then became spiritual centres. Cf. C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue*, p. 11. The journey was believed to take 28 days after the burial, and the deceased had to pass the abode of the malignant spirits, who must try to pull him to their own place. But if he had been buried properly with feasting and dancing of his fellow villagers in praise of God, he was believed to be able to overcome them and reach his ancestors and their superior power and dignity. Cf. C. C. OSUI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 31-32, 35-36. This "forced" burial-feast helps the bereaved not to isolate themselves, but it should not be seen by Christians as a necessity for the happy repose of the departed soul.

<sup>85</sup> The saloon of the family house, where the deceased would be "lying in state" the morning before the funeral Mass would be decorated with colourful cloth, the family issues a brochure about the life of the person and letters of fare well from many people, the day(s) of burial would be marked with long speeches (or chants), frenetic music, food, entertainment and gun shots.

<sup>86</sup> Those who in life were mad or died what was considered a "bad death", caused by small-pox, leprosy, any sickness that makes the stomach to swell, thunder, falling from a tree or having another accident, drowning, labour-pain or suicide, or if there is another "clear" sign of them having offended the ancestors, e.g. by a life as armed robbers or with uncontrolled sexuality, they were not buried at all but thrown into a part of the rainforest which the village called the "evil forest". Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 64.

<sup>87</sup> G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 37.

dear ones.<sup>88</sup> In many cases, they say they saw or dreamt of their deceased relations, receiving instruction, warnings or admonitions from them.<sup>89</sup>

The ancient Igbo believed in the immortality of the soul, but, although the life of the ancestors was called the “true life”, they gave greater importance to the life in this world since the main attention of both the living and the dead, in their belief, is fixed on the life of the society on earth. The happenings on earth determine the happiness or annoyance of even the ancestors. That is why for the pagan, death remained a tragedy.

#### 1.1.4. Importance of heart/blood/life

The Igbo concept of man, *Mmadu*, which literally means “good being”, shows him as a unity, bearing a central role in the Igbo world-view:

«The Igbo believe that man is endowed with three different principles or selves. Man can operate in one or more of these selves in different contexts. These three principles are: Obi, Heart or (Ume) Breath, Chi, Destiny and Eke or Agu, Ancestral Guardian. Obi, Heart, is [...] the animating principle which links man with other life forces in the universe. Chi, is the Destiny Spirit believed to be an emanation of the Creator which is in man, and the ‘Eke’ is the ancestral guardian which links man with his family and clan.»<sup>90</sup>

Thus every man is a centre of relationships, not just with fellow human beings, as in post-modern thinking, but with God, with his family/clan/tribe (the living, the dead and the yet unborn), and, through his heart, with all human beings and with the Principalities and Powers of nature. The heart is thus a centre of connection with others who are in the world, not only the seat of feelings, of love and sorrow, of affection and volition.<sup>91</sup> However, in the traditional view, the heart is not the connection point with God or ancestral spirits: for these relationships, man has a “Chi” and an “Eke”. A human person, in the African world-view, is like a computer who is connected to the world-wide-web, and who has the capacity to enlarge the connection consciously. If strongly connected to God and to all, he acquires infinite capacities.<sup>92</sup>

Blood was also seen as the symbol or the tangible sign of the life of the person.<sup>93</sup> Animal blood and human blood played a great role in traditional rituals, as being purifying, removing abomination, and placating gods and ancestors. In expiatory sacrifices, the blood represented life

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 64.

<sup>89</sup> Such comments, as the author frequently heard in Nigeria, are also well known in other continents.

<sup>90</sup> C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue*, p. 35, quoting E. I. METUH, *African Religions in Western conceptual schemes: the problem of interpretation*, s.ed., Nigeria 1991, p. 110-111. Also the traditional Bantu see three principles in man, calling it body, breath and shadow. The spiritual shadow makes it possible for man to transcend his limits of time and space, opening para-human possibilities. Breath is the life-force animating the body, which can be communicated; the body is not only the organism, but the person in its capacity to manifest itself in the world. Cf. J. NDOUM, *L'inculturation à tout prix?* Imprimenda, Padoue 2005, p. 46.

<sup>91</sup> If an Igbo wishes to express the depths of his feelings, in a heartfelt handshake or in the “Mea culpa” at Mass, he touches his chest, i.e. the heart. To be happy is to have “obioma” (a good heart). The beloved can be called “Obi m”, my Heart. The same importance of the heart as symbol of the whole person and his interior and moral life can be observed in other African societies. Cf. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 156-157.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 321.

<sup>93</sup> Some decades ago, most Igbo, unless thoroughly converted Christians, refused to give blood donations, fearing to die.

and was poured on the images of the shrine, to placate the offended spirits. It was thus believed among Igbo (as among most peoples) to have a cleansing power.<sup>94</sup>

Each human life is sacred, as each person has his own “Chi” (connection with God). The Igbo, as most other African cultures, give a special importance to life: to the mother and to God (the Creator), giver of life, to the community and to the feelings of the person, to rhythm, emotion and participation. The great value of life shows in the importance of children; in the traditional religion, children and grand-children were necessary for the parents to gain the possibility to “come back to the world” and continue being remembered and for the lineage of the family to continue in them. There is a stream of life which must not be interrupted by any means. The value of life is affirmed also in the moral codex of Igboland.<sup>95</sup> The Igbos who follow the “Omenala” (or “Omenani”, which differ from village to village in many details)<sup>96</sup>, the traditional norms, protect their life against wicked people with prayer. In the olden days, when someone felt threatened by a specific person, he invited the person to “Igba Ndụ”, a covenant for life, in which the two enemies would make a small wound in themselves, dip a piece of Cola-nut into the blood of the other and eat it. He, who committed evil (like poisoning) against one with whom he made this covenant, was believed to die immediately. Thus by uniting their blood they believed to unite their lives.<sup>97</sup>

In the case of murder and outbreak of war between two communities, the Igbos had a ritual for re-establishing peace, called “great purification” (Ikommee). The two parties provided Cola-nuts, a dog, a goat and a cock, and palm-wine. Each party selected an elder to say prayers for peace over the Cola, and all received a piece of it. The goats and cocks were immolated to the gods, their blood sprinkled in the shrine of the village idol, the flesh cooked, shared and eaten. The dogs were killed as symbols of the enmity, and to make an end of killing of human beings. They were put into traditional coffins of raffia palms and burnt to ashes. The two communities then lamented their dead, and believed that with the ritual, their souls now rested in peace.<sup>98</sup> Here can be seen the

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<sup>94</sup> The animal of which the blood was offered to the gods/spirits, while the meat was eaten in a shared sacrificial meal, fostering the union of those who partook in it, depended on the possibilities of the person who offered it: usually a cock or a goat. Cf. C. C. OSUJI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 58-60, 62.

<sup>95</sup> It condemns most strongly the stealing of Yam (a root which is the Igbo life-giving food par excellence), homicide, even if accidental, incest, homosexuality (i.e. sexuality that cannot give life to children), wilful abortion, a wife becoming pregnant again before the last child is weaned, witchcraft or poison used against the life of a person, theft of domestic fowl, especially a hen in her hatching pot, the taking of false oaths, altering land marks, and so on. Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 26. Some “sins such as murder are punished by exile or banishment from the community”, until the offender fulfilled the prescribed atoning sacrifices. *Ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. C. C. OSUJI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 25.

<sup>97</sup> If evil had been committed already, the person accused (by the diviner) was called to take an oath of innocence in the shrine of the most “powerful” deity which was believed to punish lies severely within a short time. The deities were worshipped on special days, which were kept free of farm work and burials; they resided in shrines or trees, some were male, some female. On feasts of the “god”, all villagers had to pay something for the traditional sacrifice. There were cases of pagan priests using deities to suppress the people by demanding i.e. girls who were then forced into sacred prostitution, bearing children to the deity, like the “god” Efulu at Ukehe-village (Anambra state) until the shrine was destroyed by the Christian government. If it happened several times that a public evil-doer, who was summoned to the deity and who did not make propitiation, died within few months, the status of the deity was esteemed as “very powerful”. But sometimes it became evident that someone had helped the “deity” with poisoning the person. Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 119-124, 167. Pagan Igbos had recourse to the “Dibia”, the native doctor (male or female), and requested protective charms from them, which they kept in the house, the farm or always with them. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 27-31. When sickness occurred, the “Dibia” first tried to find out a reason for it. Many native doctors did in the past the work of a pastor, pointing out wrong behaviour, leading to public confession and conversion/change, before applying any herbal medicine, thus, supplying both psychological and physical treatment. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 156.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. A. C. IDIGO, *Oji*, p. 51-52. The ceremony was possible only if the number of killed people on both sides was equal.

importance of life, also the “true life” (Ezi Ndụ), eternal life of happiness in communion with the ancestors,<sup>99</sup> the idea of an expiating sacrifice, and the experience of a sacrifice and blood which brings peace. It also gives an idea of another important cultural element in Imo State and in Africa in general: unity.

### 1.1.5. Importance of unity

In the African tradition, unity is sought first of all in one’s own community, which is bound together by bonds of blood relationship and legal bonds, as matrimony or adoption. A good or bad action of a member of the community is seen as affecting all by increasing health and wealth, or problems, sickness and death in the village. Life is the common cause of the community, thus all are living for the others. But the (traditional) African knows also about his vital union with all mankind and the whole universe, believing in the interdependence and interaction of all, seeing the need of solidarity with all creatures. He knows that the capacity to live in peace and union with others, bearing with their limitations and sustaining them to grow, is the great challenge of every human being that determines his giving a positive contribution to the community.<sup>100</sup> This unity is founded on God, creator of all and source of all life-force, who communicates life to all living beings, both in the visible world and in the world of the spirits and ancestors. The metaphysically founded unity has to be built and accepted in life: the individual is called to establish strong bonds, first of all with his family members. The following characteristics are common in African societies: spiritual and intellectual communion, solidarity (the obligation to share), hospitality, respect, the spirit of cooperation in the group, the search for unanimous consensus (in the African “palaver”, where each man/elder has the right to make a proposal, and he must be listened to with respect till he has finished, but all seek consensus), acceptance of the hierarchy of age and refusal to let someone appropriate nature to himself as an object of manipulation. Whoever separates himself from the community, the rules of the ancestors and harmony with the natural powers becomes an incarnation of an evil spirit, losing his human identity which is a distinct being in relationship. A “good” man will have the qualities of discretion, self-control, politeness, fidelity, courage, goodness, tenderness, calmness and compassion: qualities that make for union.<sup>101</sup>

Unity with those considered friends in Igboland is protected also by rituals as the Cola-nut ritual which is omnipresent and which gives to any person, who bears grudges, an easy opportunity to express them by refusing to take the nut.<sup>102</sup> Feasts in Africa, like the New Yam festival, consist mainly in coming together, sharing food and life together by eating and dancing. The level of unity of a community is measured by the capacity of the members to be happy together. Each member contributes to the success of a feast, either by organizing, by donating food items, by cooking, by

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. C. C. OSUJI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 66-67.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. G. G. TATA, *L’anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 45, 93, 135-136, cf. also G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 14. Of course, also Africans can have the feeling that someone or a whole people is their enemy, and thus, talk bad against or fight the person or people violently.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. G. G. TATA, *L’anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 47, 61, 64-65, 153-154, 157. The transgression against the solidarity in the family is seen as cause of misfortune, suffering, sickness and even death. Thus, any problem gave rise to an examination of community conscience and new efforts to overcome misunderstandings and be united. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 92, 131.

<sup>102</sup> The community of those assembled will take note and help to re-establish peace among those present, before discussing the main issue of the meeting.



serving the food, by entertaining with dance or music,<sup>103</sup> or by praying a heartfelt and lengthy blessing over the community.

In the case of an offence, public expiation was done, in former times a sacrifice to the gods or the payment of a fine (to be shared in the village) or punishment, ordained by the traditional norms. The Omenala follow the moderate Old Testament ethics of “an eye for an eye” for the re-establishment of broken bonds.

The role given to man and woman in a society has great importance in the possibility of the society to be in union. The African anthropology considers man to be bi-dimensional: male and female. A man without a woman is only a project, not a fulfilled person, and the same it is with a woman without man. All African social structures are built on complementarity: men and women have complementary roles and functions.<sup>104</sup> Women in the traditional Igbo society were limited in some sense. For example, a man was permitted to have several wives, but not a woman to have several husbands. As happened in other African traditional societies, men were permitted to divorce women on the grounds that she injured a traditional norm, like going to the market place during a cultic feast reserved for men or raising her eye-brows in looking (with a threatening air) at the husband, provided the neighbours agreed with the man that there was an offence; yet, women could not divorce. Other men had the power to issue her a divorce if, for instance, her husband injured her publicly to the point of bleeding.<sup>105</sup> A childless, married woman, or a woman who failed to get a husband, was in former times seen to have failed to fulfil her function in life, and still today, such a woman lives in disgrace.<sup>106</sup> Before marriage, a woman in traditional surrounding has to stay 32 days in the house of the bridegroom and will be treated as an unwanted servant to test her love, fidelity and humility. Chiefs are always men among the Igbos; in the olden time women were not admitted in public decision-taking assemblies and in some social activities. They were excluded from the “priestly” office in assemblies: they were not permitted to pray over the sacred Cola-nut or to touch it in an assembly when a man or a male child is around. In former time, when the Cola-nut was shared, they had to wait till the men have taken, then they lined up and came to the chairman of the occasion, bowed and received their part.<sup>107</sup> Women were forbidden to climb the palm trees... Were these taboos made to limit the women, or were they made to guide them, as all human beings need guiding rules? Also, men had their rules and taboos guiding them to a peaceful community life. Good, prudent mothers are cherished as advisors in the private sphere of the house. The fact of belonging to the Igbo tribe is mediated in the first place by the mother: an Igbo is *Nwa afo Igbo*, child born of an Igbo womb. The major honour of a woman derives from the quantity, success and

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<sup>103</sup> If it is for entertainment, it is mainly girls or women who will constitute a dance group; usually every group is made up out of age peers. The beauty of the dance depends on the capacity of the members to display agility in unity, moving in unison and wearing uniform attires. The dance can continue for hours. The dance group gives not only enjoyment, but also importance to an occasion.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. F. A. OBORJI, “Il cristianesimo in Africa”, p. 31, referring to V. FABELLA – D. MARTINEZ (ed.), *Third World women doing theology. Papers from the International Women’s Conference Oaxtepec, Mexico, december 1-6, 1986*, EATWOT Women’s Commission 1996; M. A. ODUYOYE – M. R. A. KANYORO (ed.), *The will to arise. Women, tradition and the Church in Africa*, Orbis, Maryknoll 1992; M. A. ODUYOYE, *Daughters of Anowa. African women and patriarchy*, Orbis, Maryknoll 1995.

<sup>105</sup> According to a personal investigation of the author on customs and taboos in Umuinem-village, Okigwe, October 1999.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. A. C. IDIGO, *Oji*, p. 213, who reports cases of strongly disgracing actions against childless married women. A. C. Idigo states on the same page that the man was always exonerated from any blame of childlessness. Deeper knowledge of the procreative act is slowly changing that view.

good education of her children. (In Africa, men are also defined by the family they come from and by the children they have,<sup>108</sup> and the husband, and even the whole village, used to join in the work of education since all have a sense of responsibility for all the children of the kindred. An African adage says that it needs a whole village to educate a child well.)<sup>109</sup> The first daughter in a family has a special title (Ada) and some special honour as the person who shares with the mother in the care for and education of the younger siblings. Farm work and trade can be handled by men and women equally; thus, she is respected as a partner of the man in the work of earning the living for the family.<sup>110</sup> Women had the possibility to be active in the religious field, as “dibia”, herbal doctor and medium of spirits, which is connected with an educative role of counselling, and with a prophetic function.<sup>111</sup>

### 1.1.6. Traditional Igbo metaphysics and prayer

God and the spirits were the centre of the African<sup>112</sup> universe; since 1900 for the Igbo it is increasingly the Christian God and his saints and angels.<sup>113</sup> Thus it is more and more difficult to know and study the “uncontaminated” Traditional Igbo Religion. No written source exists for this traditional religion, but all traditional aspects of the life of an Igbo (rites, feasts, sculptures, proverbs, theophoric names, legends and symbols) reveal their attitude towards the minor spirits and their general concept of the Great God.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 31, 56.

<sup>108</sup> It means, “la parenté confère le statut, détermine le droit des individus à diverses charges et définit l'appartenance”. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 89, quoting B. NKIERE, *La parenté comme système idéologique. Essai d'interprétation chez les Basakata*, Facultés de Théologie Catholique, Kinshasa 1984, p. 38.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 52.

<sup>110</sup> In most African traditions, the woman had importance and influence in the work, the family and in the market. It is colonial institutions of market-control which continued in Nigeria till 1987 which brought about a marginalization of women in determining prizes. Cf. M. OWUSU, “Agriculture”, p. 319. Nowadays, Nigerian women can be found even in the international trade. Cf. A. A. MAZRUI, “Towards the year 2000”, in A. A. MAZRUI (ed.), *Africa since 1935*, p. 913.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. F. A. OBORJI, “Il cristianesimo in Africa”, p. 31-32.

<sup>112</sup> There are great differences among tribes in rites, taboos, religious customs and legends, e.g. in some tribes the vital flux from God passes through the mother to the children, and it is, thus, the eldest mother of an extended family who is the mediator between ancestors and the living and the official intercessor, while among Igbos and most other tribes, it is the eldest father. (Cf. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 83.) But there are basic traits of faith which have been equal all over Africa.

<sup>113</sup> The Christian religion did not change the main point of African religiosity, i.e. the fact that God is the centre of all. However, it brought much change. Before, an African had to follow the laws and ancestral customs of the tribe without any possibility to criticise, even if it meant killing one's children (if they broke a serious taboo), or he would bring destruction on himself and his village. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 152. In Igboland, many shrines of feared gods and spirits were happily destroyed.

<sup>114</sup> This concept is similar to those of the Yoruba, about whom a Christian missionary is writing: “They make him the efficient, though not always the instrumental, Creator. They [...] talk much about his goodness, knowledge, power and providence [...]. They may extol the power and defend the worship of their idols, whom they regard as mighty beings, but they will not compare the greatest idol to God.” T. J. BOWEN, *Adventures and Missionary Labours*, Cass, London 1968<sup>2</sup>, p. 310. Some scholars raised the question whether Christianity or Islam should be at the origin of these notions in the African thinking. The archaeologist Charles Thurstan Shaw found in the town Igbo Ukwu locally made bronzes for cultic use, dated into the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, and thousands of glass and stone beads, demonstrating trade in that time with Cairo/Egypt. Cf. D. B. CHAMBERS, “Tracing Igbo into the African Diaspora”, in P. E. LOVEJOY (ed.), *Identity in the shadow of slavery*, Continuum, London 2000, p. 62-63 and M. A. ONWUEJEOGWU, *Igbo civilization. Nri Kingdom & hegemony*, Ethnographica, London 1981, p. 22-25. Writers as G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 50, 60, J. MBITI, *Concepts of God in Africa*, and M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 318, 320, 325-326, 331-332 do not believe in the influence of Christianity and Islam, but it seems very likely. An argument in favour of an originally Igbo belief in a single Creator High God (“Chukwu”) is his omnipresence in names and myths of origin.

The traditional Igbo religion includes the belief in God (*Chi*), often called *Chineke* - the Creator-God, or *Chukwu* – the Great God. This Chukwu created the world, his last act of creation was said to be the institution of markets.<sup>115</sup> He was believed as far withdrawn from all the worldly affairs, accidents and politics, as above human perception and understanding.<sup>116</sup> No carved image of him existed in the continent.<sup>117</sup> But the average Igbo, like most Africans, felt himself to be in direct relationship with God<sup>118</sup> and believed in the power of prayer which he directed sometimes to the High God in thanksgiving, praise and acknowledgement, as in the saying, “God’s will must happen, we cannot question it.”<sup>119</sup> Montfort Okaa is in line with other Igbo philosophers as he asserts:

«the Igbo thinking about God is best summarised by the paradox of the Known-Unknown, the Amama-Amasi-Amasi, the Known-Incomprehensible. It is the paradox of knowing the Unknown and Unknowable. [...] He is beyond all and has all under his view and control without being mixed up and therefore losing his transcendence amidst the totality of things. He is Okaakaa, the Transcendent One.»<sup>120</sup>

He continues, based on the meaning of the different names given traditionally to God, and referring to a book of the Igbo philosopher Theophilus Okere:

«The Igbo understand Chi or Chukwu to be a person. He is not just any force no matter how great and fearful, not just anything no matter how tremendous. Although he is present and active in and through everything, yet he remains a person and is personally interested and involved in everything; especially whatever touches the life of any human person. [...] The Igbo believe that Chi is personal to each and every human being in a very unique way, such that they say that each and every person (human being) has his own personal Chi. [...] Chi is a person and yet Chi expresses my relationship to this person. Every person is unique. Every personal relationship is unique. The relationship of every human being is first and foremost with God.»<sup>121</sup>

The nearness of God to man, or the spirit of man, is not based on a close equality in nature. Okaa specifies that “for the Igbo, God is not “a” or “the” Supreme Being. Supreme means the greatest - greatest among comparable or compatibles. Supreme is ‘*Okasi ibe ya*’. But God has no

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Especially in the north and mid-west of Igboland, “Chukwu” was frequently invoked. Cf. C. I. EJIZU, “Down but not out: contemporary forms of Igbo indigenous religion”, in T. I. OKERE (ed.), *Religion in a world of change*, p. 187-188.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue*, p. 16. The moon marks the month of 28 days, but the four different “market-days” constitute the four-day Igbo week. A year has 13 lunar months, and 91 Igbo weeks.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. A. E. AFIGBO, “Ancestral Igbo Religion”, p. 176.

<sup>117</sup> C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue*, p. 40.

<sup>118</sup> A devout Igbo “pagan” is convinced that any idea of what he should do appearing in his mind is a indication from his God or the spirits; if it is not against the traditional norms, he strives his best to do it. Cf. C. C. OSUI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 53.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue*, p. 52-53.

<sup>120</sup> M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 316, 343.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 327-328, referring to T. I. OKERE, *Chibundu: Ofufe Chukwu N'Etiti Ndi Igbo* (unpublished thesis), Odenigbo 1997. Explaining Chi as the personal relationship of each human being with God solves the problem of the fact, that for the Igbo, the personal Chi of one person is not the Creator of the universe, yet, the personal Chi is the same with the Universal God. Cf. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 335. In other words: “the personal Chi is still the Chukwu or Chineke which is in the human being. Through his presence in the human being, the human person receives a share in the Chukwu or Chineke the great almighty and infinite God.” Cf. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 336, referring to T. I. OKERE, *Chibundu*, p. 31. Another author explains “Chi” as “the Destiny Spirit believed to be an emanation of the Creator which is in man [...]. Although the *Chi* comes into association with a person immediately on conception, the person does not usually establish a formal Chi cult until he or she becomes a parent.” Cf. C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue*, p. 35, 38, quoting E. I. METUH, *African Religions in Western conceptual schemes: the problem of interpretation*, Nigeria 1991, p. 110-112. Postulating the High God in Igbo Traditional belief as a person, Okere tries to correct the impression of an impersonal god in African Traditional Religion, as generated e.g. by P.

'Ibe'. He has no likes, or there is nothing to which he can be compared. He is completely separate."<sup>122</sup> At the same time, the relationship of man with God in African thinking can never exclude the other members of the community:

«Among the Igbo or Africans the concept of God and the concept and practice of religion are not entirely personal and individual but more communal, social and cultural. Their idea of God is embedded in the culture and religion of the people. Mbiti writes: "Traditional religions are not primarily for the individual, but for his Community of which he is part. Chapters of African religions are written everywhere in the life of the Community, and in traditional society there are no irreligious people. To be human is to belong to the whole Community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that Community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinship and in the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence. To be without one of these corporate elements of life is to be cut out of the whole picture. Therefore, to be without religion amounts to a self-excommunication from the entire of the society, and African peoples do not know how to exist without religion."»<sup>123</sup>

For the Igbo in his traditional environment, the community is necessary in a special way for significant encounters with God.

«All is permeated by the omnipresence of God, who lets himself be approached and worshipped through and in everything. The Igbo worship God in and through everything he created. They encounter and worship him in and through the land, *Ala*, air, *ikuku*, water, *mmiri*, thunder and lightening, *egbelu*, *amadioha*, animal, insects, birds, plants, stones, hills, sand and season, day and night, times and places, cults, masquerades, behaviour and moral codes, above all in spiritual encounter and relationship especially with ancestors. They encounter, honour and worship him especially in and through their fellow human beings, their relatives, both living and dead, elderly peoples, age mates and little babies and even the unborn babies. The Igbo have sacred respect for the unborn child. Abortion is a dreadful crime against the land, relatives especially ancestors and ancestral spirits, against the past and the future of the family and the people and above all against God who is not only the sole owner and giver of life, *Chinwendu* but is Life Himself, *Chibundu* (God is Life).»<sup>124</sup>

Far below the Great God, there are the nature spirits/deities<sup>125</sup>. Every phenomenon on earth was believed to be presided over by a specialized category of spirits, of which each is attached to a certain family or village community. Thus, they have different interests and could fight or ward off each other; but generally, they punish wickedness and protect their worshippers. They manifest themselves in different ways, demand different taboos to be observed, but are quite equal in power.

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TEMPELS, *La philosophie bantoue*, Présence Africaine, Paris 1949, who presented the Creator God as the supreme force, the great power of life, who generates life in other beings.

<sup>122</sup> M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 341-342.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 322-323, and J. S. MBITI, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Heinemann, London 1969, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup> M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 340.

<sup>125</sup> Each community has a differentiated pantheon, but seven deities are known everywhere with almost the same name and function: *Ala/Ana/Ani*, the earth goddess, *Chi*, "the spirit-double of each individual person", guiding through life, *Agwu*, the spirit of divination, *Ifajioku/Ahiajioku*, the Yam-spirit, the tutelary spirit of agriculture, the four deities *Eke*, *Orie*, *Afo*, *Nkwo* (four different market-days of the four-days-week with their spirit of the same name), *Ikenga* (spirit of strength), *Anyanwu* (the sun-deity), *Amadioha/Kamalu/Igwe*, the god of sky and of thunder, *Ekwensu* (spirit of violence and confusion; the name which means *agree to it and it will break out*, is used by the Christians for the devil). (Cf. C. I. EJIZU, "Down but not out", p. 190.) These are the custodians of public and private morality, and messengers of the supreme God. Sins like adultery are first of all sins against the land(-goddess) and the ancestors, a destruction of the harmony between man, nature and the spirit world. Nature and spirits are believed to revenge such. (Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 12-14.) They are never referred to as *Chukwu/Chineke*, and only in exceptional cases as *Chi*. They can give help and influence human beings, but they are not attributed any creative power. Cf. M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 336. They are just the source of welfare and good health for the village, if all honour them and behave properly. Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 10.

Again below the domain of the nature spirits, we find the abode of human spirits, who had passed through the gate of death. Their domain, according to some local stories, is an exact copy of the physical world, with its hills, rivers and forests. Those who lived well and have been buried well are there, lacking no food. The “holy” ancestors are very active. According to Afigbo, who reports a slightly different belief, the souls of those who lived well, but were not buried well, are inside this abode, in a lower part, where they suffer serious hunger and thirst. A third zone of the domain of human spirits belongs to those who lived wicked and violent lives, those who offended the ancestors with their actions. They equally have powers, which they use in a destructive way among the living.<sup>126</sup> The “holy” ancestors are strongly venerated, as they, together with the natural spirits, have power and influence in protecting and directing their living descendants in a direct way. This traditional religion is a foundation and guarantee of morally good life with its mechanisms of public admonition, praises, blames, denouncements, banishment and ridicules, divinations, sacrifices, prayers, oracles and taboos, and the initiations in age-groups, secret societies or the group of titled men.<sup>127</sup>

For the Igbo cosmology, Okaa follows Edeh in depicting the universe as a duality with the existence of a world of man (*uwa mmadu*) and a world of the spirits (*uwa muo*).<sup>128</sup> Africans believe in a possibility of transience between the two worlds, in both directions: death and a spiritual “come-back to the world” (cf. sub-chapter 1.1.2., footnote 65). The spirits of the dead are nearer to God than the living, but the pagan Igbo seems to have hoped only in communion with the ancestors, while expecting from God only favours in life, but not a beatific vision and union with the will of God in heaven.<sup>129</sup>

Prayer is an important part of African and Igbo culture. In the traditional religion, prayer can be said sitting (in assembly) or standing (at the shrine of the idol) or it can be expressed by dancing and beating or blowing instruments as drums and a short flute. (During masquerade or initiation-ceremonies, music and dance were cultic actions, bringing in the power and the presence of the ancestors.) The main concerns in prayer are earthly things as tangible signs of the blessing of God.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, in the olden time, they believed that without the Cola-nut in hand, “both the Almighty and the ancestors will not hear the Igbo man’s prayer”.<sup>131</sup> There are ejaculations and exclamations. During the formal prayers of ceremonies (like welcoming a guest at home with cola-

<sup>126</sup> Cf. A. E. AFIGBO, “Ancestral Igbo Religion”, p. 177.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 11. For example, the “early morning sacrifice of the head of the traditional Igbo family in which prayer, praise and petition as well as teaching and expectation and blessings are spoken and requested begins with calling the name of God [...]. Then the priest/head of the family makes moral declarations like ‘I have never poured out blood’ i.e. killing, ‘ite ime’ (abortion) *imegbu nwanyi ishi mkpe* (oppressing the widow), *izu oshi* (theft) etc. After which he requests blessings and protection for himself and family members far and near.” M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 364.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 321f, referring to E. M. P. EDEH, *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*, Loyola Univ. Press, Chicago 1985, p. 14. This idea is general in Africa.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. C. C. OSUJI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 34, where he discusses from various authors the expectation of the traditional Igbo for the life after death.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. the concept of African philosophy: “We *feel* - Therefore we *think*, Therefore we *are*!” A. A. MAZRUI et al., “Trends in philosophy”, p. 665. Cf. also Igbo rituals in receiving guests. The presentation of the Cola-nut has already been discussed. Together with it, limestone can be presented to a visitor, making the welcome more openhearted. The white stone signifies the purity of intentions of the host. It was rolled on the (holy) ground (source of livelihood) to the visitor, who takes a pinch from it and touches (i.e. blesses) with it his eyelids, his feet and his mouth. Cf. A. C. IDIGO, *Oji*, p. 44-45.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 56. The following paragraph, cf. *Ivi*, and p. 59.

nut, during initiation rituals or at a yearly feast like the New Yam-festival) and in the family's morning prayers there are contained four aspects: praise, penitence (or a statement of innocence), petitions, and blessings and curses. The gods were invoked and praised, there was confession of sins and request for forgiveness, and the "five petitions" were made: to obtain long life, (male) children, prosperity and health, peace and security from visible and invisible evil forces, and justice (i.e. for all men to treat others as they wish to be treated themselves). Finally, all the members of the family or the people present were remembered and blessed together with friends and benefactors; then curses were called on those who wished for or did them evil. The prayer usually ended with a proverb or an idiom that demanded the response "Ise" (which is the Igbo word for the number five, but means here "So be it") or "Ofo" (meaning something like "just and good").

Traditional prayer normally went with sacrifice;<sup>132</sup> in the least, a piece of Cola-nut was thrown on the ground outside the house, for the ancestors. The most common sacrifice among the Igbos was the sacrifice of petition, and then the sacrifice of thanksgiving. This sacrifice was done with items from the farm; later, "dibias" requested also money. In the expiatory sacrifices, there was always the shedding of blood of a victim.

The highly structured society in Nigeria makes it easy for the "missionary" to encounter homogenous groups of people, who can be faced and instructed "in group", taking into account the (similar level of) understanding and (similar) background of the individuals of the group, e.g. parish pious-association-group, school class, group of elders in a meeting. The missionary work easily achieves great numbers of people who join in a prayer, but seldom can the missionary (sister) make a lasting impact in such a group experience, unless he accompanies the group for a long period of time. Prayer - liturgical and devotional - is a "locus" of proclamation and vocational formation.<sup>133</sup>

The African and Igbo culture has presented itself as a desire for unity, based on the belief that life comes from one God to all. This desire was hardly fulfilled in the olden time, as before the Nigerian Civil War, war between Igbo villages was occurring. The following sub-chapter looks at

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<sup>132</sup> "Sacrifice" can be defined as a "ritual or social practice of dedication and/or destruction of something valuable in order to invoke and enter into relationship with forces beyond the ordinary world of mortal beings." Sacrifice has the two essential aspects of the intention of the worshipper to create communion and of being a gift of the worshipper to God; he renounces something. A covenant was in the ancient time, thus, always marked by a sacrifice, generally the killing of an animal, that served as a shocking, memorable event. Cf. C. McNELLY KEARNS, *The Virgin Mary, monotheism, and sacrifice*, Cambridge, Cambridge 2008, p. 24, 26 and 32, referring to several studies on sacrifice of Western sociologists. Depending on the motive of the person sacrificing, the ritual of sacrifice can have very different moral value. Sacrifices that do not degenerate into a magic action (seeking to gain possession of supernatural powers) generally represent the giver himself, who through the gift of one item intends giving himself and all his belongings to God, in order to gain communion with him. Cf. A. PAUS, K.-H. MENKE and H. ROTTER, "Opfer I Religionsgeschichtlich", "Opfer IV Theologiegeschichtlich u. systematisch-theologisch" and „Opfer V theologisch-ethisch“, in *LThK*, vol. 7, col. 1061, col. 1068, col. 1070. In the Biblical understanding of sacrifice, G. Odasso observes that the Hebrew word which, in cultic context, is being translated as "to sacrifice", "ha'alot", means literally "to make ascend". G. ODASSO concludes in his article "L'eucaristia", p. 8 and 10: "secondo la prospettiva della fede biblica l'essenza del sacrificio non è propriamente data dall'uccisione della vittima, ma va ricercata nel segno della sua elevazione. La vittima 'è fatta salire' sopra l'altare e attraverso il fuoco riceve un movimento ascensionale che orienta, simbolicamente, al mistero stesso del Dio santo. [...] Proprio per questo suo valore il sacrificio è intrinsecamente connesso con l'esperienza della salvezza e, in particolare, con la sua comprensione mediante le categorie dell'esodo e dell'alleanza. [...] Si vede] nel Signore risorto la piena realizzazione del tema biblico del sacrificio." One may assume that the "being lifted up" of John 12, 32, in the Aramaic original of the spoken word, was a clear reference to the immolation of a sacrificial victim, as both disciples and other Jews understood it as a indication on his death (cf. Jn 12, 33-34).

the situation in the Church in Imo state and in Germany: Was the Gospel inculturated to the extent of bringing the desired union in God?

## **1.2. The ecclesiastical context in Imo State/Nigeria and Germany: situations of disunity**

The ecclesiastical context is basically the situation of receiving and applying the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Due to the fact that Christ has not yet conquered and transformed every heart on earth with his grace, the ecclesiastical context in Africa and Europe, like every human experience of living together, is signed profoundly by disunity. The historical roots of the disunity shall be analysed. The growing Church in Nigeria, just putting down roots and finding herself at ease with pre-conciliar forms of piety, enthusiastic with the permission to celebrate in the local languages, and busy with problems of translation and attempts of inculturation, presents many differences to the declining Church in Germany, where much pain was taken to overcome pious and ancient traditions, seeking a modern sobriety for a more rational religiosity. It is, therefore, essential to distinguish between the two contexts. After the Nigerian ecclesiastical context and the historical review on the extraordinary spreading of the Catholic faith in Igboland, there is a critical look at inculturation in its various aspects.

### **1.2.1. The Nigerian ecclesiastical context**

The Bible witnesses to the fact that Africans seek for God and for Christ (cf. Ps 68,31; Acts 8,27). The “Ethiopians” (Nubians, today Sudanese, from the Biblical “Kush”) joined monasteries in Egypt as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>134</sup> West Africa saw some early attempts at Christianisation, but it was only the end of the slave trade which brought Christianity in a lasting way to West Africa. The Church came to Nigeria because Nigerians were looking for Christ. Liberated slaves from West Africa were sent back to Africa (Sierra Leone) after living at length in Canada or Brazil, speaking French, English or Portuguese, and some becoming Baptists, Methodists or Protestant Christians of other denominations. They called for pastors. The first “modern” (Protestant) European missionaries arrived in 1795 in Sierra Leone. They established a school in 1827, which developed into a college. The first student enrolled was the Yoruba (liberated slave) Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who later became the first Anglican Bishop of Onitsha.<sup>135</sup> He and other Christian Yoruba former slaves moved from Sierra Leone to their original homeland and settled in Abeokuta, which became,

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. M. SODI et al., *La liturgia. Scuola di Formazione, itinerario di vita*, PUS, Roma 2007, p. 5 affirms generally: “la liturgia [...] è principalmente e soprattutto ‘il locus’ dell’annuncio e della realizzazione vocazionale attraverso il linguaggio simbolico della celebrazione.”

<sup>134</sup> Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa, An African Church History 62-1992*, Paulines, Nairobi 1994, p. 31.

<sup>135</sup> In 1981, Crowther, the first African Anglican bishop, broke with his Anglican British fellow bishops and formed the African Anglican Pastorate. However, the Anglican Church had African Bishops many years before PIUS XI, in his Encyclical letter *Rerum Ecclesiae* (28/2/1926), in AAS 18 (1926) 65-81, urged the fostering of a local clergy in mission countries. This was already the aim of the Magisterium in the mission attempts of the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century when a first native sub-Saharan African was ordained bishop, and it was planned to open seminaries in Capo Verde (1510) and in Congo (1682). Cf. F. A. OBORJI, “Il cristianesimo in Africa”, p. 10. In 1659, Pope Alexander VII also instructed missionaries to China to make it a priority to form immediately indigenous clergy and also to respect and protect the traditions and costumes of the indigenous, avoiding at all cost to bring in European customs. The instructions can be found in French translation in C. ALIX, “le Vatican et la décolonisation”, in M. MERLE (ed.), *Les Eglises chrétiennes et*

in 1846, the first station and base for further missionary journeys of a group which included the Anglican ordained minister Samuel Crowther.<sup>136</sup> The Anglican mission drew the Catholics. The Societas Lugdunensis pro Missionibus ad Afros, SMA, sent the first Catholic missionaries to Nigeria and many other African countries in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>137</sup>

From the very beginning, Mary played an important role in the prayer life of Catholic Africans, being evangelized by religious who cultivated a Marian spirituality. In 1954, Lagos hosted a Marian Congress in commemoration of the apparitions of Our Lady at Lourdes with an American Cardinal as Papal Legate and tens of thousand of participants.<sup>138</sup>

In British colonies, with the arrival of a divided Christianity, partly under the umbrella of the colonial forces (seen as oppressive) and partly with the experience of religious liberty in North America, Africans began to found independent African churches. In Nigeria, the first politico-messianic movement was already active in 1891, after which Nigeria became the country with the second greatest concentration of these sects in Africa, overtaken (greatly) only by South Africa. Many of them are either “messianic” or “prophetic” and “healing” assemblies, based on the Holy Bible.<sup>139</sup> E.g. the “Church of the Lord”, “Aladura” (Yoruba: “people in prayer”), was founded in

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*la decolonisation*, Colin, Paris 1967, p. 73-74, quoted in J. NDOUM, *L'inculturation à tout prix?* p. 7-8.) The first two sub-Saharan African Catholic bishops of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were ordained by Pius XII in 1939.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity*, p. 110-112. After 25 years of absence, the ex-slave found again his mother and sister, the only persons he was able to baptise in 2 years of ministry in Abeokuta. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. C. A. IMOKHAI, “The Evolution of the Catholic Church in Nigeria”, in A. O. MAKOZI – G.J. AFOLABI OJO (ed.), *The history of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, Macmillan, Lagos 1982, p. 2. A missionary attempt of the Portuguese in the 15<sup>th</sup> century had no success; Islam established in the North of Nigeria in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. At independence, October 1960, the Catholic bishops expressed their “sentiments of fraternal love towards our Muslim fellow citizens”, wishing to cooperate with them. After many sad persecutions of Christians in the North and recalls of the bishops to Muslim leaders, “to rid our nation of fanatics” (March, 1987) they still affirm in the 2002 “Message of Ibadan” (congress): “The controversy over sharia should not stop us from seeking better understanding and collaboration with our Muslim brothers and sisters.” P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 46, 47, 50.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. M. P. MACLOUGHLIN, “Highlights of the history of the Catholic Church in the Lagos Ecclesiastical Province”, in A. O. MAKOZI – G. J. AFOLABI OJO (ed.), *The history of the Catholic Church*, p. 32.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. T. TSHIBANGU – J.F. A. AJAYI – L. SANNEH, “Religion and social evolution”, p. 516-518. There are also sabbatical churches thriving because Gad, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, had a son called Eri. (Cf. Gen 46,16) Now, one of the major ancestors of the Igbo tribe was a man called Eri, as mentioned in footnote 42. As the Igbo, like many African tribes, practice circumcision of the male children and have some other “Jewish” customs, the conclusion of some was made quickly that the Igbos of the ancient Nri-kingdom descended from Abraham. Even Catholic Igbo priests postulate it as a fact in their publications; cf. A. C. IDIGO, *Oji*, p. 18. The phenomenon on Africans seeing themselves as Jews is quite widespread. The most ancient claims on Jewish roots exist among the Rusape in Zimbabwe, the Lemba in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and the Abudaya in Uganda. There are also the Zakhori in Mali, the Igbo in Nigeria and the Tutsi in Rwanda. In fact, during the Inquisition, many Portuguese Jews fled to Africa and settled e.g. among the Lemba. Many of the “Jewish” tribes are today Christians or Moslems. Cf. E. BRUDER, *Black Jews of Africa: history, religion, identity*, Oxford, New York 2008. It is known that Portuguese ships stopped also on Nigerian coasts; as the Christian missionaries accompanying them (in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) combined faith with buying of slaves, their efforts were not lasting. Igbo archaeologists call it a “likelihood that the Igbo were established in their present habitat about two and half millennia before the Christian era.” (Early bronze era.) C. A. DURUJI, “Ofo na Ogu”, p. 81, quoting Adiele AFIGBO, *Ropes of Sand, studies in Igbo culture and history*, 1981, without giving the full reference. Eri, son of Gad, is collocated by biblists in the 14<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, while archaeologists date the existence of the Igbo Eri (beginning of the Nri-Kingdom that exercised a cultic influence on ever greater territories, thus, unifying the culture of the peoples, founding the Igbo/Anambra culture and religion) into the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. The datation was sustained by the findings of Charles Thurstan Shaw in the town Igbo Ukwu of locally made bronzes for cultic use, dated into the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. Cf. D. B. CHAMBERS, “Tracing Igbo into the African Diaspora”, p. 62-63 and M. A. ONWUEJEOGWU, *Igbo civilization*, p. 22-25. The same findings, as quoted above, prove commercial contacts with Cairo in this time, thus, also marriages of Igbos with people of any religion living around Cairo at that time are not to be excluded. There are legends about families of Igbo forefathers coming from the Nile valley to their land. The not excludible mixture of Jewish blood with the ancestors of the Igbo tribe, however, had no influence in the Igbo language. The language has some familiarity with Yoruba and other tribal languages of the zone (Volta-Niger languages), and some far familiarity with Fula, Shona, Zulu



1918 as a movement of prayer for healing, and in 1982 the movement counted 1,103,340 members, of which 520 were “bishops” and pastors. The movement became a member of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in 1975.<sup>140</sup> Today, Nigeria counts over 1000 Christian sects,<sup>141</sup> some are local assemblies around one pastor, some are widespread movements. In the cases of a genuine religious human attempt of prayer and meditation on Holy Scripture, aspects of these assemblies can be a preparation for the Kingdom of God.<sup>142</sup> However, many “pastors” make use of the Scriptures only in order to affirm their own experiences and promises,<sup>143</sup> raising demagogic hope in a miracle and combining it with shamanic techniques to bring themselves and the followers into a trance. Pentecostal assemblies grew throughout the world in the last 110 years. According to estimates, in 1970 they formed 6,4% of Christianity, while in 2005 they were 25%, and together they are still growing faster worldwide than the Catholic Church. Catholic priests and Anglicans accuse Pentecostals of practising traditional divination under the cover of a Christian outlook, exploitation of the people, and permitting polygamy. Still, because of their enviable growth, Pentecostalism has influenced the liturgy, homiletics and practice of the mainline churches.<sup>144</sup> Many Igbo (and other Africans), till today, feel that “all Churches are the same”:<sup>145</sup> there is a leading Pastor proclaiming Christ and quoting the Bible, baptism, collection of money, and intensive prayer and singing. Many “members” have just an affective bond to their worshipping community and are not convinced of a special moral-doctrinal teaching since faith is mainly based on experience in prayer. It is the great challenge of the present time in Africa to make the difference between the Catholic Church and Pentecostalism more obvious, especially by paying attention to the teaching of doctrine and morals, and by how prayers are being formulated.

After this overview on the beginning of the Catholic Church in Nigeria, the Marian devotion and the Pentecostal threat, the local Church in Orlu diocese shall be looked at, in its beginning, in its growth, in the reception of Vatican Council II and in its quality (the inculturation.)

### 1.2.1.1. The beginning mission around Orlu till Vatican Council II

In 1905, the Irish Fr. Joseph Shanahan CSSp took over the leadership in the mission of Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province (with twelve missionaries). Soon after, he was ordained bishop. He valued the strategy of building schools as the most successful means of evangelization in the area,

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and Swahili (Niger-Congo languages), according to *Ethnologue*, SIL, Dallas (TX) 2013<sup>17</sup>). It has no similarity to the (C)Hamito-Semitic languages (as Hebrew, Aramaic, Amharic and Arabic). Cf. S. MOSCATI, *An introduction to comparative grammar of semitic languages. Phonology and morphology*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1980<sup>3</sup>, and G. HEUSING, *Aspects of the morphology-syntax interface in four Nigerian languages*, LIT, Münster 1999.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. J. PARRATT (ed.), *Cristo in Africa. Teologi Africani oggi*, Claudiana, Torino 1994, p. 187-189.

<sup>141</sup> According to a comment of the Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria, Mons. Kasujja, in January 2011.

<sup>142</sup> They proclaim the Word of God, bringing it to life in an African language, and they make people to be baptised in the Name of the Holy Trinity. However, they should reflect more on the Bible.

<sup>143</sup> Often they make their followers to hope for material prosperity, children, health and exciting “spiritual” experiences of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 28-29. The Anglican A. LORD, “Good News for all? Reflections on the Pentecostal Full Gospel”, in *Transformation* 30 (2013) 25, quotes Amos Yong, a Pentecostal, in seeing the Gospel message or “salvation” as deliverance from evil spiritual powers, sanctification, “Spirit baptism pointing to prophetic witness”, healing and the eschatological hope of the coming kingdom. In prayer, the Pentecostals “command” the Holy Spirit and “decree” God’s blessing for the people, as the “dibia” of old commanded, with his magic practises, the spirits and the gods.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 37, 53- 57, 61, 71, 98.

<sup>145</sup> A saying in Igboiland, quoted *Ibidem*, p. 83.

seeing their paganism as a religiosity which could be converted.<sup>146</sup> Schools were for him also a means of helping the people to help themselves, a work of charity, thus pointing at a broad education, not just a means of raising future catechists and priests. He decided to move away from the river Niger to the interior and went from village to village, especially from 1907-1917, on foot or bicycle, to advertise the building of a school for economic uplifting of the people and for the improvement of the worship of “Chukwu”. He never attacked the pagan worship directly and treated all Africans with great respect, convinced of their intelligence and “innate goodness”.<sup>147</sup> In 1910, for the area now known as the diocese of Orlu, Bishop Shanahan was the first missionary.<sup>148</sup> In Orlu, one of the first converts (1918) to the Catholic faith was Mr. Moses Mbaike Mmaduka.<sup>149</sup> Unlike many other missionaries who died very quickly, Shanahan worked till 1932 and then retired. He furthered the building of schools, collaborating with the government, which required and controlled the quality of schools; he called a religious order of sisters into the country and founded another congregation in 1924, the Holy Rosary Sisters, Irish missionary sisters, for the female education in Nigeria. In 1921, Catholic schools were as many as Anglican schools in Onitsha, and partly gave a broader education.<sup>150</sup> “The Igbos [...] became more and more fond of European education; the school was the status symbol of the town, and people willingly contributed to its financial support.”<sup>151</sup> One can speak of a mass “conversion” from the Anglican to the Catholic Church in Onitsha in his time. In 1920, he became bishop of the Vicariate of South-Eastern Nigeria. He established a seminary (1924 at Igbariam) and a teachers’ college (1928). From the work of Bishop Shanahan (and the British Government), a high level of education derived which met the European standard, both in general schools and in seminaries.<sup>152</sup> An Igbo author criticises that the “success of the Christian mission in Iboland was, like in many other parts of Africa, brought about not so much by preaching ‘Christ crucified’ as through the parade of the advantages of literacy over illiteracy, that is through the school.” The Christian message of love, peace and forgiveness, and the

<sup>146</sup> He wrote down some of his experiences, like a discussion with a pagan chief, whom he wanted to convert by telling him about hell and heaven. The chief listened, then he asked where his fellow chiefs will be. Fr. Shanahan, knowing them in polygamy and un-baptized, said that he is afraid, they might be in hell. The chief responded that he would rather prefer to be with his own than to be with God but separated from his people. Cf. J.P. JORDAN CSSp, *Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria*, Clonmore, Dublin 1949, p. 30, quoted by C. C. OSUI, *The concept of salvation*, p. 33.

<sup>147</sup> The two sentences and the quotation, cf. J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity*, p. 150-151. Respecting highly the Igbos, he respected the priesthood even more, making it from the beginning a “high task”, requiring and giving a solid formation to any candidate, thus, putting the indigenous Catholic priests into the same position of advanced education and leadership which the missionaries had enjoyed. It is on this ground that the ambitious Igbo youths in 1964 and following years saw the priesthood as an interesting ideal for life. The first aspirant to priesthood on the Onitsha-side of river Niger, the boy John Cross Anyogu (later bishop), was sent to Europe by Fr. Shanahan for a good secondary education till 1919, and then he had to serve as a teacher for five years, before Bishop Shanahan opened a seminary in 1924 and ordained John Cross in 1930. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 152.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. <<http://www.theCatholicchurchinnigeria.org/orlu.html>>, p. 1-2, seen on 11/8/2011. The website was created by a diocesan priest in the year 2000 and is no longer existing; it was replaced by <<http://www.orludiocese.org>>, seen on 5/2/2013.

<sup>149</sup> Mr. Moses was an “uncle” (elder relation of the extended family) of Fr. Montfort Okaa, according to the testimony written by Mr. Paul O. Duruiheoma, secretary of the parish council of cathedral parish Orlu (and important member of SHL in Orlu), signed also by the parish priest and published in the brochure of 25<sup>th</sup> priestly jubilee of Fr. Montfort, p. 83. (Appendix 9).

<sup>150</sup> K. B. C. ONWUBIKO, “The Catholic Church and the development of education in Eastern Nigeria (1885-1984)”, in C. A. OBI et al. (ed.), *A hundred years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985*, Africana, Onitsha 1985, p. 233-235.

<sup>151</sup> J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity*, p. 150.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. V. A. NWOSU, “The growth of the Catholic Church in Onitsha Ecclesiastical province”, in A. O. MAKOZI – G. J. AFOLABI OJO (ed.), *The history of the Catholic Church*, p. 40-44.

Christian acceptance of suffering in life found many ready hearts in Igboland but did not score 100%. Igbo priests like Achunike, while acknowledging the good of education, agreed with the aforementioned author quoted by him that many baptized Igbos are still far from the Spirit of the Gospel.<sup>153</sup>

The mission in Southern Nigeria (Onitsha) gained shape and found many indigenous co-workers.<sup>154</sup> The colonial government, in a circular instruction, dated 4<sup>th</sup> October 1921 and preserved in the Nigerian National Archives, in Enugu, vested the local chiefs with the power to control the missionary enterprises. This instruction often helped Shanahan.<sup>155</sup>

The Vicariate of Owerri was established in 1948 by dividing the Onitsha Vicariate. The latter became an Archdiocese under Charles Heerey CSSp, its second bishop (1932-1967).<sup>156</sup> In the 60's, there were still many pagans in the area of today's Imo state, but the Christian faith spread steadily, also the Catholic Church was growing rapidly. (The success of the Catholic Church gave rise to polemic attacks by members of other Christian denominations.<sup>157</sup>) At Independence, the joint Pastoral Letter of the Catholic bishops<sup>158</sup> shows that they see the African Traditional Religion as a dying religion in Nigeria: "In any case there can be no question of an impossible return to the past. Rather we must use African tradition creatively" - to enrich the Christian worship.<sup>159</sup> In about 80% or 85% of the population, the Igbos abandoned their traditional worship and adopted the Christian Bible, within 100 years.<sup>160</sup>

#### **1.2.1.2. The reception of the Vatican Council II in Imo and Anambra state**

Vatican II marked the beginning of a "World Church", giving especially to Africa, Asia and Australia the right to develop each its own inculturated theology.<sup>161</sup>

At the time the Ante-preparatory Committee sent its requests to the bishops (summer 1959-summer 1960), Nigeria was preparing to obtain independence from Great Britain: British authorities handed over the political power to Nigerian authorities, four new universities were founded in

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<sup>153</sup> The quotation: A. AFIGBO, *Ropes of sand*, University press, New York 1981, p. 349, quoted in H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 68.

<sup>154</sup> According to the statistics of Propaganda Fide, in the year 1927 in Southern Nigeria, there were 19 Spiritan Fathers (CSSp) working under an Apostolic Vicariate with some secular but not indigenous priests, one (not indigenous) religious Sister, and 596 catechists. In Western Nigeria (where the missionaries began earlier than in the South) 24 White Fathers SMA worked under an Apostolic Vicariate with a first indigenous priest, 6 not indigenous religious Sisters, and 92 catechists. In Eastern Nigeria, (Apostolic Prefecture, where the missionaries were hindered by the colonial powers who had given promises to the Moslem emirs) 6 White Fathers SMA worked with only 9 catechists. Cf. S. CONGREGATIONIS DE PROPAGANDA FIDE (ed.), *Missiones Catholicae, data statistica referentur ad diem 30 iunii 1927*, Typis P. Vaticanis, Roma 1930, p 230-231. Some catechists had received theological education.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II in Nigeria/Igbo Church with reference to Akwa Diocese*, Lang, Frankfurt 2004, p. 251. E.g. in Aku, the local chief sent away the Methodist missionaries and the government did not help them. The chief then invited the Catholic missionaries.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. V. A. NWOSU, "The growth of the Catholic Church", p. 45.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 87.

<sup>158</sup> Of the 19 signatories, only four were Nigerians. Cf. P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 119.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. C. I. EJIZU, "Down but not out", p. 182-183.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. M. FAGGIOLI, *Vatican II. The battle for meaning*, Paulist, New York 2012, p. 60.

Nigeria, and scholars, novelists and poets appeared in Africa.<sup>162</sup> Many Africans hoped for receiving some more responsibilities in the Church.<sup>163</sup>

The local Church in Nigeria had one first residential indigenous bishop, the Igbo Anthony Nwedo CSSp of Umuahia (ordained bishop of Umuahia 17/5/1959, he attended the four sessions of Vatican II, retired 1990, died 12/2/2000), and three indigenous auxiliaries, who all attended Vatican Council II: the non-Igbo Dominic Ekandem of Calabar (bishop since 7/2/54), the Igbo John Cross Anyogu, auxiliary bishop of Onitsha (since 9/6/1957; appointed ordinary of Enugu on 12/11/1962. He attended the first three sessions of Vatican II and died as bishop of Enugu on 5/7/1967.) and John Kwao Aggey of Lagos (ordained bishop 4/8/1957. In July 1965, he became Archbishop of Lagos and died as the first president of the Nigerian Bishops' Conference on 13/3/1972.)<sup>164</sup> Some bishops consulted priests and lay-people, and some consulted each other before answering. Lagos did not respond to Rome, others did.<sup>165</sup> Most bishops of the Igbo speaking parts raised Marian issues, requesting e.g. the definition of the dogma of Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces.

Bishop Anthony Nwedo requested that the doctrine about infants in Limbo be clarified, as some women were worried about their children who died unbaptized. He also requested a discussion on holidays of precept, which fell on ferial days. He argued, in a secular state as Nigeria, workers are disadvantaged if forced to go to Mass on days which the government did not approve as holidays. (Another Nigerian bishop suggested to transfer such solemnities to the following Sunday.) Further, Bishop Nwedo requested the rules of fasting be standardized for the universal Church, against the opinion of expatriate bishops in Nigeria who pleaded for taking into account the context, or for substituting fasting with devotional prayers. Concerning the indissolubility of matrimony, he asked the council to give an explanation to Mt 5,32 and 19,9: "except for the case of fornication". Nwedo pointed out that Christians of other denominations entered politics, while Catholics were reluctant, looking at the clergy for encouragement. He requested "clear directives which clergy should follow in political, municipal and cultural life". He was concerned about the education of children in non-Catholic schools.<sup>166</sup>

Archbishop Heerey and his auxiliary Anyogu requested an explanation (for non-Catholics) of the statement "Outside the Church is no salvation". John Cross Anyogu wanted indigenous priests to study liturgy and Gregorian Chant. In union with his bishop Heerey, he defended the 'unrestricted' and 'absolute' importance to retain uniformity by retaining the Latin language in the liturgy of Mass. The Igbo bishop wrote: "every nationalism in the liturgy be restrained/curbed and that uniformity be confirmed". He agreed to the pastoral advantages of the vernacular, but wanted to admit it highest for the Scripture readings. However, the vernacular for the sacrament of the extreme unction was quite unanimously favoured because of experiences that the family of the sick person, if the sickness grew worse, could suspect the "magic" of the Latin prayers as the cause of the worsening. Further, Anyogu called for enforcement of "consistency and strict conformity to the

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. A. HASTINGS, *A history of African Christianity, 1950-1975*, Cambridge University, New York 1979, p. 132.

<sup>163</sup> A "hope for responsibilities" among men is usually connected with a hope for power and comfort. Hastings describes the difference of life-style of the missionary bishops and the first African bishops: the missionaries would live together with their fellow priests and have as their own only a room; the second built elegant "bishops' houses" in areas giving major privacy. Thus, the possibility to have informal contact with the bishop reduced much. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 238.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. <[www.catholic-hierarchy.org](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org)>, seen on 10/3/2015.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 119-120.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 123-125, 138, quoting *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparendo*, [=ADA II/V] 124, 352-353.

prescriptions” for adult-baptism. Due to the great number of catechumens, it was often neglected to perform all the prescribed rites on each of them separately. With his archbishop, he wanted the council to address the problem of tensions between local bishops in Mission countries and the religious superiors of the religious missionaries working in the diocese. Concerning the laity, bishop Heerey wanted the sacramental character and the baptismal priesthood of believers to be explained.<sup>167</sup>

Bishop Ekandem requested solidarity, especially in sending well-formed professors to come to Nigeria to teach in the seminary, obviously seeing the level of teaching as poor. Concerning polygamy, his votum showed that in those days women who lived as not only wife of one man and who were not able to obtain divorce were not accepted for baptism. He requested clarification on the issue, presenting these women as very serious catechumens.<sup>168</sup>

Many more questions were raised in the vota, but the quoted ones are the major issues which already give an idea on how the reception of Vatican II would look like among indigenous in Igboland.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. 1961, the Igbo Godfrey M. P. Okoye was ordained bishop of Port Harcourt; he attended the four sessions of Vatican II.<sup>169</sup>

It was observed that African bishops present at Vatican II (and a lay auditor from Togo; there was not a single African “peritus”)<sup>170</sup> had no major voice and none played a decisive role; a fact attributed (by Europeans) to their unpreparedness.<sup>171</sup> Africans, on the contrary, would comment that “African voices at the council raised issues of pertinence to the continent that unfortunately were not reflected in any of the final documents”, e.g. the matter of tribalism and the empowerment of women championed by Bishop Joseph Malula of Léopoldville, Kinshasa, DRC, (who was elected by the fathers into the commission “De Sacra Liturgia”). African bishops made “pithy comments”, especially the first African cardinal, Laurean Rugambwa of Bukoba in Tanzania, who often acted as spokesman of the African group. (Rugambwa was chosen by the Vatican to be in the Preparatorial Central Commission of the Council, and he was also elected by the fathers to be there, while some others chosen by the Vatican to appear on the election-paper were not elected, like Aggey and Bernhard Gantin of Cotonou. In fact, he made not only “pithy comments”, but read several long and clearly motivated suggestions for changes in the text.<sup>172</sup>) African observers would further point out that the 61 African-born bishops (at the opening of the council: ca. 2% of the fathers), and also missionary bishops were disappointed to see that the themes brought to discussion were often more of European problems, and many of their vota and interventions (e.g. on polygamy

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<sup>167</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 122, 126-128, 132-133, 137, quoting *ADA II/V*, n. 355.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 127, 136-137, quoting *ADA II/V*, n. 354.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. <[www.catholic-hierarchy.org](http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org)>, seen on 10/3/2015.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. A. E. OROBATOR, “‘After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent’: the reception of Vatican II in Africa”, in *Theological Studies* 74 (2013) 287-288.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. A. de JONG, *The challenge of Vatican II in East Africa: The contribution of Dutch missionaries to the implementation of Vatican II in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Malawi, 1965-1975*, Paulines, Nairobi 2004, p. 28; A. HASTINGS, *A history of African Christianity*, p. 168. M. FAGGIOLI, *Vatican II*, p. 60, 62, however, speaks of a “significant contribution of the African bishops at Vatican II”, referring to Alberto MELLONI, “After the Council and the Episcopal Conferences: the responses”, in *Synod 1985: an evaluation*, p. 22.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Vaticani II*, vol. 1: *Periodus Prima*, pars 1, for his election, and all other volumes for his speeches.

and tribalism, or requests for further financial help and personnel) were simply ignored.<sup>173</sup> Thus they ended up watching the “conciliar drama [... of] European and North American ecclesiastical grandees [... fighting] battles across doctrinal and ideological lines”.<sup>174</sup> Seeing the vota which the indigenous Nigerians presented before the council, it must be observed that many of them were treated in Conciliar documents. By ignoring those problems which are still very controversially discussed, the Council sent these back to the sender: the people of God and the theologians are to reflect on it and find solutions. The Magisterium sees its function mainly in accepting or rejecting proposed solutions: to lead vigilantly, but not to do both research and decision.

In the first session of the Council, the only Igbo who made an intervention was Bishop Nwedo. He thanked the Holy See for bringing up the theme of means of social communication and he underlined the importance of it for the apostolate in Africa. Unfortunately, it seems he did not grasp the purpose of the Council, since his intervention aimed at a request to the Universal Church to help the Church in Africa to build up radio-stations.<sup>175</sup> In the second session, Okoye was hit by the fact that European bishops used the situation of scarcity of priests in the mission countries as an argument for the permanent diaconate opened to married men. In the name of West African bishops he requested to maintain the celibacy for all the clergy in all the world, giving two reasons: the celibacy is a splendid gift of God and leads many to embrace the faith. Accepting married men as diacons would diminish the respect of people for the clergy. Secondly, the funds of the diocese are scarce to maintain the priests. How can a diocese then maintain a married deacon with his wife and children?<sup>176</sup> Towards the end of the discussion on the decree on Ecumenism, Nwedo presents an “animadversione scripta”, in the name of all Nigerian bishops. He says, they are pleased with the schema, but present their fear that in places where people are newly converted to the Catholic faith, a great friendship with non-Catholic communities could easily make them to waver in the faith. Not questioning the need of dialogue with the ancient non-catholic Christian denominations, he asks how this dialogue should be established with the communities of Pentecostals, made up mainly of people who just left a major Church. (II, 6; p. 286; anche Okoye) The “African Enchiridion” (which is limited to interventions which influenced the resulting documents) reports for the whole Vatican Council II only two short interventions from Nigeria. In the third session, on 18/11/1964, the Igbo bishop of Warri (since 24<sup>th</sup> May 1964, he participated in the two last sessions), Lucas Olu Chukwuka Nwaezeapu († 1996), intervened during the discussion of the document on Christian Education (which became the Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, promulgated on 28/10/1965), requesting that the document should underline more the importance of the Catholic private school, recalling the positive experience in Nigeria. A day later, Godfrey Mary Paul Okoye intervened with the request to underline the right of the parents to educate their children and to choose the school of their choice. The government has the duty to help the parents to educate the children in schools, but

<sup>173</sup> Cf. A. E. OROBATOR, ““After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent””, p. 287-288, and A. HASTINGS, *A history of African Christianity*, p. 173.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. A. E. OROBATOR, ““After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent””, p. 289, referring to J. W. O'MALLEY, *What happened at Vatican II?*, Harvard, Cambridge, MA 2008, p. 291-295.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Vaticani II*, vol. 1: Periodus Prima, pars 3, p. 476-478. Translation from Latin by the author.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Vaticani II*, vol. 2: Periodus Secundus, pars 2, p. 832. Translation from Latin by the author. This opposition was ignored by the council, but remains in Nigeria: as far as the author knows, there are no married diacons.

the existence of Catholic schools and their right to receive subventions should be based on the right of parents.<sup>177</sup>

After Vatican II, the bishops returning from the various sessions immediately brought the published (Latin) documents and news on what happened to their clergy and the laity. Of course, the documents came first to the clergy and to academic circles, and the bishops presented them from their own point of view. Some bishops went immediately to work to implement the decisions taken, especially concerning experiments towards inculturation.<sup>178</sup>

In Nigeria the work of reception of Vatican II was interrupted by the civil war. Although most of the expatriate priests were forcibly expelled from the country, in Owerri diocese bishop Whelan and some priests were able to remain. In the north, Rev. Fr. Francis Arinze was appointed auxiliary bishop of Onitsha; Heerey died. Before he died, he did not give to Arinze any responsibility in administration, e.g. as Vicar General or chancellor or diocesan secretary. Then suddenly, during the war, Arinze had to administer (as much as possible) 3 Igbo dioceses: Onitsha, Enugu and Ogoja. Onitsha was left with 35 Igbo priests (in 1970); another 10 Igbo priests were studying in Nigerian or European universities. Only three of them had some idea of diocesan administration, and only eight had experience as parish-priests.<sup>179</sup> Catholic schools and hospitals had been turned into governmental institutes.<sup>180</sup> What seemed most important in this situation was to improvise, to further the training of future priests, to build new schools and hospitals and to encourage the laity. In the precarious post-war situation, the bishops found it important in Igboland to explain Vatican II at length and to introduce changes slowly, to overcome the reaction of the people against change.<sup>181</sup>

The reception will be presented here point by point:

Church-structure: Already before 1950, the missionary bishops collaborated, as bishops used to do in other parts of the world. On 1/10/1960, they issued a first joint letter to the nation on the

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<sup>177</sup> Cf. O. OGUNU (ed), *The African Enchiridion. Documents and texts of the Catholic Church in the African world*, Vol. 1: 1905-1977, EMI, Bologna 2005, p. 197. The quoted interventions entered into the n. 3 of the declaration.

<sup>178</sup> Among them were Malula, Christopher Mwoleka (Tanzania), Peter Sarpong (Ghana), Patrick Kalilombe (Malawi). Approximate translations of the Vatican documents were published. Cf. A. HASTINGS, "The council came to Africa", in A. STACPOOLE (ed.), *Vatican II: by those who were there*, Chapman, London 1986, p. 317. Cf. also A. E. OROBATOR, "After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent", p. 291-292, quoting de Jong who criticized that even the translated documents were "probably the least read and studied books in the presbyteries". A. de JONG, *The challenge of Vatican II in East Africa*, p. 33. De Jong reports on p. 83-89 a strong resistance of "legalistic" and "clericalist" African bishops and clergy against the efforts of Dutch bishops to put into practice the documents. The East African clergy is painted here as obstinately not ready to accept the indigenous religion and culture as sources of the inculturation of liturgy and catechesis, instead of recognizing their prudent approach. Others stated that the "conservatism" of the African bishops concerned also the Catholic sexual morality, which reformers wanted to weaken. Cf. A. E. OROBATOR, "After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent", p. 301. The *African Ecclesial Review* (AFER) was founded in January 1959 in Uganda, and in its dialogical character it helped much to make known the documents, translations, commentary and proposals concerning the documents in Anglophone Africa, especially in the first ten years after the council. The Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of East Africa erected a Pastoral Institute in Gaba, Uganda for the formation (and updating) of pastoral workers and catechists, to bring to the people the renewal of Vatican II with a special program dedicated to the documents of the Council. The Pastoral Institute also experimented for some years in creative ways with liturgy to find an African expression of it, until the bishops took measurements against the direction of the Institute, seen as too liberal. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 292-294. Cf. also A. HASTINGS, "The council came to Africa", p. 322: In the 70's the enthusiasm for the Council ebbed down.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 295-297, referring to CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT OF NIGERIA, *The official Nigerian Catholic directory 1966*, s.ed., Lagos 1966, p. 39-42.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. A.E. AFIGBO, "The missions, the state and education in South-Eastern Nigeria, 1956-71", in E. FASHDE-LUKE et al., *Christianity in Independent Africa*, Collings, London 1978, the whole article, esp. p. 177.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 297, 299.

occasion of the independence, dealing with social themes and Christian marriage. It also called on Christian parents to foster vocations among their children, with the declared aim of handing over the guidance of the Church to a Nigerian clergy. In Lent 1963 they issued a communiqué against three frequent moral abuses in the society.<sup>182</sup> However, the Council was an experience to witness again the usefulness and dynamics of collegiality for all bishops, and it was a general wish of the fathers to bring this experience home. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) was constituted in accordance with the provisions of the decree *Christus Dominus*, as well as the Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone West Africa and SECAM, Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, in 1969. The CBCN held its first meeting in November 1966, trying to establish a deeper inter-tribal communion at least on the level of bishops in reception of the ecclesiology of communion of the Vatican II. It created six new ecclesiastical provinces in Nigeria, instituting nine Provincial Bishops' Conferences. It converted the Catholic Welfare Conference Secretariat of Nigeria into its own Secretariat. It has a social communications department, a pastoral department, an education department, justice and peace department, medial department, legal department, and a lay apostolate department.<sup>183</sup> Apart from the departments, the CBCN instituted Episcopal commissions: for justice, peace and social development, for marriage and family, for the Islam, for social communications, for the seminary, for priests, for African Traditional Religion, for the Word of God, for theology, for legal matters, for liturgy, for education, for medical care, for mission, for ecumenism, and for lay apostolate. Religious, inculturation and various projects had only a "committee" in the CBCN. It was restructured in 1999, when a department for pastoral affairs, a department of pastoral agents, a department of Church and society, a department of mission and dialogue, and a directorate of social communications were instituted. On the level of dioceses and parishes, some diocesan synods were held, pastoral councils (in which the members were disappointed in seeing that they merely had a consultative function according to CIC can. 536) and financial councils (organizing collections, not deciding on expenditures) were instituted.<sup>184</sup>

Ecclesiology: In 1979, F. A. Arinze showed the new post-conciliar view of the Church by no longer seeing the Nigerian Church as a mere receiver within the universal Church, but as a sender of missionaries, concerning the leave of first Nigerian Holy Ghost Fathers and Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters to missionary work outside their native country.<sup>185</sup> The Vatican Council II helped the Catholics in Africa to modify their view of the Church from what they had inherited from the missionaries, seeing their own responsibility. During the Council, some Africans felt neglected in their concerns for their local Church. Thus in 1977 the Senegalese Alioune Diop proposed an "African Council", and the Zairian Cardinal Malula requested it of Pope John Paul II in 1980. In 1983, African bishops renewed the request, but when the pope called Africans to reflect about it, mainly Francophone bishops were enthusiastic, while Anglophone bishops were reluctant and brought down the idea of a *council*, maybe out of fear to have to compose a dogmatically valid document, maybe conscious of the fact that in the "World Church", which resulted from Vatican II,

<sup>182</sup> Cf. O. OGUNU (ed), *The African Enchiridion*, p. 151, 154, 189-190.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 234-236, 238-238.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 236-237, 335-340, 359-370.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. F. A. ARINZE, "Missionary dimension", in *The Ambassador*, 1 (1979), 6. The "sending out of missionaries" followed in Nigeria a strong immigration flow to Western countries. To live outside Nigeria seems till today a sort of "status symbol", an achievement in itself.



a “separatist” “African Council” did not make sense again. However, Rome verified a vast desire for an African *Synod* among the African bishops, which was announced on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1989. In 1990, the “Lineamenta” were published and studied, but many suggestions were eliminated and did not appear in the “Instrumentum Laboris”, e.g. concerning polygamy and its related problems in the evangelization as it was seen as too controversial. More important than the final document was the experience and proposal to see the Church as a universal family in which Africa has taken its stand. An important theme in the Synod was the laity, not as objects of evangelization, but as important collaborators of the bishops. The successors of the apostles requested that lay-people be admitted to theological courses in order to have well-formed collaborators. After stressing the importance of their theological formation, it was said that (married or consecrated) women should be consulted in questions regarding them, be permitted to lead liturgical non-sacramental assemblies and even cooperate in the seminary formation.<sup>186</sup>

Justice and peace/Gaudium et Spes: The bishops had always indulged in politics, resisted governmental pressures and encouraged Christians to do the same, cf. the first joint letters of Nigerian bishops to the nation. Komonchak thus gives a wrong impression in commenting that the bishops after Vatican II left ‘their dogmatic corners and engaged in the world’.<sup>187</sup> A. E. Orobator criticises that bishops are sometimes too much focused towards politics and the public sphere, together with a firm standing on their exclusive right of governance and control within the Church, and, thus, not able to balance their attention *ad extra* with an equal attention to dialogue and growth of the various charisma present *within* their portion of the people of God.<sup>188</sup>

Ecumenism: The CBCN issued “guidelines for interconfessional co-operation in translating the Bible”.<sup>189</sup> Ecumenism was experienced in Catholic Africa after the Council first of all in the common effort to translate, print and distribute the Holy Bible, promoted both by Catholic Episcopal Conferences and by Protestant Bible Societies. In 1977, for the English speaking peoples, the Good News Bible was published both in a Catholic and a Protestant edition; it became the common bible especially in schools and helped many to overcome prejudices. In Nigeria in 1965, a union of Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist communities failed, despite the agreements of the leaders: the members rebelled against it. Baur comments that the African sense of communion is satisfied with belonging to a local church. Most African Christians believe that a community has to remain faithful to the tradition handed down by its first missionaries and converts. A new structure cannot bring union, but only a new understanding of the Church can bring it about.<sup>190</sup> Something is moving, especially in the relationship with the main-line Churches as the Anglican Communion, which is called “Church of Nigeria” in the country. In Akwa diocese in the local synod of 2001, Bishop Simon Okafor said: “Joint prayer services can also be organized on such social occasions as Igwe-in-Council activities, New Year Day, New Yam Festival, May Day, Independence Day”. He encouraged mutual attendance “in ceremonies to welcome visiting dignitaries of respective Churches; joint participation by clergy or other personnel of different denominations in Radio/TV

<sup>186</sup> Cf. J. BAUR, *Storia del cristianesimo in Africa*, EMI, Bologna 1998, p. 776-778, 780-782.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 251-252, quoting J. A. KOMONCHAK, “The local realization of the Church”, in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, 36 (1981) 87.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. A. E. OROBATOR, ““After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent””, p. 300.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 243.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. J. BAUR, *Storia del cristianesimo in Africa*, p. 765-767. P. 770: Between Christian denominations in Africa, there is generally a peaceful coexistence, but little cooperation or harmony.

discussions on burning socio-moral issues; joint clergy peace panel to try to settle town disputes”. It was observed that some Catholic priests “maintain good and friendly relations with local counterparts of other Churches. The bishop encouraged the relationship and said it should be extended and intensified. Also, attempts should be made to initiate doctrinal discussions on the level of the clergy of both sides.” The Christian Health Association of Nigeria is an ecumenical organization.<sup>191</sup>

Accepting the African culture as a value: the Igbo clergy found itself in trouble, especially with *Nostra aetate* 2, declaring that there are seeds of truth in every religion, which should be purified of superstition and then used for Christian worship. (This is repeated in *Ad gentes* 9, 11 and 22.) It was diametral contrary to what they had learned and preached so far. Before Vatican II “the Igbos were forced to believe that the religious attention paid to ancestors was of no value.” They were taught that one “should neither look up to the ancestors for help nor believe that they had ever been, or would ever be, reincarnated.” The presentation of I. Dim shows that the author himself is in doubt on how to face the attention to ancestors correctly. Also the bishops found it difficult to proclaim LG 50: the union of the living and the dead, the honour due to the dead. They tried and advised their priests to act prudently in not clinging to the old attitudes, and not jumping into feeling free to impose the own ideas on the faithful.<sup>192</sup> Slowly but naturally, African funeral rites that express the union of the living with the dead, now interpreted in a Christian way, came back to life, especially singing, dancing and eating together around the tomb in the house of the deceased person.<sup>193</sup>

Formation of priests: *Optatam totius* 1 calls for continued renewal in the seminary training. Local bishops are required to set up their own programs of local adaptation (which need approval by the Holy See). Thus, “Vatican II took radical decisions contrary to [a] pre-Vatican II concept of the training of priests in mission lands.”<sup>194</sup> What may have seemed to African Fathers in the Council as a mere “European/American” problem, soon also came to Africa: the challenges of the modern world demystifying the office of priests. In the 80’s, especially seminarians in Africa were confronted with debates and controversies about the nature and role of the priesthood through professors who had just finished their doctorate in Europe or America. Some suggested that Vatican II was already obsolete. I. Dim shows that the Vatican II decree on priests encouraged Nigerian bishops to face this challenge. They encouraged their priests to take care of the poor and the sick, to serve everybody, to know their culture, to preach to all men with authority and to cling to Vatican II. In line with *Pastores dabo vobis*, 8, bishops founded diocesan associations of diocesan priests and encouraged them to meet regularly for mutual advice, communal prayer and recreation.<sup>195</sup>

<sup>191</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 368-369, quoting S. A. OKAFOR, *Synod Acta*, Nimo 2002, 49, 51.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 299-301, referring especially to the instructions to priests given by G. M. P. OKOYE, *The glories of the priesthood*, London 1974, p. 59. The concept of “reincarnation” in Africa is not to be compared with the Hinduistic one. When a man or woman is said to “have come back to the world” in a descendant, the child is seen as being accompanied and helped by the spirit of the deceased person, who communicates his/her vital power and virtues to the child as it grows. This is comparable to the Christian idea of a mystical union of a Christ or a saint in heaven with a faithful on earth. Cf. also A. E. OROBATOR, “After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent”, p. 296, who underlines that the Church continued, however, to see itself as superior and as necessary sacrament of salvation for all; other religions are only a *preparation* for the Gospel.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 357-359.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 316.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 306, quoting G. M. P. OKOYE, *The glories of the priesthood*, London 1974, p. 22. Cf. also *Ibidem*, p. 304-308, 311, 314. In p. 311, I. Dim referred to Archbishop Onaiyekan who warned priests to talk against Vatican II in

Encouragement of the laity: Due to the slow growth of priestly vocations in Africa in general and the fast growth of the people of God in many places, the request of empowerment of lay-people as catechists, teachers and rural community leaders came (also) from Africa to the council. The Dutch Bishop Blomjous of Mwanza at Lake Victoria founded a first Catechist Training Centre in 1957.<sup>196</sup> In a pastoral letter of 1971, Archbishop Arinze looked at the nature of the Church according to Vat. II, the call of all men to holiness and to share in the apostolate of the Church, each according to his state of life. The “new” dignity of the laity was quickly accepted, and as many priests lacked in humility, the laity followed them. Catechists in some dioceses in Nigeria are paid according to their level of education; they are aided by volunteer catechists. After the confiscation of Catholic schools and hospitals, the dioceses tried to get them back with very little success; they built and staffed new ones. The Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria began to function in 1973, coordinating the diocesan lay apostolate councils: 44 lay apostolate movements on diocesan and parish levels (e.g. St. Vincent de Paul Society and Sacred Heart of Jesus Society), the family apostolate, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and with special attention the Catholic Youth.<sup>197</sup> M. Faggioli presents the opinion that the laity in Africa is still much lacking in terms of being trained in reading the Bible.<sup>198</sup>

The reception of Vatican II concerning inculturation will be treated separately and more profoundly in sub-chapter 1.2.1.3. Generally, the reception of Vatican II, together with a continuous growth in number and quality, is an on-going process in Africa far from being concluded and far from being ignored.

### 1.2.1.3. The vocation boom in Igboland after the war

With the Biafran War (1967-70), foreign missionaries (about 300 priests and 200 religious)<sup>199</sup> had to leave Igboland. The military Nigerian government took over all the schools in the country. The step was a serious setback for every Christian mission, whose members invested a lot in it,<sup>200</sup> and for the schools, which soon lost some of their quality. Religious and moral

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“The priesthood and the African synod”, p. 90, without giving the reference of the article of at least 20 pages in his bibliography.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. A. HASTINGS, *A history of African Christianity*, p. 172.

<sup>197</sup> I. Dim complains about the lack of humility among the lay people: “The crisis of priestly identity, which now gives the laity edge to address the priests sometimes without regard to the sacredness attached to it, was based on the erroneous understanding of and sometimes even a conscious bias against the doctrine of the teaching authority.” I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 311. In p. 299 I. Dim refers to F. A. ARINZE, pastoral letter *The hour of the laity 1971*, s.ed., Onitsha 1971. Concerning catechists and teachers, cf. p. 348-350. Concerning the Laity Council, cf. p. 377-415.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. M. FAGGIOLI, *Vatican II*, p. 61.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. J. DALY, “Igboland: the background to the vocation explosion”, in AFER, 15(1973) 261, quoted by H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 30, who copied the numbers from N. I. OMENKA, *The school in the service of evangelisation*, Leiden, Brill 1989, p. 7. As long as the missionaries were in the country, they held more posts of responsibility, key-posts; indigenous priests were kept longer years than young missionaries in positions of vicar and assistant, and the missionaries were reluctant to entrust money to them as their relations often asked them to bring money to solve family problems. Now the situation was changed by force and avoided the “war” which broke out in other missionary countries, in which indigenous priests fought against “religious colonialism”. Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity*, p. 268, 312-315.

<sup>200</sup> M. OKAA, „Afrika zwischen Elend und Hoffnung“, in *Leben* 11, 4 (2000) 12, states that ‘the Igbos are ready to sell their property and their land, in order to send their children to the missionary schools. Before the Biafra-Nigeria civil war, almost every village already had its own church and school.’ (Translation by the author.)

instruction was neglected, examination malpractices increased,<sup>201</sup> and the teachers were not regularly paid, therefore they did not regularly work. After the war, the indigenous priests (about 90 clergymen) took over the affairs of the Church in Igboland and the spreading of the Catholic faith among the Igbos continued, concentrating now on the work in the parishes. The indigenous clergy (and religious) became strong leaders, their celibate life gained them a special respect in puritan Igboland.<sup>202</sup> Their position as priests of the High God and their knowledge of the Bible also contributed in making them ideals to follow.<sup>203</sup> The 1970's saw an exceptional vocation boom to the Catholic priesthood and the religious life.<sup>204</sup> Many candidates were rejected for any little fault mainly because the young Church was not able to provide a place in the seminary for all of them.

Seeing many indigenous vocations, and being encouraged by the missionary encyclical letter of Pius XI in 1926,<sup>205</sup> an Irish Sister founded in Calabar the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus as the first indigenous Nigerian women religious Congregation on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1931, and by 2009 it had over 750 sisters. Worldwide, the number of newly founded congregations is generally growing in every new century. The foundations in Igboland, however, were especially growing fast: Archbishop Charles Heerey CSSp (Irish) founded the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, (1937, in 2009 over 900 sisters). Bishop Anthony Gogo Nwedo CSSp founded the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy (29<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1961, and in 2009 over 950 Sisters); Bishop Godfrey Mary Paul Okoye CSSp founded the Daughters of Divine Love (16<sup>th</sup> July 1969, in 2009 over 800 Sisters). The first bishop to establish a monastery in Nigeria was the same Godfrey Okoye in Port Harcourt, calling American Benedictines to begin it. They had to leave in the Civil War. Okoye started afresh in Enugu diocese: Mt. Calvary Cistercian Monastery for men at Awhum in 1971; the Benedictine monastery for women at Amoji Nike in 1974 and another Benedictine monastery for men at Eke. Soon, more monasteries were opened. Onitsha Archdiocese spent half a million Naira (that time, a Naira was roughly equal to the US Dollar) to build a Benedictine monastery of European standard for nuns who were trained in the Benedictine monastery Monte Mario in Rome as an effort to indigenise the Church in Nigeria in response to Vatican II.<sup>206</sup> on 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1978, St. Scholastica Abbey was founded in Umuoji. In 1997, St. Scholastica Abbey founded a daughter abbey in Ozubulu. Archbishop Arinze founded also the religious Brothers of St. Stephen. Several Igbo priests followed these examples and became founders.<sup>207</sup> Fr. Denis M. J. Ononuju CSSp founded

<sup>201</sup> Cf. K. B. C. ONWUBIKO, "The Catholic Church", p. 269-270.

<sup>202</sup> It must not be overlooked that celibacy in Igboland, as in other places, was a strong stumbling-block or a proof of real conversion to Christianity, since the continuity of the family, the duty to give birth to those family members who are not yet born and were destined to exist was of highest importance to every African pagan.

<sup>203</sup> Surely the fact that Catholic bishops received help for seminaries and church buildings through Propaganda Fide and international congregations also played a great role.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. H. C. ACHUNIKE, *Dreams of heaven*, p. 30. The author points out in this and the following page, that the Igbo associate purity (of which virginity is the highest form) with power, and that they continued to expect power (health, strength and wealth basically) to emanate from worship. Few have purified their intentions to expect the power of perseverance in goodness, purity and union with Christ.

<sup>205</sup> PIUS XI, Encyclical letter on the mission *Rerum Ecclesiae* (28<sup>th</sup> February 1926) in AAS, 18 (1926) 65-81.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 325, referring to M. E. NWABUISI, "Monastery in Igboland", in *The Torch*, 41 (May-July 1971[sic!]) 15-20, and p. 326.

<sup>207</sup> Some founders followed a divine call, imparted a developed spirituality to their "child" and invested a lot of time to eradicate wrong attitudes in the pioneer members. Others were thinking just of the need of their diocese or parish for pastoral workers, gave some initial help and rules to their "child" and then asked the group to take care of themselves. (The Church is bent on merging such "faceless" congregations with others, who have similar aims and a more charismatic founder.) Among the 15 congregations founded in Nigeria which grew to a considerable number and which the author came to know so far, two had a story of sexual abuse of sisters through the male founder, which seems to be

the Holy Family Sisters of the Needy on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1983, who numbered in 2009 over 150 sisters, and Fr. Prof. Emmanuel M. P. Edeh CSSp founded the Sisters of Jesus the Saviour on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1985, with over 100 sisters in 2009.<sup>208</sup>

In 1980 the diocese of Orlu was created by separation from Owerri, and in 1981 the diocese of Okigwe, from Umuahia; Nigeria then had 30 dioceses.<sup>209</sup> In 2012, Nigeria had 52 dioceses, plus two Apostolic Vicariates.<sup>210</sup> On 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1981, the former rector of the seminary at Ikot Ekpene,<sup>211</sup> Gregory Ochiagha (from a place in what is now Okigwe diocese), was consecrated in Rome pioneer as bishop of the new Diocese of Orlu which counted 23 parishes with 48 indigenous priests.<sup>212</sup> The diocese now figures thus:<sup>213</sup>

Orlu diocese	2007	2009	2011	2012
Population	996.000	1.056.000	1.118.000	1.144.000
Of which Catholics	571.015 (57%)	602.000 (57%)	700.000 (62%)	800.500 (70%)
Parishes	125	134	150	151
Average of Cath. by parish	4.560	4.493	4.667	5.301
Priests incardinated or working in the diocese	287	276	233	240
Seminarians	213	210	192	176

rather a bad revenge than something true, since the stories came up after these sisters were sent away for misbehaviour. However, there are two Nigerian “sisters” the author came to know, who wished to live the religious life but had left their “congregation” which was never approved by a bishop, and who told the author of continuous sexual abuse or attempts to do so from the founding priest on the members of the “congregation”. Of course, such “congregations” are not growing. Sexual temptations are a problem in African religious institutes, destroying the very foundation of any religious or apostolic action of the group, but maybe they are not more rampant in Africa than elsewhere. As in other parts of the world, another problem in religious life in Nigeria today seems to be the “horrendous individualistic tendencies crippling and stifling the spirit of the community, the laudable intention of the founder, and the success of the apostolic life.” D. A. OGUN, “Renewing religious community life, 40 years after *Perfectae Caritatis*”, in *The Catholic voyage*, 5,1 (2008) p. 51-52. These “individualistic tendencies” are not always really individualistic, but the religious who plan things on their own and do not allow their congregation to use them as it seems best for the life and apostolate of the whole congregation, sometimes do so in view of their natural families, whose ties they feel stronger. “*Blood, they say, is thicker than water* [the water of Baptism].” *Ibidem*, p. 67.

<sup>208</sup> The mentioned congregations are all canonically approved as religious congregations, at least on diocesan level. The information is taken from the NIGERIA CONFERENCE OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS (NCWR), *National Directory*, Enugu 2010. Many other groups in Nigeria, founded by priests or Religious women, are still on the level of private or public associations of Christ’s faithful.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. V. A. NWOSU, “The growth of the Catholic Church”, p. 46-51.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. SEGRETERIA DI STATO, *Annuario Pontificio per l’anno 2013*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2013.

<sup>211</sup> The seminary in Ikot Ekpene (diocese of Calabar) was built and opened in 1976 as a philosophy campus of the Bigard Memorial Seminary. G. Ochiagha was the first rector from 1976-1981, when he became pioneer bishop of Orlu. Cf. <<http://bigardenugu.org/brief-history.html>> and <<http://stjosephmajorseminary.org/about-us>>, seen on 15/10/2014.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. <<http://www.theCatholicchurchinnigeria.org/orlu.html>>, p. 1, 14-16.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. SEGRETERIA DI STATO, *Annuario Pontificio per l’anno 2008*, p. 540, and the same for 2010, 2012 and 2013. Reading the number of population and Catholics, the migration and fluctuation to other countries, urban centres and to Pentecostal communities must be considered: many Catholics of Orlu are absent in the diocese.

It is seen that the Catholics continue increasing in number and percentage, while the vocation boom continues to go down slowly.<sup>214</sup> Obviously, the numbers of Catholics and population are approximate.

### 1.2.2. Inculturation in the Catholic Church in Imo state

Inculturation shall first be looked at in theory, then in the practice in its various aspects: theology, liturgy, spirituality and ecclesiastical discipline. It shall be shown not only what was achieved so far, but also some proposals of what could be done still.

#### 1.2.2.1. The theory of inculturation

Inculturation means that the whole of the Catholic doctrine and morals ‘takes root’<sup>215</sup> in the culture of a people (philosophical paradigms and ways to celebrate, mourn and create communion, laws and customs, economics and politics)<sup>216</sup>, taking up all good values in that culture, cancelling all that is contrary to the Gospel and forming a new local Christian culture. Inculturation is founded on the mysteries of Incarnation, Easter and Pentecost.<sup>217</sup> Inculturation as “Incarnation” is the Word of God becoming flesh in a people, speaking and acting Kiswahili or Yoruba, in union with, and in imitation of, Him who became a Jew more than 2000 years ago.<sup>218</sup> “Easter”: it is the Kenosis of Christ who was incarnated in order to suffer and to die for sinful men, and whose death tore down the wall of separation between the ancient people of God and the newly associated ones, which makes it possible for people to eliminate all that is contrary to the will of God in their cultures.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> 1982, the Pope first stepped into Nigeria, thus recognizing the country’s importance for the Church. In March 1998, John Paul II came a second time, mainly to beatify the first Nigerian, who, as successful parish priest, had entered the monastic life: Cyprian Iwene Tansi. In 1979, Archbishop Francis Arinze of Onitsha began to pursue the canonisation of his school teacher and model-priest. Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE (ed.), *Living our faith*, p. 127. Tansi was born in 1903, ordained 1937, entered the Cistercian Monastery Mount St. Bernard in England in 1950 and died there in 1964 as a monk, his wish to bring the monastic life to Nigeria unfulfilled. Cf. F. Card. ARINZE, “Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, O.C.S.O.: a model priest for our times”, in *Encounter* 4 (1998/1999) 5. Mt. St. Bernard Abbey founded a monastery in May 1964 in Cameroon. Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 324-325. It should also be noted that most (maybe 90%?) baptised Catholics in rural areas are really practising, and the Church always represents a centre of religious and social life in the village.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (14/9/1995), n. 60, In English in <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_14091995\\_ecclesia-in-africa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa_en.html)>. The synod and the Postsynodal document treated specifically inculturation. Cf. also the whole no. 152 of *Credere Oggi* 26 (2/2006), dedicated to theology in Africa.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. EA, n. 62, quoting Proposition 32 of the Synod Fathers.

<sup>217</sup> It is to be noted that in the three main mysteries of the life of Christ and the Church, Mary is present as a protagonist. Therefore, in the itinerary of new peoples to faith in Christ she is never to be excluded or marginalized. Cf. A. AMATO, “Per una inculturazione della figura di Maria”, in E. PERETTO (ed.), *L’immagine teologica di Maria, oggi. Fede e Cultura*. Atti del X Simposio internazionale Mariologico (Roma 4-7 ottobre 1994), Marianum, Roma 1996, p. 30-31; cf. also I. CALABUIG, “Introduzione”, in E. PERETTO (ed.), *L’immagine teologica di Maria*, p. VI-X: Mary is presented in the NT in an inculturated way, she is model of inculturation, and in many cases she is ‘felt as integrating element of the proper cultural identity’.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. EA, n. 59-60. Cf. also A. M. TRIACCA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Liturgia e nella vita della Chiesa*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2011, p. 323-325.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. EA, n. 61. Cf. also A. M. TRIACCA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Liturgia*, p. 325-327. Also because he is actively present always, while remaining trans-temporal. Cf. J. ROTEN, “Mary and the multicultural challenges”, p. 357.

“Pentecost”: the Holy Spirit makes people “to profess in their own tongue the one faith in Jesus”.<sup>220</sup> The “truth of the Gospel needs to be rendered culturally meaningful, not only spiritually, but also sociologically and psychologically.”<sup>221</sup> It is thus the same as evangelisation, only that it underlines the right of the newly converted peoples to preserve positive aspects of their cultures and meaningful cultural actions when becoming Christians, and to make the Christian life (liturgy, testimony, service and communion) their own, enriching it with their own expressions – a right that was not always protected by European missionaries.<sup>222</sup>

Inculturation can be championed only by a people who came to believe in the Christian mystery of Easter, who has received the gift of the Holy Spirit leading them to the whole truth, and who is ready to make Christ incarnate in their words and actions, in every cultural expression. The leaders are mainly to explain the norms of what cannot be tolerated.<sup>223</sup> In so far as in Igboland there were many well-trained indigenous catechists and clerics taking care of the pastoral work since 1967, one could expect to see a well-matured inculturation. But as a handicap, Nigeria is culturally dependent on European culture, and “it is also an internal, accepted, interiorized feature”<sup>224</sup>. The modern and post-modern philosophical paradigms of striving for the materialistic “bigger” and the “better”<sup>225</sup> are conquering Africa. And in some aspects, Igbos so far prefer to take over the learned patterns than to enter the risk<sup>226</sup> of producing their own expressions of faith.

<sup>220</sup> EA, n. 61. Cf. also A. M. TRIACCA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Liturgia*, p. 327, 341-344. *Ecclesia in Africa*, thus, proposes an inculturation guided by the Holy Spirit, not by intellectual efforts of finding analogical “African” titles (e.g. “Great Ancestor” or “Great Healer” for Christ), rites and concepts. Rather, theologians and pastors are to be good observers, and *after* the people of God have expressed their faith in a new way, they are to analyse these expressions, whether they are faithful to culture, Catholic faith and not disturbing the unity of the Church, and thus, encourage or correct the faithful.

<sup>221</sup> J. ROTEN, “Mary and the multicultural challenges”, p. 356.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. J. NDOUM, *L’inculturation a tout prix?* p. 9-27. Pope Francis stresses that the preaching of the Gospel has been closely associated with some cultures, but “the revealed message is not identified with any of them; its content is transcultural.” He also assigns great importance to popular piety as a “true expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the people of God” under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, thus making its contribution to inculturation. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation on evangelisation *Evangelii gaudium* (24/11/2013), in English in <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html)>, seen on 8/6/2014, n. 117, 122-123. The Apostolic Exhortation gathers the fruits of the 13<sup>th</sup> Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of October 2012 on the New Evangelization (cf. n. 14, 16), but it is also the first substantial document of Pope Francis alone and can, thus, be understood as his “program of pontificate” (cf. programmatic comments as “I am conscious of the need to promote a sound “decentralization”, n. 16; the call to re-examine ecclesiastical customs and precepts, n. 43, the reminder that the Holy Eucharist “is not a prize for the perfect”, but a medicine for the weak, n. 47; “Seminaries cannot accept candidates on the basis of [...] motivations [which] have to do with affective insecurity or the pursuit of power, human glory or economic well-being”, n. 107.)

<sup>223</sup> Cf. A. M. TRIACCA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Liturgia*, p. 340: rites of vengeance or war, rites around the area of sexuality, rites for the appropriation of the will of others, rites that lead to trance, rites towards idols or rites of superstition must strictly be avoided in the Church. Every tendency of closing the mind of the faithful against Christ’s faithful of another tribe or nation must be abhorred. The essential rites of Christianity must be preserved and receive special attention. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio* (7/12/1990), n. 54, in AAS 83,1 (1991) 249-340: the Christian life cannot be transformed by a culture to the extent that a person from another culture would no longer understand what is happening, in order to preserve the communion with the universal Church. Theologians and bishops are mainly to guide the inculturation, not to do it: it is a work of the whole people.

<sup>224</sup> C. COQUERY-VIDROVITCH, “Economic changes”, p. 305. This is especially true for how the Igbo have accepted Christianity. Unlike Yorubas, they generally do not even cherish pictures of a black Jesus or Mary, they prefer to see them “beautiful” according to their ideal of beauty, with white skin, “pointed nose” and thin lips.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. J. ROTEN, “Mary and the multicultural challenges”, p. 362.

<sup>226</sup> As the Church has to approve such, it is indeed an enterprise that needs humility. Faith cannot be expressed authentically outside the permission and approval of the Church, especially if it concerns liturgical expressions of faith. Cf. A. M. TRIACCA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Liturgia*, p. 333, 335.

SC 37-40 calls for the adaptation of liturgy to the various cultures. Concerning the liturgy of Mass, the Vatican II liturgy, modifying the Tridentine Mass, could be seen as an inculturational act also for Africa. I. Dim noted that several aspects in it caused uneasiness to the African faithful: The priest's back to the people; the Latin responses which needed explanation; the mass-servers lifting the priest's vestment at the back according to the prescription of the ritual.<sup>227</sup> As shown above, the bishops were careful not to introduce too many changes at the same time. From 1960 to 1985, the Catholic bishops recalled the "importance" of inculturation only in brief resolutions. In 1991, in preparation to the African Synod, they addressed the problem in a deeper way, recognizing that for the educated Africans the model and ideal is European, and urging serious studies about the ancient culture. Not for the sake of simply adorning liturgical rites with some cultural ancient expressions, but in order to define the values to be preserved. Some culturally formally sustained actions to be eliminated are named: denials of human rights like the Osu caste system (practically the "outcasts" of the Igbo tribe, in a certain way sacred people, untouchable, but despised) or anti-human rituals. Some elements which "require re-orientation" in the underlying understanding are enumerated: "title taking and initiations, festivals and dances, [...] matrimonial practices, use of native medicine". As positive values of the culture, only the language is mentioned.<sup>228</sup> The African Synod treated inculturation as its main theme. It was admitted that in most parts of Africa there was not yet any serious effort towards inculturation. The main conclusion was to study possibilities of inculturation more. Odoemene sustains that in order to reach to an inculturated self-understanding of the Nigerian Church, the first need is that the indigenous members of the Church reflect and digest on their own the Word of God, and then find their ways of how to implement it in their cultural context. The same author likens inculturation to a marriage covenant in which the family of the Church and the family of Africa, after long dialogues, agree to bind themselves together.<sup>229</sup> This makes comprehensible the reluctance of the Nigerian Church to discuss inculturation immediately and instead to first further the knowledge and understanding of the Bible.

As the Pope continued to insist on inculturation,<sup>230</sup> the bishops also made it a repeated topic (1996 and 2002), leaving it to the single dioceses to issue formulas for sacraments. "Here we urge all dioceses to follow the inspired lead of several dioceses which have painstakingly put together marriage rites that are authentically Catholic and authentically traditional." (2002) An interesting remark is that "structures of the diocese and the parish, while faithful to canon law, need to reflect more clearly and creatively the African tradition of the extended family, with its emphasis on personal relationships, hospitality, and on caring for the needs of all."<sup>231</sup>

Inculturation, according to A. A. Roest Crolius, involves four areas: 1. The presentation of the faith (theology) 2. The celebration of the faith (liturgy, including sacred arts, dance and music enhancing liturgy) 3. The contemplation of the faith (spirituality) 4. The laws guiding the institution

<sup>227</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 144.

<sup>228</sup> It could have mentioned also the upholding of the right of unborn babies to be received in the human family, the right of the elderly to be respected for their past contributions to the life of the community and the upholding of unity in a struggle to reconcile those who are in disagreement... These values are not only acceptable to Christianity, but have received a new meaning and importance in Christ.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 269, quoting N. A. ODOMENE, "A critique on inculturation and methodology", in *Inculturation and the Mission of the Church in Nigeria*, Port Harcourt, 1992, p. 102-110.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. e.g. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa* (14/9/1995) esp. n. 59-64, dedicated to evangelisation and inculturation.

<sup>231</sup> The whole paragraph cf. P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 116-125.



of the family of faith (ecclesiastical discipline).<sup>232</sup> Some special attention shall be given on how the various aspects of culture in Imo State which were discussed above determine the life of the church in that portion of the people of God today: the importance of language, wealth, land and purity, the structure of the society, the understanding of death, the importance of heart/blood/life, the importance of unity, and the concept of God, prayer and sacrifice.

#### 1.2.2.2. Inculturation in the presentation of the faith

Theologians received new liberty of research, thought and expression by the Vatican council. Since Trent, the main source of dogmatics was only the Magisterium; the Bible and the Fathers of the Church were quoted only to confirm the same. Now, theologians are permitted again to base their studies on all the sources of theology and even to consider the ideas of protestant exegetes, Jewish philosophers and traditional cultures, entering into a franc and scientific dialogue with whomsoever: “to a large extent the impetus to develop an African theology came from Vatican II”.<sup>233</sup> The formulation of faith (dogma) in the native language and way of expression is an important part of inculturation, but it is combined with fears of entering into heresy. The risky freedom which Vatican II gave to theologians is not yet embraced in large parts of Anglophone Africa. I. Dim states categorically: “There cannot be different formulations of the same faith”<sup>234</sup>. The truth is instead that there *are* different formulations of the same faith, each underlining a different aspect of the great mysteries which nobody can express exhaustively and without leaving space for misinterpretations. Against his own categorical statement, however, I. Dim quotes the then archbishop J. Onaiyekan, who in 1985 exhorted his fellow bishops not to see error in every difference of expression.<sup>235</sup>

In the field of philosophy and theology, many indigenous priests try today to express an African philosophy/theology; some were quoted in sub-chapter 1.1.6., but it cannot be called very developed yet.<sup>236</sup> As an example of dogmatic theology, Mariology shall be briefly examined here.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Cf. A. A. ROEST CROLLIUS, “Missione e inculturazione”, in E. DAL COVOLO – A. M. TRIACCA (ed.), *La missione del Redentore. Studi sull'enciclica missionaria di Giovanni Paolo II*, Elle Di Ci, Torino 1992, p. 254. The “four areas” neglect the fact that the culture to be transformed is not only the reality lived inside the church premises, but also in family and other places. Culture includes philosophical paradigms and ways to celebrate, mourn, and create communion, laws and customs of the whole society, not only of the church, and the church has to work on the change of all aspects of culture into a Christian culture. E.g. in liturgy, little can be adapted because the Holy Bible will always be the basis, but in ways such as how Christmas is celebrated in the Christian homes or how a funeral is arranged, there is and should be a great difference between an African Christian family and a European Christian family. The pastors only have to take care that the principles of the Gospel are being observed.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. A. E. OROBATOR, “After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent”, p. 289.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 278.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 278, quoting J. ONAIYEKAN, “Nigerian theology: preliminary questions”, in *The Nigerian Journal of Theology*, 1 (Dec. 1985) 2. I. Dim also quotes G. M. P. OKOYE, *The glories of the priesthood*, London 1974, p. 81, in which the bishop encourages the priests to study first of all the bible, only in the second place the Magisterium and finally the Fathers (probably at the last place, because the seminary libraries in Africa were probably still devoid of works as the Mansi).

<sup>236</sup> It was in the 60's and 70's that theological associations began to exist in Africa. The two first important conferences were held in Nigeria: 1966 in Ibadan, 1975 in Jos. Cf. F. A. OBORJI, “Il cristianesimo in Africa”, p. 29. Thus, the “African” theological reflection is still very young. The CATHAN (Catholic Theology Association, Nigeria), in its evaluation of the “Instrumentum laboris” for the synod of the African bishops (1993), finds concerning Inculturation only three principles of the African view of the world: the awareness of the sacredness of all aspects of life, the need of religion protecting and promoting a better life, and the importance of sharing all things in common. The document laments the neglect in the “instrumentum” of emerging and inspiring African rites as the Zairian Mass, the Christian

In the early time of Christianity in Nigeria, the clergy seemingly observed the usually strong devotion to Mary in the people without seeing the need for correction or having an idea for better inculturation of the veneration of Mary. Africans generally love and prefer the title “Mother” for Mary, as the title that includes all her prerogatives.<sup>238</sup> Also in Igboland she is celebrated as the Holy Mother, *Nne di aso*, and with the traditional titles of the Good Mother, *Nne oma*, the True Mother, *Ezinne*, and thus, understood a bit as “one of us”, an African mother, a mother of life. Nigerian bishops declared Mary first patron of the country, under the title “Queen of Nigeria”, but this happened only in the Marian year 1987/88. Also, reflections on the Mother of God were not published by the Catholic bishops until January 1988. Then they issued a four-page summary of the papal encyclical “Redemptoris Mater”, trying to find some connection with their portion of the people of God, stressing especially the model role of Mary, the Good Mother, in her faith, humility and chastity. It ends in the wish “to make this year of the Virgin the year of purity.” In Dec. 1999, they invited the people to a “deeper, sincere devotion to the holy Mother of God.”<sup>239</sup> In Feb. 2002, they published a pastoral letter on the dignity of womanhood. After passing quickly over Biblical women, the message dwells on Mary, the fulfilment of the prophetic images. “Mary is the Mother of the Incarnate Word of God, the Saviour, Jesus Christ. No greater honour has ever been conferred on any human being”. Mary’s motherhood of the Church is also mentioned. In line with the African traditional understanding that a woman gains her value through her offspring, the bishops followed the pope’s teaching in “Redemptoris Mater” and “Mulieris Dignitatem”<sup>240</sup>. They exalt Mary as “the summit of the proclamation of the dignity of womanhood in Sacred Scriptures.”<sup>241</sup> Apart from a more moralistic approach to Mariology, the Nigerian Bishops’ teaching remained quite timidly in the frame of traditional dogmatics.<sup>242</sup>

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initiation of Moore in Burkina Faso and the rite of attribution of the name among the Yoruba, and requests more liberty for Africans in evangelizing their brothers. Cf. N. BENAZZI (ed.), *Archivium. Documenti della storia della Chiesa dal I secolo a oggi*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 2000, p. 1115. In fact, among the masses of people, doctrines as the one on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, expressed in the ancient philosophical terms, are simply learned and repeated.

<sup>237</sup> There exists a recent attempt of a Nigerian to review Mariology: F. NWAIGBO, *Mary – mother of the African church: a theological inculturation of Mariology*, Lang, Frankfurt a.M. 2001. This attempt shows great interest in the relationships of Mary and in communication, unfortunately using (uncritically) many extravagant expressions (which are not always fitting) and lacking logics in some places. Also many opinions are expressed without giving sustaining references. E.g. on p. 36 he says: “Mary communicates Jesus’ experience to the whole group of believers, individually and collectively through Her holistic symbol of maternity. The relationship between Mary and humanity is clearly understood. [The statement is written in a sub-chapter on Mary in Africa, thus, it may be understood that he refers to the understanding in Africa.] She is a member and representative of the human race, and binds humanity of men and women in solidarity with God. Mary is not simply a symbol of God’s communication with humanity. She has also a personal and historical existence. [...] With Her Jesus Christ lay [sic!] a foundation of community-of-faith, existentially and relationally. Thus, there is a continual communication between Mary and humanity.”

<sup>238</sup> J.-P. SIEME LASOUL, “Africa”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 37.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 142-149.

<sup>240</sup> IOANNES PAULUS II, Epistula apostolica *Mulieris dignitatem* (15/8/1988), in AAS 80 (1988) 1653-1729. The document was given on the occasion of the conclusion of the Marian year 1987-1988 and presented Mary as a model especially for women. It was received in the Catholic world with happy applause and fierce criticism. For more information on the feminist movement and the document, cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 277-293, and S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, p. 569-577.

<sup>241</sup> The second half of the paragraph cf. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 230-232.

<sup>242</sup> In fact, Mary, as mother of Life eternal, is in a unique position to sustain Christian evangelization and inculturation. “There exists a close connection between Mary [...] and the universal archetype of mother and of motherliness”, representing values “as care, protection, acceptance, growth and affection” which are important “psychologically as well as biologically and morally.” J. ROTEN, “Mary and the multicultural challenges”, p. 360.

The third chapter of this research will present a Mariology inspired by the African idea and value of Jesus and Mary as a centre and beginning of union for the global “village” and family of God<sup>243</sup> where human relationships always include an intimate relationship with God. However, the union around Jesus and Mary is not based on blood, but on faith.

Concerning the understanding of sacrifice, the missionaries seemingly saw the pagan sacrifices as “magic” actions, not as a symbolic offering of oneself to God. This interpretation also seems proper today, since sacrifices were never offered to the High God, but only to the spirits presiding over natural forces or to ancestors. However, the communal consumption of the cola-nut and the goat, and the annihilation of the dog in the “Ikommee”, the “great purification”, had a dimension of “bringing peace”, and (re)establishing unity. Thus, there would have been a possibility to compare it with the sacrifice of Jesus, which brought to human beings peace with God and which has the power to break down all walls of discord among people. Such a comparison may never have been dared,<sup>244</sup> while the first disciples of Jesus dared to compare Him with the goat-sacrifice of the Jewish day of reconciliation, Yom Kippur, (cf. Rom 3,25-26; cf. Lev 16) and with the lamb of Easter (cf. 1 Ptr 1,19, 1 Cor 5,7),<sup>245</sup> and He made himself the unleavened Bread to be broken. Thus the understanding of e.g. the “sacrifice of the Mass” in Nigeria seems to be based mainly on what people learn in the catechism.

### 1.2.2.3. Inculturation in the celebration of the faith

In line with “Sacrosanctum Concilium”<sup>246</sup> 36, recognizing the great importance of the *local language* for the inculturation of the faith, the Holy Bible and the liturgy were translated into vernacular by learned Igbo.<sup>247</sup> After the Council, the missionary Bishop, Joseph Whelan of Owerri,

<sup>243</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 362: “centre and living source of the communion of saints”; it “is symbol of love and life, able to cross all borders of human understanding, and unites humanity in some of its most fundamental values and concerns.” By the fact that Mary in her insignificance was given the gift of God himself to bear, to love and to take care of, the icon of mother and Child is a powerful icon of redemption of man. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 361-362.

<sup>244</sup> The author has never heard nor read of such. For the ritual of Ikommee it is too late to venture such a step today, for since the Biafran War, the Igbo village communities no longer fight against each other. This ritual is no longer experienced and known among the Igbo of the present generation, while the sacrifice of only Cola to the ancestors as a sacrifice of communion remains today a possible point of reference for inculturation.

<sup>245</sup> Schnackenburg interpreted the Gospel of John as seeing in Jesus the Passover Lamb, since in Jn 13,1 it was noted that it was “before the Passover”, and that in 19,36 the fact that none of his bones were broken refer to the word in Exodus on the lamb. Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel according to St. John. Commentary on chapters 13-21*, Burns, London 1982, p. 15.

<sup>246</sup> Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy; in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_constitution\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_constitution_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)>, seen on 1/3/2014;. As the first published document of Vatican II (4/12/1963, together with “Inter mirifica”, the decree on the means of social communication), SC has the merit of a fundamental importance for all other documents of Vatican II, as the preparative documents were abolished and completely new documents were put together by the Council Fathers. The Constitution dwells already in the introduction (n. 1) on the necessity to adapt to the needs of the time and on the mystery of the Church (n. 2), stresses the need to insert more Biblical readings in the liturgy (n. 35,1) and presents Mary as “inseparably linked with her son’s saving work”, being the “most excellent fruit of redemption” and model of the Church (n. 2103) giving, thus, some guideline for what will be “Lumen Gentium”, “Dei Verbum” and “Gaudium et Spes”. In the n. 22-46, 50-58, 63-82, 84-101, 106-111, 113-121, 123-130, it decrees norms for the revision of liturgy (general norms, Mass, Sacraments and sacramentals, Divine Office, liturgical year, sacred music, sacred arts).

<sup>247</sup> SC, 36 first prescribes the preservation of the Latin language, but in point 2 permits a wider use of vernacular, where it is useful for the people. Subsequently, the CDWS, in the *Notificatio De Missali Romano, Liturgia Horarum et calendario* (14/6/1971), in AAS 63 (1971) 712-714, gave bishops great freedom to permit vernacular in liturgy. Prof. Anthony Ilonu, before he was made the pioneer bishop of Okigwe, was involved in the translation of a Catholic Igbo

went to work immediately to propose an “Igbo Mass”, and some of the dioceses (in the North and the West of Nigeria) made a few changes in the rites of baptism. Archbishop F. Arinze of Onitsha welcomed the Igbo Mass, while seeing it important to retain Latin occasionally. It was only in 1973, however, that the Catholic bishops of the Church in Igboland authorized the publication of the translation of the Roma Missal, launching the local Church into the vernacular language. In 1977, the order for five more sacraments was translated into Igbo by Albert Obiefuna, Anthony Ilonu and some others. An Igbo ritual for the presentation of the child and the mother in the church was revised and published.<sup>248</sup> The change to the Igbo Mass was first decried by a good number of clerics and lay-people, especially women. Latin was seen as the “mystical”, “traditional language” of the Church to be conserved.<sup>249</sup> But a movement among Igbos, which took pride in studying, writing and reading Igbo, gained ground and reduced the supporters of Latin at Mass.<sup>250</sup> Surely the vernacular helped to reduce the view among people of the sacraments as some “magic rite” (which could be coupled with a second magic rite by the diviner, because double protection is more safe...) and brought out its genuine character of the divine confirmation of a personal decision: God’s answer of grace to the answer of man to the call of God. Recently, an Igbo discovered the “body language” used for worship in the liturgy as something genuine African and as something developed in some attempts of inculturated African liturgy.<sup>251</sup> An important step was the admission of indigenous names with Christian meaning at Baptism. Missionary priests (but not the Irish Holy Ghost Father Shanahan and his immediate co-workers, e.g. in Orlu) in many places had refused all indigenous names categorically as devilish, thus driving away many people of good will from baptism.<sup>252</sup>

Another aspect of Inculturation in liturgy concerns the music at Mass. In Africa at large, the introduction of the drum (and gongs and rattles, and dance, e.g. during offertory) was much celebrated. Some dismissed it as “insignificant adaptation”, while others saw it as a symbolic act, i.e. the symbol of the admittance of popular participation, of an active laity, and the admittance of Africa as a full-fledged member of the Catholic Church.<sup>253</sup> Concerning songs, many missionaries tried to “adapt” European hymns by merely translating them into Igbo, leaving tune and content unchanged. The indigenous people were forced to use them, because other hymns were not permitted in liturgy. I. Dim reported a “rumblings of dissatisfaction with the ‘Roman Church’ liturgy among the faithful” before Vatican II, and called the permission given by the Council to

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Bible. For the liturgy, cf. A. ECHIEGU, *Translating the Collects of the Sollemnitates Domini of the MR of Paul VI in the language of the Africans*, Münster 1984, p. 313. The Igbo author is quoted without name and editor in M. PATERNOSTER, *Varietates legitimae, Liturgia romana e inculturazione*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2004, p. 87.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 279-282.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 285, quoting T. OKURE, “Inculturation in Nigeria: a survey and evaluation”, in *Inculturation and the Mission of the Church in Nigeria*, Port Harcourt, 1992, p. 77.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 285.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. E. E. UZUKWU, *Worship as body language. Introduction to Christian worship: an orientation*, Liturgical, Collegeville, MN 1997, p. 270-317. E.g. the Zairian rite has created a major dance around the altar for the presiding priest during the Gloria. It also shifted the penitential rite with aspersion and the kiss of peace, bringing them together after the listening to and accepting the Word of God, thus imitating the structure of an African village meeting, which used to end with a ritual meal, now overtaken by the Eucharistic sacrifice. The Eucharistic prayer contains more opportunities for the congregation to respond with interpolation, singing and dancing than in the Roman Mass. Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity. An African Church History 62-1992*, Paulines, Nairobi 1994, p. 309 and C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue. Igbo culture and the message of Christ*, Rodopi, Amsterdam 2007, p. 204.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 352-354.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. A. E. OROBATOR, “‘After all, Africa is largely a nonliterate continent’”, p. 298, referring for the negative view to A. B. CHIMA, “Africanizing the liturgy: where are we twenty years after Vatican II?” in *AFER* 25 (1983) 280-291, esp. p. 283, and to A. de JONG, *The challenge of Vatican II in East Africa*, p. 181-185, 189.

invent their own hymns, approved by their local bishops, a prevention of a “mass exodus”.<sup>254</sup> Liturgical songs in Igbo were created.<sup>255</sup> The author did not find notions in the literature or in the knowledge of Igbo Christians she asked, that in the Traditional Religion there would have been songs for praising the gods and for communicating with them. Chants were used in religious ceremonies, but the contents were mourning at funerals or accusation against fellow human beings. It seems it was the Christian Missionaries who brought the songs of praise to God. Today, Igbo Catholics still use English and Igbo songs with European tunes for Mass, but many Igbos (priests and others) compose new songs, which carry doctrine and devotion.

Many Catholic Igbo communities still cherish the solemn music of the organ, and all try to establish a “standard choir”, which did not exist in the traditional surrounding. The cultural dance of entertainment, which is meant to give greater solemnity to important feasts, is being used for Holy Mass: during the entrance procession, accompanying the offertory procession and while bringing the lectionary of the Gospel to the altar (not in all dioceses, but in Orlu diocese it is approved as liturgy).<sup>256</sup> In sacred arts, inculturation is not moving enthusiastically,<sup>257</sup> and the Church in Nigeria is still far from creating a proper Celebration rite of Mass similar to the Nzon-Melen Mass of the Beti culture in Cameroon, or the Zairian rite, which in the opening litany gives room to the spiritual view of life implying the communion of the congregation (visible world) with God, saints and

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<sup>254</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 351-352.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 276, quoting T. OKURE, “Inculturation in Nigeria: a survey and evaluation”, in *Inculturation and the Mission of the Church in Nigeria*, Port Harcourt, 1992, p. 76. The beginning of translation of liturgical texts into vernacular, and the composition of Igbo hymns for Mass began in the “liturgical circle” founded by deacons and seminarians in the Bigard Memorial Seminary in 1960 with the permission of the authority. Some leaders of the circle were Albert Obiefuna, Simon Okafor, (both subsequently bishops of Akwa diocese) Cyril Ezenduka, Theophilus Okere, Celestine Obi, Ferdinand Ugwueze and others. Many others followed. I Dim quotes one of these hymns (for the occasion of a mother presenting her child to God in the Church community, remembering Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus in the temple) as having contributed much in uplifting the perception of women as being recognized in the Church as persons with their joys and sorrows. Igbo songs turned the Mass into a celebration for the Igbo, as every liturgical celebration gains much by singing, and the texts were able to draw converts. Some tunes were borrowed from well-known traditional Igbo songs, helping the people to be able to sing them immediately. Also the psalms were translated. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 146-147. In the 80’s, the local Church still struggled with translations of readings and prayers, and Fr. Cyril Ezenduka composed Igbo Hymns for Mass: “Missa Chukwuemeka”, “Missa Ihunanya”, *I bu Ukochukwu ebebe* and *Lee Nnukwu Ukochukwu* (two songs for use in Episcopal Masses, celebrating the “high priest”). Also bishop A. Gbuji composed hymns and published them. African sacred arts in Igboland can be discovered in wood-carvings, e.g. in church-doors. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 282-284.

<sup>256</sup> The whole congregation can also become a single group of “dance” (with the upper body, without moving the feet) during the blessing with holy water (at the penitential rite); at the Gloria and during the homily, if the priest invites the choir to sing a song of praise in between.

<sup>257</sup> African sacred arts in Igboland can be discovered in wood-carvings representing Jesus and saints, e.g. in church-doors. Apart from that little can be seen. Once she heard Prof. Francis Obiora Ike of Bigard, Enugu, later vicar general, complain that his bishop never used the costly, traditionally sculptured chalice for Mass, which he presented to the bishop long ago. (Prof. Obiora Ike was a fellow student of Father Montfort in Bigard, 1975-1978.) One may ask whether candidates for priesthood and bishopric in Africa are chosen on the grounds of originality in theology and efforts at inculturation, or just on the grounds of piety? However, the author never saw an Igbo reacting with interest, when they saw a picture of an African Mary or Jesus: either they displayed dislike, or they just did not recognize Jesus and Mary in the picture. The mostly loved holy pictures are those colourful, sentimental pictures or statues of vast diffusion in the time before Vatican II, when the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was “Absoluta professio christianae religionis”, Pío XII, Encyclical *Haurietis aquas* (15/51956), in AAS, 48 (1956) 309-353. The Encyclical was written to promote the devotion to the Hearts which was perceivably in decline before (and after) Vatican II. Cf. A. ZIEGENAUS, “Die Herz-Jesu-Verehrung“, p. 41.

ancestors (invisible world). The Eucharistic Prayer is composed according to African prayer pattern.<sup>258</sup>

#### 1.2.2.4. Inculturation in the contemplation of the faith

In the Igbo culture, the importance of the term “heart” developed in the Christian era. When the missionaries tried to translate “soul”, they called it “mkpuru obi”. “Mkpuru” is the stone or pip of a fruit, thus the soul is the core of the heart, the “obi”, and the heart is the seat of the soul. Since in the Christian metaphysics, the soul is the spiritual part of man, which, comparable with the pagan Igbo “Chi” and the ancestral guardian “Eke”, can be in relationship with God and with the departed brothers and sisters, the heart as seat of the soul has become the sole centre of relationship with God and fellow creatures.<sup>259</sup> Generally, the piety of the missionaries for the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary met in the Igbo language an ally for the propagation of the same. It never aroused great difficulty for the Igbos to honour the very heart of a person, instead of honouring the person (without mention of the heart). The “promises” of Jesus, written down by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, concerning the devotion of his Sacred Heart, and the “promises” of Fatima/Pontevedra (1917/1925)<sup>260</sup> concerning the devotion to the Immaculate Heart, are known in Nigeria by almost every devout Catholic. Ejaculations as “Sacred Heart of Jesus - have mercy on us! Immaculate Heart of Mary - pray for us!” are being learned by children when learning how to recite the rosary<sup>261</sup>, as they are added between the Salve Regina and the Litany of Loreto, which

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<sup>258</sup> Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity*, p. 309 and C. UDEANI, *Inculturation as dialogue*, p. 204: the Zairian rite has created a major dance around the altar for the presiding priest during the Gloria. It also shifted the penitential rite with aspersion and the kiss of peace, bringing them together after the listening to and accepting the Word of God, thus imitating the structure of an African village meeting, which used to end with a ritual meal, now overtaken by the Eucharistic sacrifice. The Eucharistic prayer contains more opportunities for the congregation to respond with interpolation, singing and dancing than in the Roman Mass.

<sup>259</sup> I. SANNA, *L'identità aperta*, p. 140 complains about the ‘loss of the soul’ in contemporary anthropological concepts, leading to a reduction on biological and measurable processes to define man. The CDF, in its letter to all bishops *Recentiores episcoporum synodi* (17/5/1979), in DZ 4653 affirms “that a spiritual element [of man] survives and subsists after death, an element endowed with consciousness and will, so that the ‘human self’ subsists in the interim [between death and the resurrection of the dead] but without the complement of its body. To designate this element, the Church uses the word ‘soul’, the accepted term in the usage of Scripture and tradition. [...The] Church thinks that there is no valid reason for rejecting it”. In the African anthropology, soul and body are seen in unity. The body is not the material which separates the soul of one person from another, but it is the instrument of union, which permits the relationship with the visible and invisible world. Cf. P. KIPOY, “Spiritualità del corpo e forza della religiosità popolare in Africa”, in *Credere Oggi* 26 (2/2006) 128.

<sup>260</sup> Including the later visions, as 18<sup>th</sup> May 1936, when Sr. Lucia heard Jesus telling her that He insists on the consecration to the Immaculate Heart, because he wants to bring the devotion to the Immaculate Heart in connection with the devotion to his Divine Heart. Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Fatima”, in R. LAURENTIN, – P. SBALCHIERO, (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions” de la Vierge Marie, Inventaire des origines à nos jours, Méthodologie, bilan interdisciplinaire, prospective*, Fayard, Paris 2007, p. 328. The promises of Our Lady of Fatima concern the devotion to her Immaculate Heart, especially on the first Saturday of each month.

<sup>261</sup> R. SCHERSCHEL, *Der Rosenkranz – das Jesusgebet des Westens*, Freiburg, Herder 1979, especially p. 15-44, 49-53, 64-65, 68-84, 91-94 traces the history of the technique of the rosary back to the repetition of short prayers in the early oriental monasteries. The history of the text is shown as developing in the East in the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century, in the liturgical use (in the Greek Anaphora of “Jakob” and the Egyptian Anaphora of “Mark”) of the Angelic greeting, already combined with the praise by Elisabeth (Lc 1,28 and 1,42) and generally combined with giving the reason for the praise of Mary: because she brought the Saviour. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century this first half of the Hail Mary is attested in Rome. (The name of Mary was added to the Biblical text, while the name of Jesus was added probably in the 13<sup>th</sup>, latest in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, after a long period of spiritual-theological reflection on the value of this name.) In the 12<sup>th</sup> century it had become common in the West, together with Our Father and the Creed replacing the prayer of the Psalter for the illiterate. The name “Rosarium” was used around 1300 for many collections, even of laws; in the 15<sup>th</sup> century its meaning changed to

conclude the rosary in most prayer booklets sold in Nigeria. Pictures of (a European!) Jesus and Mary with a prominent, red heart can be found everywhere (in houses and shops, on cars and lorries, printed on clothing...) and are generally the sign that the owner is a Catholic. In Nigerian seminaries the devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary is generally fostered and encouraged as traditional Catholic devotions. The devotions are inculturated in the sense that indigenous clergymen and lay-people wrote new prayers and began new ways of veneration of the Two Hearts. Among these stands the devotion of the Two Hearts of Love.

The “Heart of Love” in Igbo is “Obi Ihunanya”. Love (“Ihunanya”) means literally: “to see (the beloved) with eyes (of love)”. He is seen, he attracts the look of the lover. This look can be interpreted in many ways, i.e. leading to the knowledge of all his virtues and failings and weaknesses, accepting him like that, regarding him with personal interest, seeing him with his problems in the intense wish to be able to help, and looking into his eyes to enjoy his presence, his love, his joy. Surely, the pleased looking is a beginning relationship. This linguistic “contemplative” understanding of what love is may have helped to see it as a fitting name of God, Jesus, and also of Mary.

The traditional importance of *blood* has been transferred into an interest in the devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus.<sup>262</sup> It is strong throughout the Catholic (and not only the Catholic)

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“Garden of Roses” as a title of Our Lady, connoting an idea of paradise and of virginity. Earlier, it became a pious custom to decorate statues of Mary with crowns of fresh flowers, as people were wearing for feasts. According to a popular legend of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a monk taught another to replace the physical crown with 50 prayers of the “Hail Mary”. Following a long tradition of combining short prayers with meditation of the life of Christ, listed in various episodes of his life, German Cistercian nuns began in the 14<sup>th</sup> century to add such an episode to each Hail Mary. Cf. A. HEINZ, “Die Zisterzienser und die Anfänge des Rosenkranzes”, in *AnOCist* 33 (1977) 262-309, quoted in R. SCHERSCHEL, *Der Rosenkranz*, p. 116. After the Holy Mass, it is the Marian prayer par excellence, which plays a central role in the mystical life or prayer life of most fervent Christians, as it is Christocentric, evangelic, simple, meditative, catechetical, homiletic (helpful to model one’s life), creative and containing also the praise of the Holy Trinity. On the frequent interventions of the Magisterium on the rosary, its history and Biblical-liturgical inspiration, and on its “technique”, which can help to lead the person to contemplation, cf. R. BARILE, “Rosario”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2009, p. 1034-1041.

<sup>262</sup> On the Precious Blood, cf. CENTRO STUDI SANGUIS CHRISTI, *Dizionario teologico sul sangue di Cristo*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2007, a work of 1585 pages. The NT shows signs of attention or devotion to the blood of Jesus (cf. Lk 22,44; Jn 19,34), which is always associated to his violent, redeeming death (cf. esp. Mt 27,4.24-25). In the Biblical understanding, the soul or life of a person (or animal) is identical with or located in the blood. (Cf. Gen 9,4; Lev 17,11.14; Dtn 12,23.) The NT ascribes to the blood (and death) of Christ the power to stipulate the new covenant with God (Cf. Lk 22,20, 1 Cor 11,25), to purify the conscience of men from dead works, making them to serve the living God (cf. Heb 9,14); to sanctify (cf. Heb 13,12, 1 Jn 1,7), to give victory over the accuser (cf. Rev 12,11) and to put men right with God, granting salvation, the forgiveness of sins and the access to the Holy of Holies of the heavenly temple (cf. Mt 26,28; Rm 3,25; 5,9; Eph 1,7; Col 1,20; Heb 10,19; Rev 1,5), calling it the precious, indestructible prize that bought men out from a useless way of life (cf. 1 Ptr 1,18-19) to make them a kingdom and priests for God (cf. Rev 5,9-10). This insistence on the blood of Christ is a proof that in the death of Christ, salvation is not only revealed to reason, but it is historically happening. Cf. N. HOFFMANN, “Blut Christi II Systematisch-theologisch”, in *LThK* (1994) vol. 2, col. 536. In France, a miraculous “inventio” of the relic of the blood of Jesus, which was believed to have been entrusted to the sea by a son of S. Joseph of Arimathea and washed on the shore of the Normandy, made a Baron build the Benedictine Abbey of the Holy Trinity, Fécamp, in 658. Pilgrimages to the relic and devotion to it began in France and are still alive. In Mantova, Italy, a leaden box with blood was found in 804 in a miraculous “inventio”, and believed to be brought there by the soldier who pierced the side of Christ; after a time of war it was found a second time in Mantova and was solemnly elevated (i.e. put on an altar for veneration, which had the meaning of a recognition as authentic) by Pope S. Leo IX in 1048. The Pope carried a part of it to Rome, gave a part to the emperor Henry III and left a part in Mantova, where it was highly venerated in the time of the Renaissance. The part given to Henry III is reported to have been presented to the Benedictine Abbey of Weingarten (Germany) in 1090, where it triggered a fervent veneration which is still alive. Cf. G. M. CANTARELLA, *La reliquia del sangue di Cristo: Mantova, l'Italia e l'Europa al tempo di Leone IX*, Scripta, Verona 2012. In Belgium (In the city of Bruges is an alleged relic of the blood of Christ, brought from the Holy Land by a crusader in the 12<sup>th</sup> century), the veneration of the Precious Blood had its

Church in Nigeria, as it is propagated and developed by many lay people, priests and bishops. The Precious Blood is extolled mainly as purification from sins and as protection against evil machinations of bad people or the devil. Sometimes Christians with little theological education propose the invocation of this Blood, as if it were a superior surrogate for the protective charms of diviners.<sup>263</sup> The Blood of Jesus – shed for the salvation of immortal *souls* – is invoked to cover and protect the houses and properties of people, the roads on which they travel, and the engine of the bus they use. A deeper theological reflection on the meaning of the blood as equivalent of life is necessary. In this case, blood is the equivalent of Divine Life, a life which includes doing the will of God, carrying the cross and finding fulfilment in communion with God in heaven – here lies the difference to any charm. The Precious Blood comes from the pierced Heart of Love of Christ and leads the faithful back to that Heart/person.<sup>264</sup>

The concept of *prayer* has received a new direction by the proclamation of the Gospel, but little new content. The message that God is a God of Love, who cares for his children to the extent of dying for them in Christ, was happily embraced and cancelled the taboos that were against human dignity. Prayer needs no more the presence of the cola-nut, but thrives in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>265</sup>

Ejaculations and exclamations<sup>266</sup> are still used in any moment, testifying<sup>267</sup> that many people have God in their mind. Public confession of being “a sinner” and a request for forgiveness from God are often heard in Igboland, but as in pagan times, it sometimes serves to admonish those present and is not a real confession, with the person’s particular sin and contrition in mind. Well-

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peak in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. A. DÖRING, “Blut III Historisch”, in *LThK* (1994) vol. 2, col. 534. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Congregations were founded to propagate the devotion of the Precious Blood, e.g. the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, founded in 1815 by St. Gaspar del Bufalo (Italy). The main propagation for a devotion to the Precious Blood in the Catholic English speaking world today seems to come from Nigeria. The lay man Barnabas Nwoye, born 1978 in Olo, Enugu state, propagates an “Apostolate of the Precious Blood”, which has spread already to over 44 countries. He reports messages from Jesus, Mary and other saints, received between 1995-2003. Cf. <<http://www.preciousbloodinternational.com/home.html>>, seen on 6/2/2014.

<sup>263</sup> Such an abuse of sacred things and persons is nothing new. It is reported that e.g. some Spanish conquistadores of America did the same with Our Lady, carrying and using her image like a talisman. Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale. Il significato della Vergine per la società*, Queriniana, Brescia 2007, p. 209-210. Faith can have various levels, and it could be classified into three major levels: 1. the unchristian faith or magic thinking, believing that material things can carry curses or blessings (of a God or of an impersonal power). The attention is fixed on manipulating curses and blessings according to one’s will, carrying objects into someone’s house or removing them, and performing rites and ceremonies. 2. The immature faith of seeking mainly unilateral protection from God for a life planned and lived without permitting God to direct. 3. The mature faith of entrusting oneself ever more strongly to God, seeking his will without fearing for one’s own life. In all three cases, the person may carry sacramentals blessed by a priest, and pray many hours a day, but the heart is on very different levels on its way to God.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. M. G. MASCIARELLI, *Il cuore*, p. 134, discussing the apostolic letter *Inde a primis* (30/6/1960) of Pope John XXIII.

<sup>265</sup> After the first mission churches had no tabernacle at all because of the fear of a desecration (the consecrated hosts were conserved in a small chapel in the priest’s house), now more and more bishops and parish priests in Nigeria make sure that the Blessed Sacrament is continuously or often exposed for adoration in the church or a chapel (well secured with iron bars), where people can come for private adoration. Also in the closed tabernacles, Jesus is hardly left alone for a longer period of time, as people are coming and going to pay him a visit and to implore favours of a material or spiritual kind.

<sup>266</sup> Most Igbos have two names, an “English” name (name of a saint) and an Igbo name. The Igbo name is very often such an exclamation, as “God is good” (Chidimma), “God’s time is the best” (Ogechi), “God has done well” (Chiamaka), “God is king” (Chibueze) “the great God has done marvels” (Chukwuemeka).

<sup>267</sup> In Europe, some people are used to saying “My God!” or similar words very often, without thinking of God. When the author first met Igbo priests in Germany, and they said such, she thought they were doing like other persons she knew, but when she questioned them, they were astonished at the question, as it was a real invocation of God for them.



grounded Catholics have eliminated curses of other human beings from their prayers. The five petitions for long life, children, prosperity and health, peace and security, and justice, are still a main concern for the Igbo people and are entrusted to God in prayer. Even among Christians, intercessions at Mass are often formulated with many intentions in one intercession, and with lengthy introductions, sometimes containing admonitions and little sermons, showing more belief in the power of the word than in the power of God to change others. Sometimes, prayers manifest the pride of being a “prayer warrior” and the wish to see a tangible answer from God. The Pentecostal way of prayer strongly inculturated the traditional way of prayer into Christian language, without converting the fundamental view of the world as a spirit-controlled world, while the spirits, even the “Holy Spirit”, remain seen as controllable by human beings through rites and prayers. Catholics must be taught to keep aloof from this: the Holy Spirit is God and must be called in confidence and love, no creature must ever “command” Him, or “decree” his actions. The only “Pentecostal” features that may be used by Catholic preachers is the prophetic-hopeful expectation of the return of Jesus, and the charism of speaking in tongues,<sup>268</sup> i.e. characteristics present also in the Church of the Apostolic time. It must be emphasized that there are also many Igbos who know how to pray in humility, truth and love, praying for the will of God to be done and for the salvation of souls.

The fact that pagan Igbos were convinced of communications from their “Chi”, from spirits and ancestors, in dreams, voices and circumstances, made them ready believers of messages e.g. of Paray-le-Monial and Fatima. Christians of every denomination in Nigeria are bent on continuing to believe in directions from inner voices, dreams and visions. Thus, the clergy has a special responsibility in helping the faithful to discern true charisms and to evaluate their importance for the spiritual life of the faithful.

The above discussed success of messianic-prophetic sects in Nigeria pushed ahead a development of Catholic “healing ministries”: priests and Catholic lay people who use exorcisms, holy water and blessed olive oil, coupled with celebrations of the Holy Mass to pray for healing and deliverance (from bad spirits, curses and Ju-ju). They sometimes build up “healing centres”, places reserved for prayer and preaching, often owned by or donated to the “man of God” and apart from the parish facilities.<sup>269</sup> American Dominican priests brought the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to Nigeria, where “the Church’s hierarchy is understood as constituting the ‘Church’.” Many bishops

<sup>268</sup> Cf. P. NASO, “La sfida pentecostale”, in L. CARACCIOLO (ed.) *L’agenda di Papa Ratzinger*, L’Espresso, Roma 2005, p. 128-129. The author of the present work has personally heard the singing in tongues in Catholic Charismatic groups, which is very harmonious and meditative, creating an atmosphere of praise, and also the spiritually “empty” shouting in “tongues” in some non-Catholic prayer houses; she came to believe that many, who pretend to have this charism, just imitate what they heard from others. One African told her in fact, that a Pentecostal Christian wanted to teach him how to pray in tongues, asking him to imitate his shouting of senseless syllables.

<sup>269</sup> J. A. ASANBE, “Towards a systematic integration of the healing ministries/centres into the Church’s apostolate in Nigeria”, in *The Catholic voyage*, 5,1 (2008), p. 7. The author, professor of Canon Law in the highest Catholic university in Nigeria, CIWA (founded in 1994), points out in the following pages the positive aspects of such healing centres, the strengthening of devotion and commitment in both the visitors and the organizers of the centre, and narrates some errors which have occurred in this context. He suggests that bishops should appoint a board of governors for it, prescribe the mode of worship, control the incomes and take some “tax” from it, and then register it as a juridical body of the diocese. The centres should give a yearly report about healings and how they were accomplished, about the ministers and about finance. The bishop should punish disobedience. He should think of bringing doctors, psychiatrists and theologians to the centre, to cooperate with the faith-healer. It seems obvious that the execution of these suggestions must lead to the extinction of any charism and any movement, especially with the prescription of the mode of worship. Reports and money contributions to the bishops are very just, and it is the work of the bishop to discern a genuine charism and to ban those who pretend or pray in an erroneous way. But once a real charism is obvious, the bishop has to lead the person in great respect for his intuitions.

initially ignored the rapidly growing and spreading movement, and a new generation of “Catholic” charismatics proclaimed, that “after a false trail followed for two thousand years, the true Church, the Church of the Spirit, is now in the process of being born”. Ecclesiastical authorities, the sacraments and devotions to Mary were under attack. Where the Charismatic Renewal was welcomed instead and given a chaplain who would encourage the members who wished to remain faithful to Catholic ministers, sacraments and devotions, banning only some dissidents, the Renewal became a powerful force of evangelisation. Thus, the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of Nigeria in 1986 “directed each bishop to appoint a chaplain for the Renewal in his diocese.” In 1991 the Conference issued a booklet of guidelines for the Renewal, assigning it officially the quality “Catholic”.<sup>270</sup> In 1996 the Catholic bishops of Nigeria published a prudent, and not prohibitive, guideline of 4 pages for the discernment about healing ministries.<sup>271</sup> The guidelines point out the more frequent errors: spiritualistic enthusiasm without obedience to the ecclesiastical superior, wishing to solve every problem with prayer, assuming forms or signs of magic of the ancestral religion, and materialism.

#### **1.2.2.5. Inculturation in the laws guiding the family of faith and other aspects of culture**

Some differences from Europe can be noted in the ecclesiastical discipline. The Igbo *quest for wealth* is still conditioning the church and needs further evangelization. Some denounce that, even in assemblies of Christians, people listen only to those who are wealthy and known as donors, even if the wealth was acquired dishonestly or if the suggestions of the wealthy person are against the spirit of the Gospel.<sup>272</sup> The wish to pray for money is also a major reason for some to leave the Catholic Church, which talks more of praying for grace to reach heaven, encouraging the members to face the truth and to carry the cross of their life with generosity and hope in eternal reward.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> All about the Catholic Renewal with the quotations: cf. J. O. FANIRAN, “Charism and authority: a case study of the Charismatic Renewal in the Nigerian church”, in *The Nigerian Journal of Theology*, 7, 1(1993) 70-74.

<sup>271</sup> The bishops define the necessary faith as openness to God’s plan for the sick person, warning not to see demons where there is just a nervous disorder (while acknowledging the existence of demonic possession). They forbid the invention of new sacramentals in the name of inculturation, and remind the Catholic healing ministers that they must not concentrate on that charism as if all the sick must be healed, but as Jesus concentrated on preaching, while granting healing as a sign of his love, which cannot be separated from his message, they must put the proclamation of the kingdom of God at the centre. They must obey their pastors, have their permission and use the charism with discretion. They should receive special formation approved by the ecclesiastical authorities, cultivating the theological virtues, sobriety, humility, prayer and mortification. The recommended setting for a healing ministry is within centres of prayer; the prayer for healing can be within the Eucharistic celebration, but only in the Introductory Rite, at the end of the Liturgy of the Word and after the Post Communion Prayer. The exaltation of the minister is to be avoided, as well as any gesture of prayer suggesting magic. The bishops see forced “taking of oath” as harmful, like the undue raising of hope for a miracle. Material reward received from the faithful must be administered under the supervision and according to the norms of the ecclesiastical superior of the minister. Cf. P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 100-108.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. G. E. M. ADIBE, *The crisis of faith*, p. 110. Unfortunately, the power of money seems to condition also some native religious.

<sup>273</sup> A “pastor” of a non-Catholic Nigerian worshipping community in Rome was reported (to the author of this present research) to tell the people that they must each submit their complete wallets, with all the money they had with them, leaving it for him on the “altar”, if they wanted God to bless them. Famous is the request to pay the “tithes”, bringing one tenth of the income to the “pastor”. The Catholic Church has the serious obligation in Igbo land (and elsewhere?) to teach its seminarians and priests not to apply such methods of playing with the religiosity of the people but to exhort only to freewill donations.

Concerning the *importance of the land*, the Catholic Church (and the government) in Imo State permits that burials are being done in the compound of the family of the deceased, i.e. in his own land. The donation of land to the Church is counted as a great act of faith and especially praised. If land is sold, it has a high price.

The importance of *purity* has, of course, been accepted and also elevated according to Catholic morals. Missionaries and indigenous priests have inculcated in the people a greater attention to purity in the sense of faithfulness to a single wife/husband even if without children,<sup>274</sup> encouraging adoption of unwanted babies by barren couples, and to virginity for the Kingdom of God. The traditional importance of purity made the celibacy of priesthood and sisterhood very prestigious in Igboland, compensating for some of the disapproval of a life without children. As those who “professed” purity before were the elders and decision-makers, so today the clergy is immediately in a leading position among the Catholics, even in the presence of town authorities and governors. If a son of the family becomes a priest, his word and advice is regarded higher than that of the “Okpala” in Catholic families.

In the *structure of the parish society*,<sup>275</sup> the traditional society was imitated. Nowadays, the Church urges that all must be registered in a Catholic age/grade group: the catechism-groups and “Block Rosary” for children (assembling the children of one “block” or quarter of the village), the “Catholic Youth Organisation” for the unmarried, confirmed boys and girls,<sup>276</sup> in some places a “Mary League” for unmarried girls, the C.W.O. and the C.M.O., organisations for Catholic married women and men; pious societies with their activities of devotional prayers, charity, study and evangelisation replace the “secret societies”: there are societies as Sacred Heart, St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, Legion of Mary, Bishop Shanahan Society, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and Blessed Fr. Tansi Society; the group of “Knights of the Church” (for men of honour: membership is being conferred solemnly by the bishop, the wife becomes a “Lady”). Generally, the laity became much involved in the life of the parish: in parish councils, as leaders of the above mentioned organisations, and in many commissions (for the building of the parish church, for the organisation of a parish feast, ...)<sup>277</sup> The group laity involvement meant in Africa

«the adoption by the local Church of collective participation which was a dominant feature of African traditional religions. As a result, members of the local Church tended to group themselves into societies or associations, comparable to the age-sex-groups of traditional settings. [...] Activities such as preparing catechumens for baptism and other sacraments were carried out through such culture-based societies and associations. On Sundays, for example, members of various church societies and associations normally held meetings after the service during which detailed arrangements were often made to ensure group involvement in evangelical work. [...] As every member of the local Church is

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<sup>274</sup> Thus, in Igboland the Church was able to build up some conscience, that the first aim of marriage is not posterity, but the union of the couple in Christ, their testimony of love and fidelity, their well-being (cf. CIC, Can. 1055).

<sup>275</sup> Due to the many indigenous priests and the relative wealth of the Igbo society, in most cases the parish coincides with the town community, the community being able to sustain a priest. Thus, it was not necessary to plan for Small Christian Communities on the size of extended families, which see a priest only rarely and have to organize a spiritual life on their own, as patronized by J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity*, p. 317-319.

<sup>276</sup> This Youth organisation is well structured, plans and executes its activities, but it does not reach the standard of the spiritual Youth program of Fr. Matondo kwa Nzambi of Zaire in 1974, which accompanied the youths, with the help of elder members in a 7 years' program of retreats, initiations, solemn promises and 3 years apostolic commitment from confirmation to definite membership in the Small Christian Communities. The program, modelled on the traditional initiations, has its own rituals, rules, songs, secret terms, stories and symbols, available in 7 companion books. Cf. J. BAUR, *2000 years of Christianity*, p. 338.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. V. A. NWOSU, “The growth of the Catholic Church”, p. 45-46.

expected to be registered member of one of the church societies or groups, no one is left out to operate as an individual participant in the mission of the Church.»<sup>278</sup>

This involvement ended the mentality formed by the missionaries, that money for church buildings and gifts like rosaries and statues should be provided by the universal Church to the Church in Nigeria,<sup>279</sup> and that the white man will organize everything in the parish. The original African idea of communities contributing for their projects came back. The priest guides mainly by appointing those who are worthy and prepared to help in organizing and teaching others, especially those who are to carry out assignments of a certain pastoral responsibility. In pious lay organizations, the “officers” are generally democratically elected.

Many traditional initiations, stripped of their magic elements, continue side by side with the sacraments, according to the direction of *Nostra Aetate*<sup>280</sup>: the naming ceremony – without diviner and without offerings to the ancestors and individuation of the ancestor living in the child – will be done at home; when the child is a few days older and ready to be carried to church, baptism follows. Boys go to catechism and are initiated into masquerades, which are today mainly entertainment. Marriages are celebrated first as “traditional marriage” with its different steps of establishing a covenant between the two families (pagan elements have been removed from the rites) till the “wine-carrying ceremony”, then the “white marriage” in Church, usually during Sunday Mass. The Church in Imo State encourages their members to strive for “titles”, knowing that only those who live in a self-controlled and charitable way are admitted. Pagan elements in the initiation have been removed for Catholics. Normally, it is those honoured with Igbo titles and chieftaincies who also receive the title of a “Knight of St. Molumba” or similar honours in the Church.

On the *death* of a person, the tradition continues that there must be feasting and dancing. The Church permits it, seeing it as an anthropological/cultural aspect of seeking to prolong the family and social ties.<sup>281</sup> In Imo State, the Church was generally able to suppress the pagan elements as the offering of food to the deceased and ancestors, but prayers will be offered to God for them. The celebration helps the relations to live the time of bereavement in company with people, giving them opportunity to talk out some of their bitterness over the death and receiving consolation through the “funeral-orations” of friends. Many Igbo Catholics seem<sup>282</sup> to die in the grace of God, and the relations do not count the death of a good Catholic as a tragedy but proclaim a “transition into glory”<sup>283</sup>. In some people, the belief in “ino-uwa”, the coming back of a deceased to the world in connection with a new-born child, bears some pagan features of seeing this connection built on blood relationship as a presence which is bound to the body of the child and not as a relationship built on the grace of God and in terms of mere spiritual influence. The Igbos are also still very determined to be buried on their family land. In the case of a priest or bishop, he is buried in the cathedral compound, to underline that the person, with ordination, belongs to the

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<sup>278</sup> G. J. AFOLABI OJO, “Emergence of laity organizations in Nigeria”, in A. O. MAKOSI – G. J. AFOLABI OJO (ed.), *The history of the Catholic Church*, p. 73. These societies have become “powerful instruments of evangelization [...] through the relentless efforts of its members”. *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 72.

<sup>280</sup> ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965), n. 2, in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_declaration\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_declaration_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html)>.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. CDWDS, *Directory on popular piety and the liturgy*, (13/5/2002), n. 257.

<sup>282</sup> Zeal for God, prayer life, good morality, charity and readiness to help priests in the apostolate in the parish are very much alive in Nigeria and many persevere in it till the last moment.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. innumerable death announcements and funeral brochures in Nigeria.

Church and no longer to his family; a religious is buried in land belonging to his congregation. If lay people would be buried together near the church, it would emphasize the union of all parishioners even beyond death. It may be that the pagan categories of space and time applied to the deceased are still valid in the minds of many Christians. Evangelizers must continue to deepen the Christian understanding of the condition of the dead.

The Church fully upholds the great value of *life*, in line with the healthy Igbo tradition. But since Catholics were reported to commit abortion (and murder),<sup>284</sup> there is need to further stress that murder is not just against a command of God. The pagan idea of a “stream of life” emanating from God is something real also for a Christian. That “stream of life” is not supposed to be interrupted, there are children that are destined to be born. The Church does not teach immediate and immanent punishment of an offender. However, it teaches that the crime of abortion does not only cut off the person from the relationship with the Church, but potentially also from God and from eternal life. (Cf. CIC, Can. 1398) I. Dim counts the creation of the office of the exorcist in Africa as development growing out of the inculturation encouraged by Vatican II,<sup>285</sup> and it is certainly so, although it may appear strange to European eyes. To have an experienced exorcist in the diocese to protect the life of the faithful spiritually seems to be a need seen by both the faithful and objective pastors. The office of exorcist goes alongside with the “recognition of certain places as centres where healing can be experienced.”<sup>286</sup>

Christianity first compromised the pagan traditional *unity* of many families as different members chose different denominations, or some members remained pagan. The Church, of course, wishes to re-compose unity, but on the higher level of the whole Family of God, deepening it by giving it a new purpose. The aim is now not just the survival and the wealth of the community, but the salvation of all souls. It is in this aspect of inculturation that it is clearly seen that many Igbo have not yet grasped the spirit of the Gospel.<sup>287</sup>

The traditional battle for unity in a community used to involve the entire village; therefore, private dialogue for peace between an offended and the offender, as commanded by Jesus before bringing the case into public, (Cf. Mt 5,25; Mt 18,15-17; Lk 17,3-4), or immediate forgiveness (cf. Lk 23,34) has not yet succeeded in becoming part of the Igbo culture. It happens more typically that the offended will accuse the offender publicly, immediately engaging the family or the whole community in the case.<sup>288</sup> The Church stresses that unity cannot be achieved without forgiveness for the sake of God, battling to make its members cherish the joy of being merciful and patient. Pope Benedict XVI saw it as urgent that traditional rites of reconciliation in Africa, e.g. every cultural

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<sup>284</sup> It is seen that it was the fear of the community and the social pressure that prevented e.g. abortion in the olden time, without forming a solid conscience concerning the value of life (of others) as a gift from God. Cf. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 151.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. I. O. DIM, *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 288.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 288.

<sup>287</sup> Nigeria's bishops wrote in 2002 at Ibadan: “We know that Nigeria has been torn apart by ethnic conflicts which result in part from tribal discrimination and the son of the soil syndrome.” (This syndrome means that people accept as their leaders, including Church leaders, only persons born on their “soil”, i.e. from their village or region.) P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 50; cf. for the syndrome: *Ibidem*, p. 54.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 99: the need of the whole village as supreme judge for resolving personal problems with one other person is seen as not good, even in Africa. Thus, it belongs to the official promises in certain covenants, that a person in blood relationship or covenant bond cannot be denounced in public for any fault committed: it is supposed to be treated in the family. This brought about that in the religious life it can happen

ceremony with the cola-nut among Igbos, should be strongly linked in the mind of people with the celebration of sacramental confession,<sup>289</sup> which bases its efficacy on the mystery of Easter, so that unity and reconciliation will reign, not only among human beings, but also between human beings and God.

Concerning the unity among man and woman, Catholic bishops tried to abolish polygamy. The purpose of the abolition is to uplift the dignity of women and to make the education of the children a business more clearly faced by both parents together.<sup>290</sup> In Imo State, they succeeded on a large scale because women gained education equal to men, and children became less important as a guarantee for wealth as they had been in an agricultural society of ancient time.

Concerning polygamy, in areas where this is still a major problem for people who would like to join the Catholic Church, I want to make the following proposal: the status of “church-widow” of the ancient church could be introduced in the diocese, giving to good Catholic elder women who were married, and who live in continence, a special respect (cf. 1 Tim 5,3-16).<sup>291</sup> If a man who lives in polygamy requests baptism, the wives could be offered to choose between 1) leaving the man and marrying another man who is single. Of course, this solution has many obstacles in rural Africa, but it cannot be excluded a priori. It seems obvious that an eventual bride-prize has to be given back to her by the man, if the woman chooses to leave. 2) Becoming a “reverend widow”, living in continence and prayer, and taking care of her children. 3) One of them can choose to remain the only wife. 4) Choosing to live in the house of the man and promising to live in continence, but not wishing to take up the responsibilities of a “church-widow”. The discussion about what to choose should be done under the guidance of the priest or another socially able and honoured Catholic and eventually with more members of the extended family present, if they are Catholics. The decision should not be left to the man, who originally chose all of them, and who usually has only one solution: to take the youngest and to take care of the elder ones who have already had their children, and are thus expected to be satisfied. To leave the decision to the women could give some surprises, which may further the idea in Africa of man and woman forming a couple not only for the sake of children, but also for the spiritual benefit of an intimate union. Whoever chooses to become a “church-widow” and is recognized as such by the priest, should be taken care of by the father of her children in the name of the church and with respect of her decision. Once the children are grown up and are no longer in need of the mother, a “church-widow” should be acceptable in a religious congregation, if she has the desire to leave the house of the man and to be more closely united with Christ. The author hopes that the difficult process of making decisions will contribute in building an informed conscience in those concerned, a conscience that chooses in freedom what is good in the sight of God.

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that a sister covers bad actions of a fellow sister. It shows that the sister has not yet understood that the Congregation is her real family, in which problems have to be uncovered and treated, hopefully in a calm but serious way.

<sup>289</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae munus* (19/11/2011), n. 33.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. P. SCHINELLER (ed.), *The Church teaches*, p. 82-83: October 1960. As in other tribes all over Nigeria and Africa, even a number of already baptised Igbo men were living in polygamy. In 1997 in Orlu, the author met an elderly Catholic man with whom several women were living in the same compound. Only one was the officially retained wife; the other women, with the children he had from them before baptism, he continued to sustain financially.

<sup>291</sup> They can be given a uniform and front seats in the Church near the reverend sisters, and some assignments. In the ancient church, their main work was prayer and fasting. They can be sent by the priest to visit the sick and families in the homes and other places, to pray with people and to bring report to the priest about the situations that need his own attention. Those who are instructed may be asked to help in the work of education, especially catechism.

In Imo state, the traditional view that natural barrenness is a cause of shame is in the process of being suppressed, and Catholic women in Nigeria are freer today to live a partnership with the man with equal dignity and rights. The Western cry for opening the Catholic priesthood to women has also reached the ears of Nigerians and caused them to reflect on it. The Igbo Mother Abbess of the Benedictine Paschal Abbey, Nike, Enugu, shall be quoted here on the topic, as her reflection is probably acceptable to most Nigerian Catholics:

«Christ's purpose in instituting the Eucharist is to purchase us by His Blood. He is the Groom, we the purchased become His bride. All souls are feminine, men and women alike. Christ assumes the duty of a Groom immediately to nourish and look after His bride. While he is physically absent, He wants His servants and ministers whom He also called His friends to look after His bride in memory of Him, till He comes back. 'Son behold your mother.' So it falls to male counterpart to take up this duty. Women have their own leading Character, dignity, and specific vocation. They are the centre of human existence, symbol of dwelling and interiority which alone makes a home possible, proximity to the mystery of life and its hidden purpose. [...] That is why the Church is symbolized by women. The Church is a mystery of interior life. She is the Tabernacle where creatures are at home with God and dwell together like brethren. She is a place of intimacy and love of the Trinity. [...] The Church as *Corpus Christi*, is one with Christ. Women as virgin, bride and mother is symbol of the Church.<sup>292</sup> Mystically she can say 'This is My Body, this is my Blood' but not in the way the ordained priest would. The ordained priest exists for the sake of the holiness and perfection of the Church. What women symbolise gives its final fulfilment to the ordained priesthood. [...] So sexual difference enters in the symbolic representation of the relation between Christ and His Church. This very symbolism is expressed in the Eucharistic celebration. Therefore only a male can act in the person of Christ in this regard. [...] As far as incarnation is concerned, no man has a right to say this is my body, this is my blood. Therefore it needed the power to be given the[m] through the sacrament of Holy Orders. Mary has no need of ordination so as to claim what in reality she possessed and that existed before the institution of the sacrament. [...] In Mary, what woman produced physically, Jesus granted it to men by power in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. For the woman it is a physical reality, for man it is a sacramental reality. [...] We do not need to be ministers in order to be transformed into this reality. [...] I would say it is a display of inferiority complex if we think that we need ministerial priesthood to raise women's status. Many women have been influenced by male ideals of exteriority and efficiency [...]. It is praiseworthy for women to continue to demand their rightful equality with men. But to make this equality to men to be indistinguishable from men is cheating humanity.»<sup>293</sup>

The abbess refuses the idea of ministerial priesthood for women. According to her, priests gain intimacy with the Mystery by ministering to it sacramentally; women who seek intimacy with the Mystery find it on the physical-mystical way (which includes the reception of the sacraments) which is more proper for them.

<sup>292</sup> This idea that the Christian soul and the Church as a whole are woman, mother and virgin before God, comes e.g. from MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Orationis Dominicae brevis expositio*, in PG 90, 889A, several times dwelt on by H. U. von Balthasar.

<sup>293</sup> M. C. ANYANWU, *The pride of womanhood*, Snaap, Enugu 1998, p. 62-63, 90-97. Any observed mistake in grammar and writing is in the original. The quoted work speaks of "bride" of Christ in relation to the Church, and also the present work speaks of being "spouse" or "bride" of God or Christ – either in relation to any human being, to the people of God as a whole, to all mankind or to Mary (thus portraying her role as type and model of the Church and positive realisation of the relationship of any human being with God). The word "spouse" is used here in a figurative sense, alluding to the human experience of spousal love. The relationship of love with God is holistic and self-giving for a lifetime for the project of the Reign of God on earth, involving, in the experiences at prayer (cf. sub-chapter 2.3.2.) and in the struggle for growth in virtue the human body and soul, will and affection, reason and memory, time and energy, capacities and limits. The human experience of spousal love in its traditional meaning of a certain self-giving to build a common project of life (family) is an expressive image. However, there is the great difference that human marriage can be consumed on earth and can bear its fruit visibly in a growing family, while the espousal with God remains an "already – not yet", an experience that always keeps the faithful in the situation of desire for a final union and the hope to be able to do more for the Reign of God.

Customs around celebrations in Imo state, religious or any other other kind, are still underdeveloped. Popular customs distinguish e.g. the celebration of Easter from the celebration of birthday and add colour to a feast. E.g. in the Western world, the customs around the egg (as sign of life hidden in what is lifeless) on Easter distinguishes this feast from others. A particular African custom attached to a particular Christian feast does not yet exist in Igboland.

Much work of inculturation in various areas remains to be done to attract and unite all the indigenous in a Christian Igbo culture in union with all other parts of the Catholic Church.

### **1.2.3. The German ecclesiastical context**

The “Catholic Church in Germany” shall be looked at here, beginning with the end of the Vatican Council II, considering the effects of the same Council, current philosophical thinking and reigning policies, for the spirituality and life of the faithful. Vatican II officially began the dialogue with the “modern thinking”, which became unavoidable, but which brought about in Germany till today a division between those who want the Church to adopt many modern ideas, in structure, liturgy, pastoral work and aims, and those who see the validity of the traditional ecclesial structure, liturgy, pastoral actions and aims and accept to change only wordings, style, music, architecture and ornaments, in order to draw contemporaries to God.

The Catholic Church in Germany has 27 dioceses in 7 provinces (since 1989). It grew from 1960 to 1970 from 25,7 million to 27,2 million members. In 1968, the students’ revolution took place and a general refusal of traditional values and councils for life, with the double effect of Catholics declaring that they are leaving the Church and the birth-rate declining drastically: from 1.240.000 children in 1960 to 650.000 in 2011 (of which many children of Moslemic families).<sup>294</sup> Despite the German union in 1989, roughly adding 2 million Catholics, in 2011, they counted only 24.5 million, of which roughly 5 million were immigrants (or children of immigrants) and 124.500 were religious or members of spiritual families. Of these 24.5 million baptised Catholics, only 12.3% (3 million) went to Mass on ordinary Sundays. (Christians of other denominations were 25.6 million in 2011, the Moslems were 4 million in Germany in 2009.) Parishes reduced from 1990 to 2011 from 13.313 to 11.398, and priests in the same years from 19.707 to 14.847<sup>295</sup>, of which 2010

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<sup>294</sup> Historians are generally unanimous in calling the time in Germany of ca. 1958-1973, with its peak of 1968, as a phase of socio-cultural change. Public opinion became critical against traditional norms and against authoritarian actions of the government. Youths followed a pop culture and accepted the neo-marxistic theory of Wilhelm Reich, that the capitalistic society is based on a repression of sexual desires. The abortive pill was introduced 1961, which dissolved the natural union of sexuality and procreation (together with other contraceptives). The birth-rate was going down since 1900, but the decline accelerated in the sixties. The Mass-media treated the theme of sexuality broadly. A discussion on the relationship of traditional norm and reality was unleashed, in which Catholics criticized that “facts” were turned into norms of what should be: not bringing a sexual liberation, but bringing men under the yoke of ‘scientific classification of human behaviour’. Changes were visible also among Catholic German students. Their Journal, since 1960, no longer published Episcopal documents, but treated themes as racism in the U.S. or criticized Ecclesial realities. Fighting and discussion became acceptable; pluralism was sought, trying to overcome a mere theological perception of political, educational or scientific realities. The society as a whole reduced the use of terms as “Volk” (people) and “Gemeinschaft” (community), replaced by “Gesellschaft” (society), a change in which sociologists saw a proof of a shift in perceiving the reality. Pastoral programs aimed at being based on a sober analysis of social structures. Cf. B. ZIEMANN, “Die sechziger Jahre als kulturelle Umbruchzeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland”, in *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 64 (2013) 317-323.

<sup>295</sup> With an average of 550 priests per diocese, Germany seems still much better than Orlu with its 240 priests, but most priests in Germany are already very aged, and the seminarians are few: even Passau had in 2011 only 27.



there were 1.711 foreign priests, especially Indians and Polish priests. In 2011, there were 4.699 women (mostly not religious) performing pastoral services in the dioceses. There are strong local differences: in the diocese of Passau 89% of all inhabitants are Catholic, in Regensburg they are 71%. In the eastern dioceses of Magdeburg and of Dresden-Meißen with its large numbers of Protestants and people who do not confess any religion, they are 3%. Every year tens of thousand declare they are leaving the Catholic Church, thus evading the tax which the German government receives and devolves to the Church. In 2005, the year of the election of the German pope, the numbers went down visibly, later rising again. The German Bishops' Conference published the following figures for recent years:<sup>296</sup>

<b>Catholic Church in Germany</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2011</b>
Newly baptised	186.000	179.000	169.599 <sup>297</sup>
Non-Cath. Christians became Cath.	4.388	4.009	?
Former Catholics re-enrolled	9.500	8.600	7.163
Catholics left the Church	more than 121.000	more than 123.500 <sup>298</sup>	almost 126.500
Catholic funerals	?	?	247.762
% of Catholics in Germany	30,7%	30,5%	30,2%

As everywhere in Europe, the Church in Germany encounters financial problems, feeling the need of mission in one's area, lacking the tax of those who left, no longer being able to sustain all the parishes, social and charitable works built up in the past.<sup>299</sup> The decline of the Church in Germany announced itself early: in 1972 the synod of the German dioceses discussed an opinion-poll on faith among the German citizens.<sup>300</sup> Of those who go to Mass regularly on Sundays, 23% stated they were *not* a believing member of the Church, nor did they accept its teaching. Among

<sup>296</sup> Cf. the German Bishops' Conference in <<http://www.dbk.de>>, seen on 7/2/2013. Under "Zahlen und Fakten" the booklet *Katholische Kirche in Deutschland – Zahlen und Fakten 2011/12*, Bonn 2012, can be downloaded. Here pages 2-17 were used. The numbers for 2008 and 2009 were issued by the SECRETARIAT OF THE GERMAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE, <<http://www.dbk.de/katholische-kirche.html>>, on the front page, seen on 5/5/2010, and are no longer available there. The numbers for 2011 cf. <<http://www.dbk.de>>, *Katholische Kirche in Deutschland – Zahlen und Fakten 2011/12*, p. 2-17.

<sup>297</sup> Of the newly baptised, 3.013 were adults: over 14 years.

<sup>298</sup> In 2010, it rose to 180.000 cases, because of the scandal of sex-abuse of children.

<sup>299</sup> The closing of charitable institutions is also due to the lack of young religious. In some Congregations in Germany, more than 85% of the members are above 65 years old. Cf. A. HERZIG – D. MEIER, "Gebt Zeugnis von der Hoffnung, die euch erfüllt (1 Petr 3,15) – Ordensleben in Übergängen. Ein Gespräch", in *Ordenskorrespondenz* 52 (2011) 273.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. B. ZIEMANN, "Die sechziger Jahre als kulturelle Umbruchszeit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland", in *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 64 (2013) 323: the synod was to discuss putting into practice the Vatican II documents in Germany. At the beginning and at the centre of the preparation of the synod was the so-called "Synodenumfrage", an opinion poll among Catholics above 16 years with a questionnaire written mainly by the "Allenbacher Institut für Demoskopie". Ziemann commented that determining the expectations of the faithful was an important part of the discussion on the putting the Vatican II Council into pastoral action in Germany.

those of 16-20 years the percentage was 58%.<sup>301</sup> A young bishop concluded that the problem lies with the Church and saw this as the main points of criticism:

1) that the Church identifies too much with traditional opinions, norms and forms of piety. He suggested saving only the main principles.

2) That the Church, especially the Pope (Paul VI) is immovable in questions of contraception and the bond of matrimony. He called for a deeper understanding of sexuality within and without matrimony.

3) That the Church has not been able to demonstrate the congruity between faith and knowledge of modern sciences. He saw a lot of work for pastoral workers in this field.<sup>302</sup>

This sub-chapter will analyse how these principles were put into practice in Germany, especially in the fields of liturgy, ecumenism and dialogue with rationalism, how the faithful reacted and how the faith was being lived in homes and parishes, where devotion and faith are being transmitted to new generations.

### **1.2.3.1. The liturgical reform of Vatican II in Germany**

Churches built in Germany after the Council are usually not high cathedrals, but quite simple halls, or “parish centres” with a multifunctional church hall and other smaller assembly rooms. The community of parishioners with their various social activities and, among others, their liturgical assemblies, was at the centre of attention.<sup>303</sup> The feeling of guilt and shame, after the horrors of the Hitler regime became public and their effort to found a nationalistic (triumphalistic) “German Church”, may have also influenced and destroyed any triumphalism in the people and in the Catholic Church in Germany. The post-Second World War German Catholic world was marked by spiritual sobriety and charitable activity, soon diminished by capitalism and materialism which became common in society in general. The materialistic capitalism made everything to be calculated, scientifically tested, and everything which was useless for its purposes, was removed. This determined the way how many clerics and lay people looked at devotions and some sacred art works.

According to Lameri, some liturgists (beginning before Vatican II) devalued the rites used in liturgy as “empty ceremonies”. The Vatican Council encouraged rituals as the proper “language” for the mystery and for liturgy (cf. SC, 48).<sup>304</sup> The liturgical reform - where it was put into practice

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<sup>301</sup> G. SCHMIDTCHEN, “Rückblick auf das Symposium über Kirche und Gesellschaft“, in K. FORSTER (ed.), *Befragte Katholiken. Zur Zukunft von Glaube und Kirche*, Herder, Freiburg 1973, p. 274. Those younger than 16 years were not included in the poll.

<sup>302</sup> K. LEHMANN, “Konflikte und Chancen in Glaubensverständnis und Verkündigung“, *Ibidem*, p. 52-53. It can be seen that the expectations of the faithful that were being considered brought about the conclusion that the Church had to adapt to the weakness of the faithful, cancelling the fundamental statement of Vatican II that all are called to holiness (cf. LG 39-42).

<sup>303</sup> Cf. LITURGISCHE KOMMISSION DER DEUTSCHEN BISCHOFSKONFERENZ, Dokument 26 (14/2/2003), “Räume der Stille - Gedanken zur Bewahrung eines bedrohten Gutes in unseren Kirchen”, p. 13. (In German in <[http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/veroeffentlichungen/kommissionen/KO\\_026.txt](http://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/veroeffentlichungen/kommissionen/KO_026.txt)>, seen on 9/11/2011). The Liturgical Commission, headed by Card. Meisner, encouraged parishes with such “halls” to invest energy and money, in order to create a sacred building, a beautiful building which would facilitate not only the encounter with each other, but also with God. What is ugly and disturbing to the eye, in its colours or forms should be removed from the church. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 13, 16. (Translation by the author.)

<sup>304</sup> Cf. A. LAMERI, “A 40 anni dalla SC”, in *Liturgia* 38/6 (2004) 53.

in the limits set by Vatican Council II<sup>305</sup> - helped many to live the mass more actively (e.g. by participating in a youth choir, or as a lay reader) and with clearer understanding (by allowing the celebration of Holy Mass in the vernacular). But in some areas, “modern-minded” Catholics used SC as an argument to obstruct the exercise of devotions in the parish, over-stressing the importance of liturgy, and at the same time cancelling the importance of rituals and rubrics of the liturgy: the liturgical celebration became an experimental field of prayer experiences. A systematic desecralisation<sup>306</sup> took place, seen as the removal of altar rails and the obligation to kneel for Holy Communion, or the demolition of statues, especially those connected with wide-spread devotions which seemed to “modern” Catholics as no longer fitting.<sup>307</sup> Some people secured statues in their private houses and continued kneeling for Holy Communion even without the altar rail. In some parishes, then, Holy Communion was refused to those who knelt down to receive Him, with the accusation of fundamentalism.<sup>308</sup> Parish priests who did such cannot be condemned, as generally the value and the justification of even Eucharistic adoration was discussed critically by theologians and clerics during the time of liturgical renewal. They pointed out the shift of the centre of gravitation from the former piety of adoration (called the “middle-age piety of watching”) to the new spirituality, in which the active celebration of the Holy Mass (called a ‘process’ and an ‘event’)<sup>309</sup> and the weekly or daily reception of Holy Communion are at the centre.<sup>310</sup> In the years

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<sup>305</sup> Bishop Walter MIXA criticised that for a long time many priests who were experimenting freely with the liturgy tried to organize religious “happenings”. He sees here a reason why many faithful quietly left the Church. Cf. “Das Konzil authentisch leben”, in *Kirche heute* 12,12 (2005) 6. The Vatican Council did not mean, e.g., to eliminate the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, but rather stressed its basic intention: to put the life and the humanity of Christ at the centre of faith. Cf. DV 2, 4.

<sup>306</sup> This is the expression used by the French Bishop Marc AILLET, in p. 1 of his speech “La liturgia ferita”, in the theological convention at the Pontifical University Lateranense, 11<sup>th</sup>-12 March 2010, published in <[http://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2010-03/12-13/Aillet\\_it.html](http://www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2010-03/12-13/Aillet_it.html)>, seen on 2/11/2011.

<sup>307</sup> Looking back to that time, the LITURGISCHE KOMMISSION DER DEUTSCHEN BISCHOFSSKONFERENZ wrote in “Räume der Stille”, p. 8, 10, that with the liturgical reform after the Council “cult” and “cultic” actions were looked at as something strange, as it could be seen as a magic action, and as many did not understand the sense in it. Then the document explains in a full page the importance of images for the prayer life of the faithful and concludes that some of the valuable images, which were lost in the “storm against the images” in the time after the Council, should be brought out again. Apart from that, it should be checked whether in every church there is ‘an image of the Lord, a Crucifix, images of the Mother of God and the saints, which - no matter the time they were created and their artistic value – make it possible and invite the faithful to experience the presence of the saint in awe-filled silence, in order to be able to pray there.’ (Translation by the author.)

<sup>308</sup> E.g. in the parish of St. Joseph, Erlenbach am Main, Holy Communion was refused for some time to some women who were convinced that Mons. Lefebvre was acting right in condemning Vatican Council II - until he broke with the Catholic Church and was excommunicated in 1988. These women remained Catholic. Concerning the still hot debate around hand and mouth communion around 1985, cf. J. KLEIN, *Heute Kirche bauen*, Klein und Hiese, Kingenberg 1998, p. 437-441.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. the gentle teaching of priests as Joseph Klein, parish priest of the diocese of Mainz, who was very active in assembling German songs for what became the Catholic Hymn book for all dioceses (till 2013), calling together Heinrich Rohr and the Thumair couple to create new songs. Concerning the altar, in line with the leading liturgists of his time, he teaches: ‘The altar is a table. [...] A table rallies people around itself, so that they may, 1. eat and live from the presented meal, 2. thus, know each other and be happy, 3. share what they have at their disposal.’ *Ibidem*, p. 49, also p. 861. (Translation by the author.) In a church, of which he himself supervised the erection, the altar is in the centre of a round of several round circles of benches; the tabernacle is between the seats for priests and mass servers on one side, and the benches for lectors and choir on the other; the organist sits behind it. He further emphasizes that the concentration on the tabernacle already at the beginning of Mass could cause people to overlook the presence of the Lord in the assembly and in the Word. (p. 867) On p. 869, he narrates how it was planned to build the tabernacle in a side chapel, in order to promote private adoration, but the faithful requested to have it in the main church. Father Klein was a Marian priest who cherished Eucharistic adoration, and his statements can be understood correctly only if it is seen that before, the altar was over-stressed as the place for the sacrifice before God. After the Vatican Council II, the other side of the truth was over-stressed by some clerics and theologians, and caused confusion in the people of God

after the Council, the faith of the Church in both the Divinity of the historical Christ and in the Eucharist has been topic of question and doubt.<sup>311</sup> Some people thought that the active (and outward) participation of all in the Mass, where all share in the one bread, is the essential element which gives growth to the Kingdom of God, falling into a sort of deism and activism, while accepting Christ only as a holy man and prophet, but denying him the relationship of *owning* and guiding the faithful as members of his own body.<sup>312</sup> They wished to distribute and receive the Holy Eucharist and to see consistent changes in the liturgy,<sup>313</sup> to make it more “lively”. Confession, this great gift of God to have the opportunity to talk out all one’s failures in private, receiving the sure promise of forgiveness, was largely seen as unnecessary, especially if there were many people who wanted to receive absolution at the same time<sup>314</sup>. As Mary played a role in the South American

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and in the same clerics who searched for some years for the right words and expressions in liturgy and dogmatics. Cf. the whole book of Fr. Klein, in his narration on his evolving thoughts and declarations from the Church leaders. (On p. 728-729 he asks whether hell exists; he believes that the condemned live in the same “place” as angels and saints, only that they are very unhappy to be there.)

<sup>310</sup> It was said: ‘the Eucharist is basically food, not an object for exposition.’ Thus, it was neglected that the Eucharistic Bread is Jesus, who communicates with the faithful both in being eaten and in being prayed to and looked at, cf. Jn 8,28; 19,37. Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, „Verehrung des Allerheiligsten“, in IDEM, *Klarstellungen*, Herder, Freiburg 1971, p. 111.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. “Der Wert und auch die Berechtigung von eucharistischer Anbetung und Verehrung wurden im Zuge der liturgischen Erneuerung zuweilen kritisch hinterfragt. Mit Recht wird auf die durch die Liturgiereform vorgenommene Schwerpunktverlagerung von einer ehemals vorherrschenden Anbetungsfrömmigkeit hin zu einer Spiritualität verwiesen, in deren Zentrum die lebendige Mitfeier der Messe und der häufige Kommunionempfang stehen. [...] In den bewegte Jahren nach dem Konzil wurde auch der Eucharistieglaube der Kirche angefragt, ja angezweifelt.“ LITURGISCHE KOMMISSION DER DEUTSCHEN BISCHOFSKONFERENZ, Dokument 26 (14/2/2003), “Räume der Stille“, p. 11. On the same page, the Liturgical Commission continued that today it is well understood that Eucharistic adoration helps the faithful to participate more actively and consciously in the Holy Mass. In this crisis of faith in the godhead of Jesus, Mary was intimately involved, with a parallel crisis of Mariology and Marian devotion. In Germany (equally in Europe), there was e.g. no Mariological publication specifically on the devotion of the Immaculate Heart after 1964 (a translation of a French work) until the Marian year 1987 (outside Germany some years earlier). Cf. M. HAUKE, “Geschichtliche und systematische Grundlinien“, p. 10-12.

<sup>312</sup> Pope Benedict XVI (as pope, and already as Cardinal) struggled a lot to counteract this doubt, which was/is not restricted to the faithful in Germany. Cf. E. GUERRIERO, „Benedetto XVI“, in E. GUERRIERO – M. IMPAGLIAZZO (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa XXVI. I Cattolici e le Chiese Cristiane durante il pontificato di Giovanni Paolo II (1978-2005)*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2006, p. 321: “La preoccupazione di Ratzinger, espressa nella prefazione a *In cammino verso Gesù Cristo*, è la diffusione, anche nel popolo credente, di un accostamento riduttivo a Cristo a partire dall’esegesi storico-critica. Cristo [...] ha solo un legame affettivo-sentimentale con il credente d’oggi.” (Of course, it is not Christ who has only a sentimental relationship with the faithful of today, but many faithful have only such a relationship with Christ.) J. RATZINGER stressed in *Introduzione allo spirito della liturgia*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2001, p. 169, the importance not of the active participation of the people in the liturgy, but of the fact that it is God himself who acts and does the essential part.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. the comment of A. DILLON, “Klarstellung aus Rom”, in *Kirche heute* 5,1 (1998) 10-11, and also the article of assistant bishop A. LAUN, “Laie, erkenne Deine Würde!” in the same magazine, p. 8-9, after the Roman Instruction on some questions on the collaboration of lay people in the priestly service of November 1997. They name some abuses, as lay people presenting the homily in the presence of priests, which are called “prophetic” and “theological correct” by the “modern” Catholics. LAUN, in his article “Brauchen wir eine ‘Reform der Reform’ in der Liturgie?“, in *Kirche heute* 12,12 (2005) 9-10, observes also other serious abuses in the liturgy, as sharing Holy Communion to (publicly known) non-Christians, calling lay people (pastoral assistants, Protestant pastors or the whole community) to concelebrate by joining in saying the consecration words, reading any story instead of the gospel, sharing unconsecrated particles to little children for them to play with it.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. J. KLEIN, *Heute Kirche bauen*, p. 418-426. The parish priest Klein was thinking of many people coming for a rather devotional confession before a feast. He suggested a common penitential service and general absolution at the end. Thus, one may discourage a person among the multitude who would have been ready to confess in private a mortal sin. In the case of a common, public fault of the whole group, and if there is no grave matter but only venial sin, general absolution is of course possible.

theology of liberation, with which many “modern” (German) Catholics feel in solidarity,<sup>315</sup> a certain Marian devotion can be found among them, especially by honouring Mary’s song of praise of the Saviour, singing the “Magnificat” for change. It is more difficult to find among them a song or prayer directed to Mary or praising God for her. The wish for change led to the “Kirchenvolksbegehren” - “We are the Church!”<sup>316</sup>

On the other hand, the “conservatives”, who usually profess fidelity to the Pope and conserve the traditional Eucharistic-Marian spirituality and liturgy, can be diverted in three ways: some could be called “ritualists”, who need rituals in their life in order to feel comfortable. Some are attached to Mons. Lefebvre († 1991), with his rejection of the Vatican Council II as “satanic”, falling into a fundamentalist attitude.<sup>317</sup> Some are diverted by exaggerated attention to supernatural phenomena or by evaluation of the messages of a (dubious or true) “apparition” higher than the directions of the competent clergy, also in issues of liturgy.<sup>318</sup> This research will come back to the theme of supernatural experiences in the sub-chapters 1.2.3.4. (influence of apparitions on Catholics in Germany) and 2.5.2. (experience of prayer).

### 1.2.3.2. German ecumenism and facing the “gender mainstreaming”

<sup>315</sup> Surely the important aspect for these German Catholics in the theology of liberation is not the Marxist theory, but the mere opposition against social structures, including ecclesiastical structures. Cf. the article of a former missionary in Brazil, P. Augustinus DIEKMANN OFM, since 2004 director of the Franciscan Mission in Dortmund, in which he hopes that Pope Francis will make the theology of liberation a major point of his agenda, and undertake steps for a “courageous democratization of our Church”. “Franziskus von Rom”, in *Ordenskorrespondenz*, 54(2013)166-167.

<sup>316</sup> The “Kirchenvolksbegehren” (petition for a referendum within the Church) began September/November 1995 in Austria, and came successively to Germany. The five requests, under headings of very reasonable sounding petitions, were proposing a complete uprooting of the present structure and life of the Church: (1) ‘a fraternal Church’: giving to lay people the right to collaborate in the choice of the diocesan bishops, i.e. doing democratic elections, and also a possibility to correct the hierarchy in questions of doctrine. (2) ‘Equal rights for women’: more women in ecclesiastic institutions, and ordination of women as deacons and priests. (3) Free choice for priests between celibate life and married life. (4) ‘Positive understanding of sexuality’: the “responsible decision by conscience” is understood as a free decision, in which the laws of God and the laws of the Church are only “helps”, but everybody has to accept the final decision of others, it cannot be criticised as erroneous. There is also the request that the magisterium should stop being fixed on moral matters, but rather talk about peace, social justice and the protection of the creation. (5) “Good news” instead of “Threatening news”: i.e. the Church should allow all divorced and re-married people to receive Holy Communion. This is how the auxiliary bishop of Salzburg, A. LAUN, who studied the requests from the writings of the initiators, presents (and rejects) it in “Das Kirchenvolksbegehren - eine kritische Stellungnahme”, in *Kirche heute* 3,1 (1996), 8-17.

<sup>317</sup> Lefebvre, born 1905 in France, joined the Spiritan Fathers and went to Senegal as a missionary, where he became the first archbishop of Dakar (1955-62). Back in France, he became the Superior General of his Congregation till 1968, and participated with fierce criticism in the Vatican Council II. Contested by French bishops and priests of his congregation, he abandoned the Spiritan Fathers in 1968. In 1970 he founded the Society of S. Pius X and opened a seminary for traditionalists, teaching the need of the categorical refusal of Vatican II. The Vatican made repeated attempts to reconcile him with the Church, being ready to permit the Tridentine Mass and the continuation of the seminary, if he could accept the validity of the new Ordo and show obedience to orders from the pope. He did not consent, and in 1976 he was suspended “a divinis”. In 1988 he was excommunicated after the ordination of four bishops. Cf. W. D. DINGES, “Lefebvre, Marcel”, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 18, p. 239-242.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und “Wunderglaube”*, p. 77-79. This is wrong; direction of the pastors must be followed first, even if it is contrary to the divine message received, because the virtue of humility and obedience to the hierarchy is one of the criteria the Church uses to accept or refuse an apparition the seer was called to make known to the Church. Cf. CDF, *Normae S. Congregationis pro Doctrina Fidei de modo procedendi in iudicandis praesumptis apparitionibus ac revelationibus*, of 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1978, under chapter I. A) b) 1., published in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19780225\\_norme-apparizioni\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19780225_norme-apparizioni_en.html)>, seen on 15/11/2013. However, in questions of personal piety, the clergy has no right to limit the faithful.

After the Second World War, the Catholic Church in Germany received new members: the Germans driven away from their houses in Silesia, Cheb and Bohemia, where they were living on lands now belonging to Poland and Czech Republic. It gave the Church a positive experience of hospitality. With all the changes in post-war Germany, the experience of the Second Vatican Council opened further horizons, and the ecumenical dialogue and ecumenical prayers became very normal in many places, and brought fruits of friendships.<sup>319</sup> The Lutheran communion (who has no essential difference between the laity and the pastors leading the flock) began 1958 in Lübeck to appoint women as pastors. In 1991 the last German “Landeskirche” (part of the German Lutheran communion, similar to a diocese) followed, in acceptance of the requests of a certain feminist theology. As this is one of the few possibilities for Protestant women to dedicate themselves completely to God and prayer, many German women began to aspire to the possibility of being a “pastor”.<sup>320</sup>

Additionally, in the society, the “gender mainstreaming” came up, the (American-) European policy of teaching all citizens that it is a human right for each person to choose his/her sex and his/her sexual orientation.<sup>321</sup> This was combined for many with seeing the biological and psychological, anthropological, social, and theological differences between man and woman as being historically conditioned, leading to the idea of a practical complete equality of man and woman.<sup>322</sup> In heaven, all are one in the Son, (cf. Gal 3,28), in a glorified body, in which the different sex probably does not matter again (cf. Mt 22,30; Mk 12,25; Lk 20,35). But in the earthly

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<sup>319</sup> In Mariology, however, the ecumenical attention brought about first of all a reduction. Cf. J. G. ROTEN, “The theological and cultural image of Mary in German-speaking countries”, in E. PERETTO (ed.), *L’immagine teologica di Maria*, p. 114-115, 119: the German bishops issued 1979 a pastoral letter on Mary [SECRETARIAT DER DEUTSCHEN BISCHOFSSKONFERENZ (ed.), *Maria, die Mutter des Herrn* (27/5/1979)], was characterized by J. Roten as “very lean Mariology. The ecumenical concern is apparent, and one can perceive a certain self-restrictive tendency.”

<sup>320</sup> With their female dedication and sensibility, many female Protestant pastors are doing very wonderful work of teaching their flock to pray and to live holy lives. It shall be stressed that they are not representing Christ sacramentally. Also, in the Catholic Church, women who were called into functions of counselling and teaching (outside the liturgical assemblies, in a context of communion of life), can be and are a great help.

<sup>321</sup> The concept of “gender” (lat. “genus”) was first used in the United States. In 1968 the American psychoanalyst Robert Stoller postulated that there is no real correspondence between the cultural-socially assumed-learned gender (masculine/feminine) and the biologically given sex (man/woman). This was taken up in Europe, e.g. by the British sociologist Ann OAKLEY in *Sex, Gender and the Society*, Smith, London 1972, p. 16. Cf. M. BINASCO, “Gender: una questione di Civiltà”, in *Rivista Teologica di Lugano* 19 (2014) 195-232, and V. PACILLO, “Diritto, orientamento sessuale, identità di genere: riflessioni e profili di comparazione a partire dall’ordinamento giuridico italiano”, in *Rivista Teologica di Lugano* 19 (2014) 257-273. The worst aspect of the theory of gender is the teaching that little children should have experience of sex, while every victim of child abuse knows the tremendous psychological damages which are caused by such an experience. Sex is a positive experience only for those who are able to live it responsibly, as a means to unite permanently in a couple ready to receive children.

<sup>322</sup> Feminists and sociologists of the “gender” are divided in two currents. Some use the “gender” theory to deny any difference between man and woman, wishing to eradicate any practice founded on “cultural stereotypes” as “mother” or “father”; others exhort women to insist on their specificity in the society. The first current has become powerful in public life in Germany and elsewhere, under the name “gender mainstreaming”. Since 1999 the same has become the guiding principle for all political, administrative and normative actions. The Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugendliche, encourages women to choose technical jobs; the male youth are asked to consider more seriously the possibility to work in the social area and in education. Men are also asked to share with women in taking holidays for the sake of rearing children, which is the main reason for the difficulty for women to get jobs and make career. Cf. <<http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/Gleichstellung/politik-fuer-frauen-und-maenner.html>>, seen on 10/8/2013. Catholic women as G. KUBY in “Gleichschaltung: öffentlich verordnet”, in *Vision 2000*, s.a. (2/2010) 8-9 fight against all this. apart from *Mulieris dignitatem*, cf. Pope FRANCIS in the General Audience on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2015 on human beings being male and female (in their difference), seen on 26/6/2015 in <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/Francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150415\\_udienza-generale.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/Francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150415_udienza-generale.html)>.

life, the limitations of different organs, hormones and structure of the brain are given by nature and surrounded by religious believes, cultural laws and historical customs. While some fight against these given facts, also in Germany some fight their battle *for* the protection of the family and the Church and the possibility of discovering the significance of sexual differences.<sup>323</sup>

Till today the Magisterium defends the catholic tradition of the difference and complementarity in equal dignity of man and woman.<sup>324</sup> But the indoctrination of the “gender mainstreaming” is so successful that it has become very unjust in the sight of many baptised that the Pope still continues to exclude women from the priesthood.<sup>325</sup> This theme is one of the clear distinctions in the Catholic Church in Germany between those who wish to be faithful to the catholic tradition and the large group of German Catholics who grant to themselves the freedom to judge moral matters according to their own knowledge and conscience.<sup>326</sup>

<sup>323</sup> Some base on the work of the Philosopher Edith STEIN (St. Teresa Benedicta a Crucis OCarm, † 1942), who defended the union of sex and gender, e.g. in the talk of October 1931: “Beruf des Mannes und der Frau nach Natur- und Gnadenordnung”, in *Die Frau. Fragestellungen und Reflexionen*, Herder, Freiburg 2000. She compares man and woman to the left and right hand of man, who should work together in harmony of powers as they are created to be an image of the divine persons, who are united in love and operate in union. To her, man and woman should cooperate in every aspect of life. (p. 73-74) For E. Stein, the woman can work especially in education, health-care, social work, in anthropological sciences, also in business and administration, especially where administration takes care of human beings. (p. 75-76) Because of this discussion around the role and status of women in the society, including the Ecclesial communion, especially in countries north of the alps, JOHN PAUL II saw it necessary to re-confirm the Catholic teaching. He did it in his apostolic letter *Mulieris dignitatem* (15/8/1988), seeing the woman graced (mainly) with the unique duty of motherhood and care for life. C. MEVES, in her article “Wie wunderbar ergänzen sie einander!”, in *Vision 2000*, s.a. (2/2010) 6-7, is based on the physical/biological differences: the male and female brain is different in its structure. (The Cortex Cingularis, the “place” for worries, and the Insula, the “place” for feelings, the Wernicke-region, the “place” for talkativeness, and the Hypophysis are bigger in the female brain, while the Amygdala is bigger in the male brain.) The hormones are different and have different cycles and effects. From it results a difference in reactions and ways of life between the two sexes, even in new-born babies. Women are, thus, more attentive, more patient, feel skin contact more strongly, have a more differentiated sense of smell, are generally faster in perceiving and are more drawn to talking (important for mothers, who have to transmit the “mother tongue” to their babies). They are more easily nervous and depressed. The male brain, in its structure, gives men a greater capacity in technical work, mathematical calculations, logical thinking, leading, judging limits, planning. The male hormones make it a sacrifice for men to feed their babies, and they have little spontaneous sensitivity for their needs. Also the “male” voice can be seen as an advantage for a leader, while the “female” voice is better in consoling and encouraging. For the differences of man and woman cf. also sub-chapter 3.2.1. Here, it shall be stated only the fact that the “women’s question” is discussed controversially in the Church in Germany.

<sup>324</sup> Apart from *Mulieris dignitatem* of John Paul II and various words of Benedict XVI, cf. FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 103-104: “The Church acknowledges the indispensable contribution which women make to society through the sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they, more than men, tend to possess. [...] 104. [...] men and women are equal in dignity [...]. The reservation of the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open to discussion.” Cf. further Pope FRANCIS in the General Audience on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2015 on human beings being male and female (in their difference), seen on 26/6/2015 in <w2.vatican.va/content/Francesco/en/audiences/2015/documents/papa-francesco\_20150415\_udienza-generale.html>. The difference of sexes in the psychological area is sometimes very remarkable. It shall be noted here that some people sustain that homosexuality would be genetically determined. C. R. VONHOLDT stated that it has been tried to be proven scientifically, but never with success. In the past, psychiatrists were able to help overcome the roots of the problem in about 60% of those, who came for treatment. In 1971, a group of professing homosexuals forced the American Psychiatrists’ Association (APA) to cancel homosexuality in the list of psychiatric problems, thus, making it difficult for persons with homosexual tendencies to request for psychiatric help, and for psychiatrists to study the phenomena. Thus, homosexual relationships became more frequent in the USA and worldwide. Cf. C. R. VONHOLDT, “Als Ideologie die Wissenschaft besiegte”, in *Vision 2000* s.a. (2/2010) 11-12. Dr. Vonholdt is head of the German Institute for Youth and Society; her arguments are available also in <http://www.dijg.de>. Seen on 4/12/2011.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. e.g. FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 104. A priest is in a sacramental way united with Christ. Excluding women from the priesthood, they are denied to realize this type of union with Christ, but they have the bridal mystic, which men cannot experience in the same intensity. Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 523.

<sup>326</sup> However, these lay people could vindicate the support of the German Bishops of 1968. After Pope PAUL VI published the moral Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1968, in AAS, 60 (1968) 481-503, the German Bishops gave

### 1.2.3.3. The impact of modern and post-modern philosophy, and the reaction to it

With philosophers such as Schleiermacher († 1834)<sup>327</sup>, Gadamer († 2002)<sup>328</sup> and Ricœur († 2005)<sup>329</sup>, the foundations of Christian faith seemed to have been explained as something generally understandable, something generally human.<sup>330</sup> The (Christian) German culture of reflection eagerly accepted the idea that the faith in God is something logical and reasonable. As something reasonable, God was no longer adorable. The philosophic discourse “consists of speaking of God in order to silence him”<sup>331</sup>. Heidegger († 1976)<sup>332</sup> was not taken seriously in his warning: “The Christian experience is so completely different that it has no need to enter into competition with philosophy. When theology holds fast to the view that philosophy is foolishness, the mystery

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the “declaration of Königstein” on 30<sup>th</sup> August of the same year, in which they declared to be in distance to the Encyclical. They proclaimed that the faithful should have a wide range of decision according to their conscience. (The same did the Austrian Bishops’ Conference.) With it, the bishops tried to dialogue with those who were opting for abortion and the pill, misinterpreting the Vatican Council, which proposed this type of pastoral dialogue for those who do not believe in the resurrection, not for the Christians whom the pastors are bound to teach the truth. Cf. R. ZAS FRIZ DE COL, “Spiritualità”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 1147. The medical doctors of the “Europäische Ärzteaktion” on a congress in 2008 criticised the declaration, pointing out the disastrous consequences of “pill” and sterilization for the health of the women, for the loss of respect for the partner, for the loss of a great percentage of the next generation, lacking now in every section of the society. They request the actual German Bishops’ Conference to withdraw the declaration and to help the faithful to accept *Humanae Vitae*. Cf. B. GRAPPMAYER, “Antrag an die Deutsche Bischofskonferenz”, in *Kirche heute* 15,11 (2008) 12-13. Cf. Also the book „Childless. Europe in the demographical pit“: S. BAIER, *Kinderlos. Europa in der demographischen Falle*, MM, Aachen 2004. Cf. also the homily of Christoph Card. SCHÖNBORN before many European bishops in Jerusalem, March 2008: He hailed the courage of Pope Paul VI and John Paul II to say the truth even if it meant being despised. He called for repentance for the lack of courage in the past and now in the face of the laws for equality of homosexual unions and heterosexual marriage. He reminded the fellow bishops of their share in the guilt and the sadness of so many for having aborted. “Aus Angst verschlossen wir uns hinter den Türen”, in *Kirche heute* 15,10 (2008) 4-5.

<sup>327</sup> Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher was a Protestant theologian and philosopher, influenced by Kant. In 1921 he published his main theologian work “Der Christliche Glaube“. “In Schleiermacher’s thought faith always issues in knowing (doctrine) and doing (ethical action), but it is first of all a kind of ‘feeling’ or intuition, the ‘feeling (consciousness) of absolute dependence’”. To him religion is intrinsic to human nature, connected with culture and history. Cf. W. E. WIEST, “Schleiermacher, Friedrich Daniel Ernst”, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 1136.

<sup>328</sup> H.-G. Gadamer was a German philosopher, influenced by Heidegger. Opponent of any scholasticism, he elaborated the “wirkungsgeschichtliche Bewusstsein” (consciousness on how history, the situation of people in their time, influences their questions and answers). He tried to return to the Socratic legacy, which says that human wisdom and scientific knowledge are not infallible, but nescience. He underlines the primal significance of conversation for mutual understanding, a conversation in which nobody has the last word, but which continues endlessly to lift the participants in ever deeper understanding. He also speaks of a conversation of the soul with itself, but for him it has not the purpose of transcending any given limit through thinking. Cf. F. G. LAWRENCE, “Gadamer, Hans-Georg”, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 18, p. 173-175.

<sup>329</sup> P. Ricœur, a French philosopher, studied existentialism, phenomenology and psychoanalysis, the will and involuntary acts, accountability for faults, the fallibility of man. He values religious and mystical experience, because to him, only if a divine Wisdom is admitted, can man overcome with knowledge and action his dramatic situation of sin, doing things he does not want to do. Thus, he avoids also a concept of freedom that would be deterministic or anthropocentric. G. MORRA, “Ricoeur, Paul”, in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, 2<sup>a</sup> ed., vol. 5, col. 755-756.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. T. SCHÄRTL, “Postliberale Theologie und die Standortbestimmung von Fundamentaltheologie”, in *Zeitschrift für Kirche und Theologie* 132 (2010) 49. Since the Christian culture in Europe has been so reduced from divine to human logic in order to be generally accepted, today it may be better for the Church to accept to present herself as the “strange” thing in the society, cultivating the love of God and the unity among the Christians.

<sup>331</sup> J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, Chicago press, Chicago 2012<sup>2</sup>, p. 55.

<sup>332</sup> German philosopher; his main work is “Sein und Zeit”, 1927. He tried to analyse the human existence, with all the sentiments people can have, and the truth of the being, which to him is entrusted to the human language. Cf. C. MAZZANTINI, “Heidegger, Martin”, in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, 2<sup>a</sup> ed., vol. 3, col. 520-525.



character of revelation will be much better preserved.”<sup>333</sup> Theology “secures its scientificity only by fixing itself on the positive fact of faith, namely, the relation of the believer to the Crucified.”<sup>334</sup> Theology cannot “think” or define a “God” a priori, and how he should be believed in, but starting from the relationship of faith of the columns of the Church with God, and how God revealed himself to them, God and faith are being discovered. On this basic point, mistakes were committed: exegesis, Church history and other theological disciplines permitted methods that no longer respected the revelation of God contained in these subjects.<sup>335</sup> “God” was seen first of all as a “Being”, that could be philosophically analysed, described, understood, and delimited. It was forgotten that God is first of all Love, who loves without limit and restriction as it pleases him, and who can be received by anyone who wills to receive his love.<sup>336</sup>

In a second step, faith was seen as something subjective, a private affair of each person: in the public life, each felt that he must act in a way that would be valid even in the case that God did not exist, in case another person concerned with the action did not believe in him.<sup>337</sup> That is why, as the then Card. Ratzinger observed, the Church was not able to present its faith as the great alternative after the fall of the wall of Berlin and the whole Eastern Communist antireligious and destructive empire.<sup>338</sup> In the post-modern time, certain categories changed in meaning or fell out of use: eternity, truth, substance (like “human nature”), sacrifice, authority are to be named especially. In the past, these categories made Christianity something understandable (in faith) and good.<sup>339</sup> The experience that past important categories were no longer seen as valid and other tremendous changes in society brought about a feeling of uncertainty to many, producing the “liquid society”<sup>340</sup> in which values have become relative. Many people live without a life project and without a fundamental decision for life, hoping that one day the great opportunity of a better life will come up for them and at the same time fearing that one day a terrible catastrophe will destroy all they have without possibility of survival.<sup>341</sup> The post-modern time is marked by nihilism.<sup>342</sup> It has cancelled, especially in youths, any hope regarding the future leading them to the most irresponsible actions.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> *Berichte aus der Arbeit der Evangelischen Akademie Hofgeismar*, I, 1954, in the English translation of Hart and Maraldo p. 64-65, quoted in J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, p. 62.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. also CDF, Instruction on the ecclesial vocation of the theologian *Donum veritatis* (24/5/1990), in <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_doc\\_19900524\\_theologian-vocation\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_doc_19900524_theologian-vocation_en.html)>, and CTI, *Theology today* (29/11/2011), in <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_doc\\_20111129\\_tologia-oggi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_doc_20111129_tologia-oggi_en.html)>, both seen on 18/5/2014.

<sup>336</sup> This is the thesis of J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, esp. p. 47-48.

<sup>337</sup> This happened gradually, in the sense that it affected more and more circles of people. In Germany, it seems to have begun in the late sixties when the misery of the years after the Second World War was overcome and the youths revolted vehemently against any form of tradition and law as the adult generation began to respond with a laissez-faire attitude. Cf. B. ZIEMANN, “Die sechziger Jahre”, p. 317-323.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Einführung in das Christentum*, *Weltbild*, Augsburg 2005, p. 9, 14: on p. 9-26 is the introduction to the new edition in the year 2000.

<sup>339</sup> Cf. A. MATTEO, *La prima generazione incredula. Il difficile rapporto tra i giovani e la fede*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli, 2010, p. 27.

<sup>340</sup> Expression coined by Zygmunt Bauman (born 1925 in Poznań, Polish philosopher and sociologist near to Marxism, of Jewish origin.) to describe the time after modernity (in which man tried to put things in order, gaining security by bringing all under control). Post-modernity is to him the shift into a “liquid” era, in which the security of having all under control is given up for the sake of enjoying life in consumerism. Cf. Z. BAUMANN, *Liquid modernity*, Polity, Cambridge 2000; IDEM, *Liquid fear*, Polity, Cambridge 2006.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Liquid love: on the frailty of human bonds*, Polity, Cambridge 2003: a difficulty to decide important things as marriage definitely has been reported as general, the strong tendency to spend much time on entertainment and the lack of effort to reflect. A faith with stable values cannot be suggested to them, unless if by grace they experience the

For those who grew up without the quest for such categories as truth and sacrifice, who grew up in a society that did not transmit the presence of God and that did not postulate Christianity or even religiosity as a basic value, who sought fulfilment in human relationships, spirituality and often also in charitable action for the poor, the Church had to find a new language to reach them.<sup>344</sup> The Church thus has the *first* duty in European culture not to teach doctrine, but to teach how to speak with God and thus how to build up a living, individual relationship with *God*,<sup>345</sup> the only one who can accompany them to a fundamental decision, after which they can be helped to seek the truth of good morals and doctrine.

#### 1.2.3.4. The influence of “New Age” and apparitions on Catholics in Germany

The nihilism of the post-modern time drew a mysticism<sup>346</sup> and love of magic, exotic knowledge and practices, developing to the movement of “New Age”<sup>347</sup>. The new wave of mysticism, in the evaluation of the then Card. Ratzinger, brought about the “Grundgewissheit”, the basic consciousness in many Catholics that God can never be known completely as he is. Thus every religion (Hinduism, Buddhism, ...), in the opinion of many, was seen not only as the carrier of some part of the truth but as equal ways leading to God.<sup>348</sup> Some people of low education

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Love of God. Thus, in 1970, while in Nigeria there was a vocation boom, Germany had empty seminaries and formation houses, and in the world 2.546 Religious requested to be permitted to quit the religious life – the peak of the crisis of religious life in the Western world, triggering anxious reforms. L. HOLTZ, *Geschichte des christlichen Ordenslebens*, Patmos, Düsseldorf 2001, p. 336-337.

<sup>342</sup> Cf. e.g. J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, p. 38.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. A. MATTEO, *La prima generazione*, p. 58-59.

<sup>344</sup> In the Magisterial Mariology, this step was already taken by Pope PAUL VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2/2/1974), in AAS, 66 (1974) 113-168, esp. in n. 28, 56 - after the discovery of the importance of Mary's relationship with Christ and the Church in the Vatican Council II. The Apostolic letter was issued in the middle of the “Marian crisis”, when liturgists publicly called Marian popular devotions “useless” or opposing a right understanding of the Holy Spirit, but the Pope recalled the timeless importance of the popular piety, while also stressing its need (cf. MC 1-23, 31, 56-58) and gave detailed directions for a renewal of Marian piety (cf. MC 24-39; 40-55 only on the Angelus and the rosary.) For further introduction to the document, cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 119-125.

<sup>345</sup> Cf. A. MATTEO, *La prima generazione*, p. 34-35.

<sup>346</sup> Psychologists define “mystics” as persons (of any religion) who see prayer and meditation as their first daily duty in life. Cf. M. MARGNELLI – G. GAGLIARDI, “Gli stati di coscienza mistici come percorso evolutivo”, in M. ALETTI – G. ROSSI (ed.) *Ricerca di sé e trascendenza. Approcci psicologici all'identità religiosa in una società pluralistica*, Centro scientifico, Torino 1999, p. 192.

<sup>347</sup> New Age, which has as its sign the rainbow and which argues with the astrological signs for a new age, is based on the teaching that all spiritual and spiritist experiences come from one common source, without distinguishing, as the Catholic Church and other denominations, between evil and good spirits. New Age, thus, aims at a universal religion, in which it is the responsibility of man to create the cult and rites. New Age also cancels all metaphysics, for its “common source” of all energy remains an “ultra-subtle” physical reality; all “mediums”, have just special *natural* gifts. The objective reality and the divine Mystery are not distinguished. F.-M. DERMINE comments in his conclusion of the published part of his doctoral work on *La medianità e la fenomenologia mistica nei loro atti rispettivi*, P. U. Angelicum, Ancona 2000, p. 107: “sembra che la diffusione e la pretesa delle tecnologie dello spirito, inerenti alle comunicazioni non cristiane con l'aldilà, scaturiscano dal [...] entusiasmo scienziata [...] basta ricordare come la fiducia nella sperimentazione concreta e nel progresso offerti dalla scienza abbiano spinto lo spiritismo contemporaneo a perseguire una dimostrazione sperimentale dell'aldilà e una rivelazione progressiva dei suoi ‘misteri’, nonché a impiegare mezzi sempre più perfezionati di comunicazioni.” Concerning New Age, cf. *Ibidem*, p. 7, 26, 108. On New Age, cf. also C. CUMBY, *Die sanfte Verführung. Hintergrund und Gefahren der New-Age Bewegung*, Schulte + Gerth, Gütersloh 1986. New Age may be called the reaction of the post-modern man/woman to the excesses of sobriety of modern time, and, together with drugs or chatting for hours with unknown people on the internet, the attempt to bear one's existence without earth-transcending hope.

<sup>348</sup> This is the teaching which e.g. the French bishop Gaillot proclaimed when the dean of the philosophic faculty of the Cath. University of Eichstätt invited him for a public talk in 1997 after the bishop had been removed from his diocese of

misunderstood in this sense also the interreligious dialogue of the Church.<sup>349</sup> Ratzinger concluded that Christ is thus no longer accepted as the only one who is Way, Truth and Life – he is no longer accepted as the only God. For many Christians, God could be just a power, a peaceful Nothing, a Foundation of reality.<sup>350</sup> The “New-Age” and mysticism-wave has also affected the Catholic Church in Germany. A great growth of sects and sect-like prayer groups or meditation groups outside the control and outside the traditional teachings of the Church is visible.<sup>351</sup> Because of the obviously dangerous error in many such groups, every diocese in Germany has a counsellor concerning sects (“Sektenberater”).

Also within the Church, a steady growth of charismatic groups and prayer groups with devotions towards mysticism or devoted to a presumed apparition or vision, and the search for experiences, cannot be denied.<sup>352</sup> The administrative apparatus of the German dioceses, devoted full time to the administration of different pastoral fields,<sup>353</sup> has banned in various places many attempts of a post-modern, more subjective worship of God from within the Church, permitting only groups with practices in the range of the “normal”, to receive space in the life of parishes and ecclesiastical approval. The over-prudent reserve of many clerics against new ecclesial movements and prayer communities is in contrast to their evaluation by St. John Paul II, who trusted his own capability to distinguish the spirits. In the post-synodal document *Christifideles laici* (30/12/1988) he noted with benevolence their existence, recognized the justice of their mission and gave them

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Evreux and was now only a titular bishop. Many Catholics came with buses from faraway places, to hear him and to show him their solidarity, so that the Aula Magna of the university was filled. After his talk, the weekly diocesan newspaper (*Eichstätter Kirchenzeitung*) was full of praise for the titular bishop, both from the journalists and from letters to the editor. But such a teaching makes the cross of Jesus Christ to have been suffered in vain. The declaration of the CONGREGATION FOR DOCTRINE AND FAITH, *Dominus Iesus* of 6<sup>th</sup> August 2000, n. 14-15, (in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000806\\_dominus-iesus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html)>, seen on 15/11/2013) said that the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and fulfilled once for all in the mystery of the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus alone. The declaration in n. 12 does not omit to quote GS, 22 (“For since Christ died for all, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery.”) i.e. God can save also unbaptised people, but always in Christ. According to Mt 25,1-12 and 31-46, God brings non-Christians into contact with the Easter mystery and with his Church by their free decision to search for the mysterious God, calling on him in love and desire to know his will and to act in charity towards their fellow human beings, following the voice of their conscience.

<sup>349</sup> It is the well accepted teaching of the Vatican Council II that it is not only Christianity that can lead human beings to a positive relationship with God. The author, in union with the then Card. Ratzinger, states here the fact that some baptised in Europe confuse the virtue of tolerance or respect for the opinion and faith of others, and the effort of the Church to achieve the human right of religious freedom for all in the world in the interreligious dialogue, with the relativism of taking all religions as *equally* true and helpful to reach union with God. This confusion exists both on the side of those who call it right that the Church should take all religions as equal, as bishop Gaillot and his followers (cf. the previous footnote), as well as those who call the Papal prayer of peace at Assisi, with leaders of various religious, as a fall into the plan of “New Age” to build a “universal” syncretistic religion, e.g. L. GASSMANN, *Okkultismus, Östliche Religionen und die New-Age-Bewegung. Eine Orientierungshilfe*, Johannes, Lahr 1990.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Einführung in das Christentum*, Weltbild, Augsburg 2005, p. 18-21.

<sup>351</sup> Concerning oriental meditation techniques, *Ibidem* notes on p. 108 that these techniques were developed in the East as a way to escape the scandal of evil and pain, and the illusion of the proper personality, opening the way to another world. In the West, he finds many people using the same techniques in order to attain to a better well-being and inner harmony, in order to live better in the immanence.

<sup>352</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 16-17: the then Cardinal considers the new search for mystic experiences and apparitions, sees the negative point of view of many clerics, who feel that their institution-Church is left out and cheated by these movements and, thus, denounce them as only looking for experiences. Ratzinger does not wish to lament, but points out that genuine experiences do exist and stand often at the beginning of a change of life.

<sup>353</sup> Not like in most places in Africa, where even the Vicar General of a diocese is mainly a parish priest, and secondly also a Vicar General.

rules, which did not contradict his calls for zeal and devotion in prayer.<sup>354</sup> Pope Francis, in “*Evangelii gaudium*”, shows a preoccupation for “restoring a mystical adherence to the faith” in the Church.<sup>355</sup> Theologians as A. N. Terrin agree that “mystical” movements are a nucleus of a reform of the Church, a new evangelization and reinvigoration,<sup>356</sup> or they observe an urgent need of mystical theology as a way out of intellectual aridity.<sup>357</sup>

With a “mystical theology”, this research enters into the question on what are visions, locutions, apparitions, messages, inspirations received in prayer and meditation, private revelations, questions that will be treated in sub-chapter 2.3.2.1. Here Biblical apparitions will not be treated as they belong to public revelation, but with those that occurred after the death of the last apostle until today. In doing this, this research will not enter the thorny question of distinguishing between authentic and non-authentic apparitions in particular cases,<sup>358</sup> or try to give a list of those places and messages that most influence the faithful in Germany today, but will only look at the phenomenon as such and give some general guidelines. Post-Biblical apparitions and their contents do not belong to the “*deposito fidei*”, to the fundamental knowledge of God and his will as revealed in Holy Scriptures. What value do they have for the life of the Church today?

After some interest of Medieval authors on ‘private revelations’, the classic theology of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century (till the thirties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), under the influence of the European critical and illuminist culture, did not give a prophetic value even to ecclesiastically approved apparitions.<sup>359</sup> They were held as accessorial realities, while the apparitions that had a lot of impact

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<sup>354</sup> According to the former vice-president of the Pontifical Council for the laity: “Le prudente riserve di molti pastori risultano chiaramente in contrasto con la valutazione che ha dei nuovi movimenti papa Giovanni Paolo II. Il suo scritto postsinodale *Christifideles laici* ne registra benevolmente l’esistenza, riconosce la giustezza della loro missione, formula dei criteri per la loro ecclesialità”. P. J. CORDES, *Segni di speranza. Movimenti e nuove realtà nella vita della Chiesa alla vigilia del Giubileo*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1998, p. 226. About the reserves and distance of pastors towards new movements and accusations of fanaticism, sectarianism and fundamentalism, cf. *Ibidem*, p. 153. Benedict XVI wished to “reaffirm the importance of prayer in the face of activism and the growing secularism of many Christians engaged in charitable work.” Encyclical letter *Deus caritas est* (25/12/2005), n. 37.

<sup>355</sup> FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 70, noting “a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith to the young. [...] The causes of this breakdown include: a lack of opportunity for dialogue in families, the influence of the communications media, a relativistic subjectivism, unbridled consumerism which feeds the market, lack of pastoral care among the poor, the failure of our institutions to be welcoming, and our difficulty in restoring a mystical adherence to the faith in a pluralistic religious landscape.” In the same n. 70, the Pontiff sees the problem of false apparitions, “which would replace all else”, or of wrong use of devotions, placing too much emphasis on “outward expressions” and leading to “sentimental faith” that excludes the necessary concern for the advancement of society. N. 89-90 continues: “Today, our challenge is not so much atheism as the need to respond adequately to many people’s thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others. Unless these people find in the Church a spirituality which can offer healing and liberation, and fill them with life and peace, while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness, they will end up by being taken in by solutions which neither make life truly human nor give glory to God. 90. Genuine forms of popular piety are incarnate, [...] they entail a personal relationship, not with vague spiritual energies or powers, but with God, with Christ, with Mary, with the saints.”

<sup>356</sup> Cf. A. N. TERRIN, *Antropologia e orizzonti del sacro, culture e religioni*, Cittadella, Assisi 2001, p. 96.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi. Sussidium per lo Studium*, (ed. V. CRISCUOLO – D. OLS – R. J. SARNO), LEV, Città del Vaticano 2012<sup>2</sup>, p. 119-120, proposing a constant research to reach the mutual fertilization of Christian experience of God and the reflection of the reason on it. Both the effort to express a mystical experience and the trial to put the revealed truth about God into theological terms are always very insufficient attempts to communicate the mystery of God. Cf. also F. ASTI, “La divisione fra teologia e santità e fra ascetica e mistica”, in *Rassegna di Teologia*, 46,1 (2005) 64.

<sup>358</sup> In fact, the author considers the apparitions mentioned in this research as authentic, but her knowledge of the facts around these apparitions are absolutely too limited to permit a sure judgement.

<sup>359</sup> S. De Fiores named here Domenico Gravina (who published in 1638), Eusebius Amort (1744), Nicolas Lenglet Dufresnoy (1751), and Prospero Lambertini († 1758 as Benedict XIV. As Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation

in the life of the Church in Europe, began with Paray-le-Monial (1673-1675), Rue de Bac, Paris (1830), La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), Pontmain (1871) and Fatima (1917).<sup>360</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1966, can. 3218 and 1399 § 5 of the CIC 1917, forbidding publications on not recognized apparitions under the pain of excommunication, were silently abolished.<sup>361</sup>

According to the norms of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (following St. Thomas), private revelations belong to the “munus propheticus” of the baptised, which can be received from God as a charism. Prophecy in the Church, according to St. Thomas, is given to orientate human comportment. To respond to private revelations and messages is not a dogmatic question, but an ethical one.<sup>362</sup> If they are neither from the devil nor from human imagination of self-deceit; if they are authentically from God, private revelations shall here be treated as communications from God, read and interpreted in the context of the theology of charisms,<sup>363</sup> i.e. as gifts from God that are given in order to edify the whole Body of Christ. They are ‘prophetic

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of Rites he commented and published 1734/1738 the collected Papal decrees and laws on beatifications and canonizations since 1588; within this context there are directions on how to judge the veracity of mystical experiences. P. LAMBERTINI, *Opus de servorum Dei beatificatione et de beatorum canonizatione*: ed. 1734/1738; 1743; 1839: liber II, caput 32, n. 15.) as theologians who propagated reservation towards apparitions, while annoting that Francis Suárez, followed by Gotti and Bellarmino (of the same 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century), gave positive attention to them. Fundamentalist use of apparitions is one of the reasons why many theologians devalued visions, following a Protestant/Jansenist line (rejection of apparitions on the basis of the ‘sola scriptura’) or the sober spirituality of St. John of the Cross. (Rejection of *desiring* visions for the sake of curiosity and the wish of ecstatic experiences. The saint did not reject the responsibility and call to suffer with Christ coming from a mystical experience.) Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Apparizioni”, p. 22-23, quoted with approval in S. M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio nella storia. Apparizioni e Mariofanie*, Messagero, Padova 2011, p. 201. Perrella speaks of this theme again in p. 382, quoting S. DE FIORES, “Apparizioni”, p. 32-33. And cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Droit de l’église et apparitions”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 268-269, quoting also Benedict XVI in a minor speech on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2006. In Germany, a gap can be observed in the years 1942-1956 between lay people who “believe” in apparitions and request e.g. a consecration of Russia and the world to the Heart of Mary, and theologians, who discuss the possibility of such an act. It was controversially discussed whether a group can be consecrated to Mary, if unbelievers are included. Generally, a consecration needs the free acceptance of the individual. The theologians of Rottenburg conclude that such a “consecration” cannot be interpreted as a “handing over” of the various persons to Mary, but only as a request for protection. There is also the gap between the lay people and the bishops, who were rather reluctant in Germany. Cf. J. SCHMIEDL, “Herz-Jesu- und Herz-Mariä-Frömmigkeit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert”, in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung. Geschichtliche Entwicklung und theologischer Gehalt*, Pustet, Regensburg 2011, p. 162-164. Another disturbance of the peaceful acceptance of apparitions is given today by the fact that in places as Germany, in the “esoteric literature”, the word “mystic” is combined with preter- and paranatural phenomena as spiritism (communicating with the spirits of the dead), hypnotism (making another person to do something without the person knowing, under hypnosis), telekinesis (moving an object without touching it), predicting the future, etc. Cf. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und “Wunderglaube”*, p. 50, quoting O. STEGGINK, “Mystik – Wortgebrauch und Theoriebildung“, in IDEM et al., *Mystik: Ihre Struktur und Dynamik*, s.ed., Düsseldorf 1983, vol. 1, p. 13.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Apparizioni”, in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, EDB, Bologna 2006, vol. 1, p. 22-23.

<sup>361</sup> Cf. AAS, 58 (1966) 1186.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. C. J. SCICLUNA, “Criteri e norme della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede nel discernimento delle apparizioni mariane”, in *Marianum* 74 (2012) esp. 232-236, 239-240. The relative passage of St. Thomas is *STh* II-II, q. 174, a. 6, ad 3. As non-Biblical apparitions do not pose a dogmatic question, but an ethical one, the faithful are not obliged to believe (with “theological” faith, which makes man to build his whole life on this belief, as one can build his life on the faith in the incarnation, passion and resurrection of Christ) in the fact of even an approved apparition, but they are encouraged by the episcopal or Pontifical authentic (not infallible) Magisterium, which they are to receive with religious respect, to take them as a (mere) encouragement, witness and stimulation for their faith, their spiritual and moral life. Cf. C. J. SCICLUNA, “Criteri e norme”, p. 239-240, and S. M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio*, p. 193-211, 445, 507-508. For the private sphere of people, A. Fuchs admits that a Marian apparition can have a revelational importance: “Die Marienerscheinung stellt sich als zutiefst offenbarungstheologisches Phänomen dar, das adressatenspezifisch in das Mysterium des Glaubens hinführen möchte”. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und “Wunderglaube”*, p. 82.

<sup>363</sup> Cf. S. M. PERRELLA – G. M. ROGGIO, *Apparizioni e mariofanie. Theologia, storia, verifica ecclesiale*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2012, p. 25.

communications', and as such aimed, not at the perfection of the subject (alone), who has the status of a witness, but of that of the community.<sup>364</sup>

The CDF, *Theological commentary on the message of Fatima*, (26<sup>th</sup> June 2000) states: «Private revelation [...] can be a genuine help in understanding the Gospel and living it better at a particular moment in time; therefore it should not be disregarded. It is a help which is offered, but which one is not obliged to use [...]. The criterion for the truth and value of private revelations is therefore its orientation to Christ himself».<sup>365</sup>

Mystical charisms are a precious gift, signs of the continuous care of God for his people, but such messages have to be understood within the frame and light of the public revelation.<sup>366</sup> The Church needs to ponder these phenomena carefully in their usefulness for the pastoral work assigned to her.<sup>367</sup> According to Perrella, apparitions, as means of communication for God, have the aim to further the spiritual growth and the common good of his faithful. Thus they are a precious gift, a help for the faith in this time of shaking faith in the Western world, a challenge to the post-modern "reason" and the nihilist culture.<sup>368</sup> They are thus meant by God to influence the Church in her pastoral care, spirituality and, as an inspiration, in the liturgy.<sup>369</sup> Though never constituting a

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<sup>364</sup> Cf. F.-M. DERMINE, *La medianità e la fenomenologia mistica*, p. 48; concerning the visionary as witness: cf. F.-J. FLEMMING, "Les apparitions de la Vierge Marie. Entre histoire, foi et théologie. Un regard Protestant", in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *Apparitiones Beatae Mariae Virginis in historia, fide, theologia. Acta congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in civitate Lourdes anno 2008 celebrati*, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2010, vol. 1, p. 477-483. A. Fuchs states with the French expert on mysticism, A. F. POULAIN († 1919), *Grâces d'oraison. Traité de Théologie mystique*, Paris 1922<sup>10</sup>, chap. 21.2, that the value of witness of an apparition is the same as the value of witness of the person reporting it: "les révélations privées n'ont qu'une autorité purement humaine ou probable." Cf. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und "Wunderglaube"*, p. 163. Thus, the credibility of the receiver is to be a main thing to be investigated, together with the questions of whether the message contains moral or doctrinal errors.

<sup>365</sup> CDF, *Theological commentary on the message of Fatima*, (26/6/2000), in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000626\\_message-fatima\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html)>, seen on 15/11/2013.

<sup>366</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, "Fatima V", in *NDM*, p. 519.

<sup>367</sup> Cf. L. M. DE CANDIDO, "Manifestazioni straordinarie per il bene del popolo di Dio", in *Credere Oggi* 24,4 (2004) 88. Cf. also the comment of H.-U. v. BALTHASAR on the importance of Marian apparitions and messages as the best help to understand the revelation in Christ in a deeper way, "Aprite i cuori all'Immacolata, ecco appare la Madre di Dio", in *Il Sabato* (3-9/12/1983) 19.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. S.M. PERRELLA, *Le apparizioni mariane*, p. 187-189.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. S. MAGGIANI, "Le memorie liturgiche delle mariofanie tra "lex credendi" e "lex orandi", in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *Apparitiones Beatae Mariae Virginis in historia, fide, theologia*, vol. 1, p. 377-411. There are liturgical memorias inspired by the event of apparitions, but what is being celebrated is the Biblically based faith, the person of Mary in her relationship with God and the faithful. 1969, the unofficial comment to the *Norme generali sull'anno liturgico e il Calendario*, comment given by the "Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra Liturgia", *OR*, Milano 1969, p. 41-107, quoted by S. M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio*, p. 443-444, qualified liturgical memorias of e.g. Lourdes or the memoria of the Immaculate Heart as 'devotional', and 'not celebrating a fact of the mystery of salvation', seemingly with the intention to abolish these memorias. Instead, the Church opted to transform them into memorias of an aspect of the mystery of salvation, in the case of Lourdes inspired by some details of the message and on the occasion of the date of the apparition. The memoria of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was established in remembrance of the consecration of mankind to the Immaculate Heart, and recalls, thus, the presence of Mary in the history of the Church. After Vatican II, some (decisive) theologians did not see the feast as a liturgical feast, celebrating any salvific act of God, but only devotionally motivated, and pleaded for it to be cancelled, cf. A. LENTINI, "Maria nel nuovo Innario Liturgico", in *Marianum* 30 (1968) 317: "Le innovazioni dunque, come sembra verosimile, sarebbero le seguenti: Le feste della Presentazione di Maria, di M. Regina, di S. M. *ad Nives*, dell'Immacolato Cuore e del SS. Nome di Maria verrebbero sopresse." Others did not agree, demonstrating the biblical foundation and salvific importance of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was left in 1969 as an optional memoria and transferred to the Saturday immediately after the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Cf. I. M. CALABUIG, "Il Cuore di Maria", p. 123, 126-128. Backed by interventions of theologians as G. M. MORREALE, "E ancora valido il culto del Cuore immacolato di Maria?" in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 25 (1975) 359-380, St. John Paul II lifted the memoria up to be obligatory. Also the feast of the dedication of the Basilica S. Mary Major (5<sup>th</sup> of August) was commemorating the alleged miracle of the snowfall in

new revelation, they express a new command, the will of God in a certain historical situation, which is in line with what is given in Holy Scriptures, but cannot be found by mere reasoning on the Biblical revelation.<sup>370</sup> Some clerics may be sometimes too sceptical and might have taken distance from some genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit in their diocese, thus losing vocations for the work in God's vineyard.<sup>371</sup> John Paul II (and also Benedict XVI), in his authentic magisterium<sup>372</sup>, did not fear to use details of ecclesiastically approved supernatural events for parenthesis and exhortation.<sup>373</sup>

An ecclesiastical recognition urges the faithful and clergy not to suppress the knowledge about the apparition,<sup>374</sup> but does not exhort them to follow *all* the indications and particular

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August, and after the liturgical reform of Vatican II, it celebrated the dedication of the church and Mary. Cf. G. MEAOLO, "Dedicazione di S. Maria Maggiore", in *NDM*, p. 420. The reason for celebrating the memoria of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Lourdes or Fatima is seen by Maggiani in the wish of the Church to help the faithful not to isolate Mary and the apparition from God/Christ/Church, which cannot be marginalized in a Eucharistic celebration. Cf. S. MAGGIANI, "Le memorie liturgiche delle mariofanie", p. 407. Perrella stressed instead with Avitabile and Roggio the positive view that a Mariophany which presents paschal aspects can be inserted as a feast in the liturgical year, because of the presence of Mary in the Christological mystery already recognized by liturgy. Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio*, p. 448, quoting A. AVITABILE – G. M. ROGGIO, *La Salette: un'apparizione da riscoprire*, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 58 (2008) 441. Furthermore, Perrella underlined that the ecumenical orientated members of other Christian denominations have taken note that apparitions belong as a lawful reality to the "vissuto ecclesiale", the life of the Catholic Church. Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio*, p. 449.

<sup>370</sup> According to the theological opinion of K. RAHNER, *Visionen und Prophezeiungen*, Tyrolia, Innsbruck 1952, p. 39-42. The early work of the later on famous theologian is not much known in Germany, as those, who could have been interested in the book, took their distance from Rahner when he became known with his later works.

<sup>371</sup> Prayer groups related to Medjugorje, the Marian Priests' Movement of Don Gobbi or the Rosa Mystica, which are important to many German faithful, can hardly be experienced in German parish churches, due to the disinterest for such from the side of the pastoral workers. Seminary formation in most dioceses in Germany seems to discourage it strongly, saying that only Christ and the Holy Scripture matter.

<sup>372</sup> Theology has as its sources Scriptures (as the basic source which contains all that is necessary for salvation), Fathers of the Church and Tradition (as help for interpretation). Cf. e.g. F. ASTI, "Maria nell'esperienza mistica", p. 278, and J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, Darton, London 1975, p. XXX-XLVIII. The Magisterium of the Pope and the bishops has a major doctrinal weight in the tradition of the Church, although there are also the teaching of the Doctors of the Church and saints, liturgy and the faith of the people of God as a whole, expressed e.g. in theological-spiritual works and prayers commonly accepted. Of special importance is the "extraordinary Magisterium", which is to be received by the faithful as infallible teaching: ecumenical councils or the pope, when they publicly condemn a heretical opinion or proclaim solemnly a dogma of faith, which binds the whole Church. Not infallible, but to be received with religious respect is the "ordinary Magisterium": the teaching of the same councils or the pope for the whole Church ("universal Magisterium"), or of a bishop or synod for their respective territories, when they confirm the tradition of the Church, recalling the Biblical and patristic teaching concerning an issue. This form of Magisterium is expressed by the pope mostly in form of apostolic letters or exhortations; Vatican II expressed it in constitutions and decrees. The pontifical congregations, councils and academies have some share in the dignity of the papal ordinary universal Magisterium, especially if their document is published in the AAS. To the "authentic Magisterium" belong all other public exhortations and teachings of the pope or bishops, each for their respective territory. What is only "authentic Magisterium" is to be received with the same religious respect, but knowing that it is not meant to exhort the whole Church on an important issue. The forms of this type of Magisterium can be homilies, catechesis, the Angelus, addresses to groups, etc., but Benedict XVI has given doctrinal importance also to some addresses and homilies. Cf. also D. BERTETTO, "Magistero", in *NDM*, p. 758-759; S. M. PERRELLA, "Magistero", in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.), *Mariologia*, p. 774-785; F. A. SULLIVAN, *Capire e interpretare il Magistero. Una fedeltà creativa*, EDB, Bologna 1997.

<sup>373</sup> Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Dominus flevit*, Omelia per la dedicazione del santuario della Madonna delle Lacrime di Siracusa, 6.11.1994, paragraph 7, in GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1996, vol. XVII,2, p. 635-640. Cf. also D. CANDIDO – A. SIRINGO – E. VIDAU (ed.), *Lacrime nel cuore della città. Atti dei tre Convegni preparatori e del XIII Colloquio internazionale di mariologia nel 50° anniversario del pianto di Maria. Siracusa, 29 settembre – 2 ottobre 2003*, AMI, Roma 2007.

<sup>374</sup> Rather, L. SCHEFFCZYK, "Privatoffenbarungen", in *Marienlexikon* (1993) vol. 5, p. 319, insists that an official recognition of an apparition by the Church urges all Catholics 'to accept them in obedience and piety towards the Church'. To choose what to believe and what not, once the Church has investigated thoroughly and came to an official result, would be against the communion and in favour of a destructive individualism. Cf. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und "Wunderglaube"*, p. 93.

devotions connected with *all* apparitions. Thus, the faithful need to be given criteria to choose them for their own personal life.<sup>375</sup> Sub-chapter 2.3.2.2. will treat the necessity to respond to private revelations, as God can give through these experiences a specially defined mission to a person.

For the Church, it remains an ever urgent duty to study the experiences of apparitions and “messages”, to use and guide pastorally the authentic events and to warn of the seemingly not heavenly inspired ones.<sup>376</sup> The credibility of the Church depends also on whether in it there is seen an interest in the presence of heaven among the faithful (clerics and lay people).<sup>377</sup> The Holy See has continually reminded all those who bear responsibility in the Church of the importance to test and investigate such phenomena as visions and heavenly “messages”, issuing guidelines for the ecclesiastical investigation, since it is essential for the faithful to receive prudent guidance about them from their pastors.<sup>378</sup>

The scattered society in Europe, where even in school classes the children have very different levels, life experiences and backgrounds, the stress of the missionary work must lie more on personal encounters - during pilgrimages, retreats, prayer groups, personal discussions; in hospitals, on the road.

### 1.3. The person of the founder and the beginning history of the foundation

The panorama of the Church in Nigeria and in Germany has been presented. Now the question is how the SHL began and inserted itself in the said milieu. In the life of a group, though

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<sup>375</sup> Cf. the recommendation of the PONTIFICIA ACADEMIA MARIANA INTERNATIONALIS [PAMI], in *La Madre del Signore. Memoria, Presenza, Speranza*, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2000, p. 127, to consider in the just light messages and promises: “sono infatti un incitamento perché essi vivano secondo i dettami del Vangelo, un prolungamento della parola che la Madre di Gesù disse ai servi delle nozze di cana [sic!]: ‘Fate quello che vi dirà’ (Gv 2, 5); non intendono quindi né completare il Vangelo né sostituirlo con ‘vie più facili’, al contrario mirano a ravvivare nei discepoli la necessità della conversione e della sequela di Cristo sulla via regale della croce.” Cf. CCC, n. 67, that evokes the guidance of the Church in issues of private revelations, MC 38 that warns of only exterior practises, and M. M. PEDICO, *La più amata dai Cristiani. La pietà Mariana secondo il Magistero*, Messagero, Padova 2013.

<sup>376</sup> Cf. CCC, n. 67: “Guided by the magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.” The “*sensus fidei*” is the capacity of the single faithful, a capacity given and sustained by the Holy Spirit, to conform their faith under the guidance of the magisterium in reception of the Word of God to the faith of the whole Church, with right judgement in matters of faith and able to apply the faith to the various situations of their life. The “*sensus fidelium*”, the sense of faith of all the faithful together, both clergy and lay people, if in a universal consent in matters of faith or moral, is held infallible. Cf. LG 12. Cf. also R. LAURENTIN, “Droit de l’église et apparitions” p. 264-266.

<sup>377</sup> There are many efforts to take apparitions serious, cf. the works on the theme quoted above and below.

<sup>378</sup> The problem of dubious visions and “prophets” was discussed on Conciliar level in the Church as early as 1516, in the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Lateran Council V (1512-1517). Because of the many errors and abuses committed in that time by un-enlightened preachers, it was then decided that such facts must be examined by the Apostolic See (in urgent cases also by the local ordinary, who has to consult some theologians), before something about it can be published or preached. Cf. CONCILIIUM LATERANENSE V, Sess. 11, “Sulla predicazione”, in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum decreta*, Herder, Bologna 1991, p. 637. For the present legislation, cf. C. J. SCICLUNA, “Criteri e norme”, esp. p. 230-232 236-281. The norms in English cf. <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19780225\\_norme-apparizioni\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19780225_norme-apparizioni_en.html)>, seen on 15/11/2013. The *Normae* enumerate the aspects to be analysed: the contents of “messages” and the meaning of signs connected with an apparition; whether the attention is focused on God, or the seer or some strange idea; whether the seer is healthy physically and mentally; whether there are fruits of conversions and growth in holiness. Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria Madre di Gesù. Sintesi storico-salvifica*, EDB, Bologna 1992, p. 351-352, also G. COLZANI, “Apparizioni”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.), *Mariologia*, p. 136-144. In the present legislation, the diocesan bishop is the competent authority to judge the authenticity of apparitions with the help of a commission, but the Episcopal Conference and the Holy See can intervene. Cf. also S. M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio*, p. 212-220.



having much in common, each member has his own temptations, sufferings and successes. Those of the founder shall be looked at here as an example for the whole Society. The founder of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love – Priests, Brothers, Sisters and members of the Hearts of Love, being at present still alive, shall be looked at, with his family background, in his efforts to teach others the devotion of the Hearts of Love and how it developed, with the difficulties he encountered, and the situation of his foundation in 2015.<sup>379</sup>

### 1.3.1. The family and childhood of the founder

Louis Maria Montfort Chukwuemeka Okaa (Okanwikpo) was born on the second Sunday of Advent, 8.12.1957 in Orlu<sup>380</sup>, a rural town in Imo State, Nigeria, in a Catholic monogamic family of the Igbo tribe. The parents were Chief Louis Okanwikpo, born ca. in 1910 (or 1914?) in Orlu, † June 2007, and Mrs. Cecilia Okanwikpo, née Agbaneje in ca. in 1927 in a neighbouring village, † June 2002; they were baptised at the age of ca. 9 years, the father thus belonging to the early successes of Shanahan and his co-workers. The father was a highly respected person in the town of Orlu, first counsellor of the "Eze", the traditional king of the town, who was born in 1900 (probably) and died 2001. Chief Louis served the Church as a catechist and headmaster of the mission school, he was president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Orlu<sup>381</sup> and was made a "Knight of St. Molumba". His wife served as churchwarden and member of the Legion of Mary,<sup>382</sup> she was cherished as a Good Mother<sup>383</sup>, as an intelligent trader<sup>384</sup> and a hardworking person. The French doctor, who saved the mother, when she bled seriously after the delivery of the 4<sup>th</sup> child, bore the name Montfort, so the father gave this name to the newborn child, together with the Igbo name "Chukwuemeka", which means "The great God has done (marvels for me)".<sup>385</sup> He has two elder brothers: Kilian and John, one elder sister, Veronica; two younger sisters: Patricia, and Cecilia, who became a Daughter of Charity in 1984. The lastborn, Engineer Emmanuel, died in late

<sup>379</sup> Many of the facts have no proof in any published work or study, but only in the testimony of persons. The type of person testifying will be usually specified.

<sup>380</sup> The parents' house is in Umueleke village (that time); the quarter in 2005 separated from Umueleke and became "Umuduruanyaehie village". The address is B.S.C. Road 118A, very near to the cathedral. The town Orlu actually consists of many rural villages, the number and height of buildings are continuously growing, but it can be expected that during the early 60's, the years of childhood of the founder, life was peaceful and simple, though filled with work as bringing water from the spring to the house, collecting firewood, farmwork, and of course with many discussions in the village arising from family conflicts, conflicts between pagans and authorities of the Church, discussions on ownership of land and similar matters.

<sup>381</sup> Cf. the profile of Sr. Cecilia Okanwikpo, p. 5 in the brochure remembering her silver jubilee of profession on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2010. (Appendix 10).

<sup>382</sup> Cf. the testimony of Fr. Pius C. Ohia on p. 13 of the brochure of the 25<sup>th</sup> priestly jubilee of Fr. Montfort. (Appendix 9).

<sup>383</sup> This is a title which was conferred on her as to someone who gave a good Catholic education to her children. The author also heard several stories about the love and mutual respect between the two parents of Father Montfort, and personally always noticed only harmony between them.

<sup>384</sup> This is the testimony of Bishop Gregory Ochiagha which the author heard at the burial of Mama Cecilia.

<sup>385</sup> She was thought to have delivered well and was left alone to arrange herself, when she started bleeding. It took time before it was discovered. She needed several blood transfusions. An Igbo pagan, considering blood as the life of the person, never donates blood. It was seminarians who used to be requested to donate blood in such cases, and also mother Cecilia was saved with the blood of seminarians. This is the story of Papa Louis Okanwikpo, when asked by the author about whether there was anything unusual about the birth of Father Montfort. The incident made the parents to cherish the child in a special way. Later, seminarian Montfort donated his blood for another person. The mother told the

2007. The background of a good, Catholic, respected, hardworking and united family transmitted to Montfort a healthy self-esteem, the sense of responsibility, the readiness for sacrifice and it allowed him to grow in a religious atmosphere, with deepened knowledge of the Catholic catechism.<sup>386</sup>

Montfort was circumcised eight days after the birth, according to the tradition of the tribe, and baptised at the age of 40 days. In his early childhood, he knew French and Irish Spiritans at Orlu, and Irish Holy Rosary Sisters.<sup>387</sup> As a child, he got an infection which made his two small fingers to be bent and painful, and up till today, the joints of the two fingers are stiff. Surely he had malaria several times in his childhood and later. During the Nigerian Civil War, Orlu was never a battle field. In 1963-1969 Montfort went to the Holy Trinity Primary School.<sup>388</sup> The eldest brother went to war with ca. 15 other young men of the village; none of them died by shooting.<sup>389</sup> In the academic year 1969/70, Montfort struggled with his family for survival of themselves and others in the terrible famine during the war, by cultivating every possible piece of land, and by arduous prayer.<sup>390</sup> It gave Montfort a first experience of great suffering, especially through solidarity with the many starving refugees and orphans. After the war, Kilian, the first-born, emigrated to Austria and he married there. In 1970-1974 Montfort went to Bishop Shanahan College, a 20-min-walk from his house, during which he used to say the rosary. Out of love for people it happened that he prayed till being very exhausted.<sup>391</sup> 1974 he entered the diocesan seminary at Okpala, and in 1975 the seminary in Enugu.<sup>392</sup> The library (and the market of books available for Nigerian students)

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sisters that this was not the only strange thing in this pregnancy. During the nine months she used to be very weak, but felt unable to eat properly, as if already completely satisfied, and she had strange dreams.

<sup>386</sup> Despite such knowledge, and considering the rural surrounding, the Prayer and devotion of the Hearts of Love is hardly explainable by mere human effort in prayer and contemplation of the boy Montfort, but should be understood as a gift from above, as Fr. Montfort used to underline.

<sup>387</sup> The two sentences: according to Fr. Montfort in comments to the author.

<sup>388</sup> Cf. "Curriculum vitae", in M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 410.

<sup>389</sup> According to the testimony of an elder of the village, which the author heard during a celebration.

<sup>390</sup> Also because the Bishop Shanahan College, where he should have gone for his further education, was used during the war as a military camp.

<sup>391</sup> Cf. 18/9/2007, in the sermon at Mass during the day in Nigeria, he mentioned how he once on a second November prayed exceedingly long at the cemetery, out of compassion for the poor souls in purgatory. (Appendix 4). The catholic doctrine of the purgatory is based on Mt 12,31-32, Lk 16,19-26 and especially on 1 Cor 3,11-15. It is the idea that after death the situation of each person is different according to the quality of each, and that after death, there is an exam which is decisive for the ultimate destiny of each. The exam in St. Paul seems to be taking place in the final Judgement, as it was seen in the Judaism of his time. The term "purgatory" (and "limbo") exist only since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but the prayers for the dead were offered since the first century. Early Fathers as Tertullian expected only martyrs to go to heaven directly, all others were believed to be waiting in various conditions of punishment (especially thirst) or consolation ("refrigerium") for the return of Christ. Clemens of Alexandria and Origene took up the idea of the ancient Greek philosophy that any ordeal from God is never a mere punishment but always a means of education and salvation in a process of purification. Origene applies this idea also to the fire of hell, as in his time, what is called purgatory today, was defined as an upper part of hell, and St. Augustine condemns him for that as a laxist. Cf. J. LE GOFF, *La nascita del Purgatorio*, Einaudi, Torino 1982, especially p. 53, 56-57, 64, 66, 81, referring to Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4, 34, Clemens, *Stromata* 7, 26 and Augustine, *Civita Dei*, 21, 13-14. St. Augustine writes so bitterly against Origene after 413, because of some "merciful" groups of people who had the opinion that no matter what, at the end all would be saved, or at least all Catholics, or all those who did almsgiving in their lives.

<sup>392</sup> Cf. "Curriculum vitae", in M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 410: Bigard Memorial Seminary, which was built with the help of Propaganda Fide (Opus Sancti Petri Apostoli) for Western and Eastern Nigeria. It was inaugurated in 1951. The Spiritan Missionaries were in charge of it. Since 1970, Nigerian professors became in charge, and Bigard trained for few years not only Nigerian seminarians, but also young men from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cameroon. In 1975, there were over 600 seminarians, the rector was Albert K. Obiefuna until he became pioneer bishop of Akwa in 1977. Cf. AAS 70 (1978) 65. Mons. Cyriacus S. Mba was since 1975 a teacher and after Obiefuna rector of Bigard till 1986. The theological and philosophical faculty are affiliated to the Pontifical University Urbaniana, Rome. Cf. <<http://bigardenugu.org/brief-history.html>> and <<http://www.orludiocese.org/priests/1959priests/Mrsg.%20C.S.%20Mba.html>>, seen on 15/10/2014.

must have contained mainly books of European authors ca. of the years 1900-1960,<sup>393</sup> and of course the documents of Vatican II.

### **1.3.2. The foundation of the Society of the Hearts of Love**

The charism of an authentic founder is based on the “chewed” Holy Scriptures, the Word of God meditated in prayer, and thus on Christ, but also on the Church, its tradition and teachings, and becomes fruitful in being transmitted. The spirituality of the Two Hearts of Love, i.e. the charism of Father Montfort, will be explained in the sub-chapters 2.2. to 2.4. Here, the historical development in the founder and subsequently in his foundation shall be expounded in the beginning history of the Society of the Hearts of Love. It is well known that the charism of love cannot develop to maturity in human beings without sufferings; both the founder and the members were faced with temptations and troubles. First of all, there are the temptations which are always there in community life: expecting much from oneself and from others, and feeling offended when others expect too much of oneself. By character easily annoyed, the founder had to learn to be patient with himself and with all<sup>394</sup>, accepting even opposition due to human weaknesses as a way how God guided him. Father Montfort welcomed sufferings generally in a spirit of penitence.<sup>395</sup> The externally visible difficulties shall be presented in the following.

#### **1.3.2.1. Historical beginning of the charism in Nigeria**

The charism of the devotion of the Hearts of Love was received as a gift in mystical experiences<sup>396</sup> of the founder and it was encouraged by the teachings of the Church.<sup>397</sup> Also some historical incidents and the social surrounding helped Montfort to develop his charism. The experience of the war with its hatred of the enemy and the decay of morals made him see very clearly from his youth the importance of love, charity and purity as the only powers which can overcome human catastrophes, which threaten to destroy the world. The Protestant Christians in

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<sup>393</sup> Father Montfort said in 2014 when asked by the author which books he remembered from the seminary time as enriching: “All enriched me in one way or the other. I devoured books... many were of German authors. E.g. in moral theology, I read Hermann Pesch.” († 1926, Pesch published his main work in that same year.) Probably many books available were more spiritual than scientific.

<sup>394</sup> Often someone needed a lot of time to be able to overcome his feelings and accept the solutions or proposals of Father Montfort, and the founder had to bear with the uncomfortable situation(s) and with accusations from the members. The fact that the foundation was intercontinental (Nigerian-German) from the very beginning of the first novitiate did increase the spiritual sufferings of the founder for misunderstandings among the Sisters. The Sisters from the two different cultures have different understandings of a good prayer life, of the importance of communication, of how to express annoyances, wishes and corrections, of what type of work a religious sister can do or should not seek to do, of how to organize the community life, of the importance of eating together, and so on. The founder, knowing well the two cultures and world views, understood each sister and used to indicate solutions, which were not always understood and promptly accepted. Some Sisters of temporary profession and many aspirants left the congregation, in different years, not being able to cope with such unsettled community life of the pioneer time.

<sup>395</sup> Cf. e.g. a sermon in Switzerland on 28/5/2011: “I do not understand someone who ‘left all for the sake of Christ’, and then complains about hardships: you, thus, lose the glory, but the pain remains!” (Appendix 4).

<sup>396</sup> Cf. sub-chapter 2.3.2. on the experience of prayer.

<sup>397</sup> One day, Fr. Montfort found an article in a spiritual periodical, headed: “John Paul II urges devotion to the Two Hearts”. This “urging” happened only in very few minor interventions of the Pontifical Magisterium, but generally the devotion of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary in their unity is well grounded, accepted and promoted in the Catholic doctrine and tradition. Cf. sub-chapters 2.1.1.1, 3.1.2., 3.3. and 3.4.

Nigeria often use polemics against the veneration of the Virgin Mother. This became to Montfort, from earliest years, an incentive to contemplate the mystery of Mary more deeply, wishing to make her known.<sup>398</sup>

According to his statements, when he was about five years old (ca. in 1963), Montfort saw one evening a mighty angel in the mission church of Orlu.<sup>399</sup> It gave him a vague idea that God was calling him for something. He had some visions of light and locutions already in earliest years. When he was 8 years old, since his First Holy Communion at Christmas 1966, he began to hear and feel Jesus *within* himself, especially after receiving Him. Christ began to draw him nearer by asking him for prayer and visits to the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>400</sup> Montfort responded with obedience to these requests, even if it meant overcoming his natural shyness, as when he saw himself called to kiss Jesus in the statue of Our Lady bearing the child Jesus in the church after mass. The Biafran War (1967-70) and the year of famine (69/70) strongly increased his zeal in prayer and his trust in God, as Orlu was spared from becoming a place of fighting, and none of his family died. After the war, Montfort introduced and headed “Block-Rosary” meetings for children in his village, he joined the Legion of Mary<sup>401</sup> and went for ever longer visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> October 1972, coming from Church after nightfall, he heard a voice: “Do not fear. I have a mission for you. It is Me. You shall tell the people about my mother. So many do not know her, do not love her. You shall make her known.” He ran home and in his doubt he prayed to see Jesus and Mary, if the voice should be from God. In the darkness of the “Obi” [parlour] at home he

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<sup>398</sup> According to some comments of the founder.

<sup>399</sup> He told the author that as the son of the catechist, it was his duty to lock the church in the evening. He saw that angel standing peacefully in the church, but the angel was so tall that he saw him only from the feet to the belt. According to how the founder told the story to Mons. R. LAURENTIN, Montfort was afraid in the darkness of the church, and the luminous (guardian) angel gave him the courage to fulfil his duty. Cf. “Montfort Okaa”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dizionario delle “apparizioni”*, p. 1019.

<sup>400</sup> He kept his experiences under great secrecy, for many years. One man of his village, when the author asked him whether he remembers something extraordinary from the childhood of Montfort, answered Yes, “He used to carry his Bible even to the farmwork”. He knew of no supernatural happening. Father Montfort told the author in 2009, when asked, that sometimes he went into ecstasy. The author never witnessed anything like that, although she presumes that she has been present often when he received a vision or locution, because she often saw his face changing expression and he then began to write something in booklets or in the note-book which the author knew as reserved by him for “messages”. When asked, he said that sometimes he touched the heavenly appearance. But what was important to him was not the sensual experiences but the messages, which helped him to mould his life and talking. He, thus, followed, without knowing it, the behaviour of St. Mechthild of Magdeburg (Cf. F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, Echter, Würzburg 2003, p. 99.) and the teaching of ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, transl. and ed. by E. Allison Peers, Image, New York 1958- 2<sup>nd</sup> printing 1962, p. 158, book II, chap. XVI, n. 12: “Wherefore the eyes of the soul must ever be withdrawn from all these apprehensions which it can see and understand distinctly, which are communications through sense, and do not make for a foundation of faith, or for reliance on faith, but must be set upon that which it sees not, and which belongs not to sense, but to spirit [...]; and it is this which leads the soul to union in faith [...]. And thus, these visions will profit the soul substantially, in respect for faith, when it is able to renounce the sensible and intelligible part of them”.) Montfort submitted as a young priest the booklet of his early messages to Bishop Ochiagha, and thus, it got lost to the Society of the Hearts of Love. Father Montfort remembers some of the contents and sometimes mentions them, but he cannot remember exactly the year and the dates of single visions/locutions from these early times. In his public letter of May 2001, he states that Jesus began talking to him when he received his first Holy Communion. (In that instance, Jesus asked the boy what he wishes from God, and Montfort answered: ‘Make me your priest!’ thus receiving his priestly vocation.) Jesus soon asked him to come to him daily (to the tabernacle), and to bring those who detest the name of Jesus also, teaching them to love Him. Cf. TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love. GOD’s Only Solution in the Two Hearts of Love*, BoD, Norderstedt 2010, p. 11.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL, The devotion and Society of the Hearts of Love - the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary - the Two Hearts ever united in Love*, s.e., Eichstätt 1999, p. 97. (Appendix 6.)

saw a very great light approaching, which followed him inside his room.<sup>402</sup> After he did penance for running away, he received a comforting vision [without words] of Our Lady, later a vision of Jesus in tears, asking him to make a Holy Hour every day, to comfort Him.<sup>403</sup> Visions, locutions and dreams became more and more frequent.

A person does not exist without relationships; everyone needs others, and Montfort experienced this in his visions. He saw himself alone as insufficient to collect all the graces Jesus is pouring out on the cross.<sup>404</sup> He responded to this “revelation” of his insufficiency by beginning to teach his family members and fellow schoolchildren acts of Love towards Jesus and Mary and he went regularly to Mass. According to Father Montfort, in 1970, “the Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary was officially formally established in Orlu.”<sup>405</sup> At that time, he did not yet know the Prayer of the Two Hearts of Love, which must have been<sup>406</sup> written between the mid of October 1972 and the beginning of 1973, adding part after part on different occasions.<sup>407</sup> Father Montfort saw the “Block-Rosary” as a beginning of the Society, as there was a communion of people (children) loving Jesus and Mary in regular prayers and works of love as help for poorer children, or visits to the aged.<sup>408</sup> When the boy wrote down the Prayer of the Hearts of Love in English, he taught it to his “communion of people” and his family.<sup>409</sup> In 1974, Jesus asked Montfort to found a community with those who would recite the Prayer of the Hearts of Love every day.<sup>410</sup>

In the seminary (early October 1974) he had many friends, and he introduced the Prayer of the Hearts of Love to them and to his formators. This Prayer and the wish to spread it had already become his life.<sup>411</sup> 1977-79 Montfort was in the new philosophy-campus of Bigard Seminary in Ikot Ekpene, under the then rector Gregory Ochiagha.<sup>412</sup> Parts of the seminary were still under

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<sup>402</sup> Cf. The sermon of Fr. Montfort on 2.2.2008, appendix 4: “I was still a small boy when this happened, I was reading a catechism book and saw the picture of our Lady carrying the Child Jesus, I made the sign of the cross on the picture and whispered with all my heart a prayer, “Mother Mary, Lord Jesus, I want to see you now, please come to me now.” I hardly finished this prayer when something happened. The whole room became dark, and the candle on my table had no more luminescence. Why? Because an extraordinary light was coming. I saw it coming to me at the table, I knelt down, covered my eyes and took fright and did what? And ran away.”

<sup>403</sup> Cf. the whole paragraph: early 1997, remembrances, appendix 4.

<sup>404</sup> He remembers, in the first important visions, how Jesus showed himself on the cross “with uncountable wounds all over His Body and they were bleeding. The blood was gushing all over and dropping on the ground. I tried to collect all the blood with my mouth and drink it but the flow was too much from too many wounds. Much of the blood flowed away on the ground. Then I tried to stop the flow with my hands pressing at some wounds with my fingers, but the wounds and the flow were too much. I was helpless. [...] He said to me: ‘*You alone cannot comfort me much. Bring your relations and friends to come to Me. Bring many people to visit Me and My house (Church) will be full and I will be happy, and forgive you (the world) your sins.*’” TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 12.

<sup>405</sup> M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 97. (Appendix 6).

<sup>406</sup> As mentioned in footnote 392, the booklet in which Montfort wrote down the first messages got lost.

<sup>407</sup> The founder of SHL insists that the devotion of the Hearts of Love is not his own invention, but a gift from God. Cf. the Prayer leaflets, always bearing on the front the writing: “This prayer is a gift of God’s Infinite Love for the whole world.” An ejaculation as “Jesus! Mary! I love you! Be appeased. Save souls! Amen.” may have been known in his family before 1972.

<sup>408</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 97. (Appendix 6).

<sup>409</sup> Many of them are still today members of SHL, coming for prayers to the “Sanctuary”.

<sup>410</sup> According to how Mons. R. LAURENTIN understood the explanation of Fr. Montfort. Cf. “Montfort Okaa”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dizionario delle “apparizioni”*, p. 1019. This message was probably given after Montfort, seeing the greatness of his mission to bring the Prayer of the Hearts of Love to the whole world, asked God to give him helpers.

<sup>411</sup> Probably, he felt encouraged in his personal experiences with God by the tradition of the Church as presented in the seminary.

<sup>412</sup> According to the documents available in the secretariate of the “Institutis Affilatis” of the Pontifical University Urbaniana, Montfort Chukwuemeka Okanwikpo was enrolled in Philosophy at “St. Joseph’s Major Seminary”, Ikot

construction, thus all seminarians had to learn a craftwork and help in the building. Montfort became a carpenter, constructing tables, chairs and shelves for the seminary. It is there that he began to talk (privately to close friends) about founding a religious congregation of the Two Hearts of Love.<sup>413</sup> From 1979-1983 he was in the seminary in Enugu. In 1979 he and his friends received permission from the rector of Bigard Memorial Seminary to form the SHL within the seminary.<sup>414</sup> Montfort then practised the devotion not only with others during the day, but he spent more and more time to pray this prayer alone at night. In December 1982, as a deacon, Montfort approached the bishop of the new diocese of Orlu, Rt. Rev. G. Ochiagha, and begged for the imprimatur for the Prayer of the Two Hearts of Love. The bishop, according to the remembrance of Fr. Montfort, replied “‘that such prayers receive the approval only when the person [author] is dead.’ However, he [...] permitted us to write it or type it out and give it to friends”.<sup>415</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1983, Rev. Montfort was ordained priest.<sup>416</sup> He was first posted as a curate to the parish St. Paul, Isu.<sup>417</sup> He begged the parish priest to let him invite people to join him in the devotion, and he obtained the permission. As he invited people to the Holy Hour (3-4pm), saying with them the rosary and also the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, many joined him.<sup>418</sup> Father Montfort began to practise fasting very much. He also developed his discipline of kneeling<sup>419</sup>, the discipline of keeping Vigil every night and of getting up early in the morning (before 6am)<sup>420</sup>. For over a year his knees were swollen, and he sometimes mentioned it as an encouragement to the members not to fear hardships.<sup>421</sup>

1984/85 he was sent to help the rector of Bonus Pastor junior seminary in Osina, both as a teacher of Latin in the seminary and as his vicar in the parish.<sup>422</sup> He asked and got the permission to keep the Holy Hour every Thursday afternoon in the church with the Prayer of the Hearts of Love. Especially the members of the Society of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus joined him.<sup>423</sup>

In 1986/87 he became a curate under the Vicar General in the parish Regina Pacis, Ihioma.<sup>424</sup> Again he obtained the permission for the devotion of the Hearts of Love from the parish priest, many joining him in prayers. Together with them, he translated the Prayer into Igbo and printed it for the first time, with permission from the Vicar General of Orlu.<sup>425</sup>

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Ekpene, and he was awarded the Bachelor Degree in Philosophy on 23/6/1979, reaching the total average: “Magna Cum Laude Probatus” = (92.44/100). According to his sister, Veronica Ofoegbu, Montfort was one of the favourites of rector G. Ochiagha, because of his intelligence, prayer-life, humility and obedience.

<sup>413</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 98. (Appendix 6).

<sup>414</sup> Cf. *Ivi*. The permitting rector was Monsignor Cyriacus S. Mba, who always remained a friend of Fr. Montfort.

<sup>415</sup> *Ivi*.

<sup>416</sup> Cf. “Curriculum vitae”, in M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 411. It was the special Holy Year of Redemption.

<sup>417</sup> Cf. *Ivi*.

<sup>418</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 99. (Appendix 6).

<sup>419</sup> In the OT, the usual position for prayer seems to be standing, though all the assembly and king David (1 Chr 29,20), Salomon (1Kg 8,54, 2 Chr 6,13), Hezekiah and the assembly (2 Chr 29,29) and Daniel (Dan 6,11) kneel and prostrate for prayer. In Luke, Jesus falls to his knees in the garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22, 41); since then the Christian Biblical leg-position mentioned at prayer (especially intensive supplication and adoration) is bent on the knees (Acts 7,60; 9,40; 20,36; 21,5; Eph 3,14) and in prostration (Rev 4,10).

<sup>420</sup> He always showed himself grateful when someone woke him up for prayers, even if he was very weak.

<sup>421</sup> Cf. the sermon in Holy Hour on 17/6/2011, in Mozelos, Portugal, appendix 4.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. “Curriculum vitae”, in M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 411.

<sup>423</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 98. (Appendix 6).

<sup>424</sup> Cf. “Curriculum vitae”, in M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 411.

<sup>425</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 99. (Appendix 6). Probably the permission was only oral.

From 1987-1992, he was posted to St. Kizito Secondary School, Umuchima, after the bishop had begged many other priests to build it up, and they all refused.<sup>426</sup> The bishop asked him privately whether he would be ready to open and head a newly built secondary school for the diocese. That meant construction work and poverty, as in Nigeria the priests are being sustained by their parishes. Father Montfort saw it as a call from God, as he believed that in this place the Society would blossom.<sup>427</sup> So he accepted and became first school principal of St. Kizito's Comprehensive Secondary School, Umuchima,<sup>428</sup> and it soon became the best school round about.<sup>429</sup> Father Montfort was the principal, but he was not allowed to handle the money of the income of the school: another person was made in charge of the purse. He was running the school without funds from the school; it was the Society of the Hearts of Love sustaining the school.<sup>430</sup> Every donation he got, he used it to build up the school he was in charge of, and he personally guided the children to a disciplined life. After some time, Father Montfort began to withdraw in his free time to a place in the midst of farmland, in Amaocha. Soon some people and school children followed him to join him in the prayers, Holy Hour and Vigils. Amaocha became a place of prayer for the members of the Two Hearts of Love.<sup>431</sup> The centre of the place consisted of a marble altar in an open field.<sup>432</sup>

<sup>426</sup> According to the testimony of Veronica Ofoegbu, sister of Father Montfort, in 2014.

<sup>427</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 99. (Appendix 6).

<sup>428</sup> Cf. "Curriculum vitae", in M. OKAA, *The transcendental Ideal*, p. 411.

<sup>429</sup> This is the testimony of Sr. Matilda Egbusinwa SHL, from Umuchima, p. 1 (Appendix 8) and of others. As the diocesan schools compete and compare themselves with each other and as the final exam is equal for all schools, the superiority of the school and its students was publicly known.

<sup>430</sup> According to the testimony of Veronica Ofoegbu, sister of Father Montfort, in 2014.

<sup>431</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 99-100. (Appendix 6). This place, which Father called "Centre of the Hearts of Love", is not a "healing centre", even if some people went there with the intention to request healing or another miraculous grace from God, and even if such graces were obtained there. In the brochure for the 25<sup>th</sup> priestly jubilee of Fr. Montfort, Rev. Fr. Jude-Mary Obiechina Cmf of the Claretian Institute of Philosophy, Nekede-Owerri, says about the Universal Centre of the Hearts of Love in Orlu in p. 22 (appendix 9): "Many miracles of grace and nature do occur daily in this holy centre." The author also heard testimonies of some men and some Sisters of some cases. Though the clearly testified cases are few, (cf. e.g. Sr. Matilda Egbusinwa and the 1988 new-born child of her brother, which vomited the milk through the nose, which they carried to many doctors who did not know what to do, which was finally brought to Father Montfort, who asked the family to pray and fast together with him, then the child was healed. The same Sister and other Sisters told the author of the case of a man working in the Ministry of Education with kidney insufficiency. Three doctors had told the man in 1992 (or '93?) he would die within a few days, and he felt that he still had to put in order many things in his family. He came to the Centre and special prayers were offered for him. He quickly got better and lived on for three more years and then died in peace.) The fame of Father Montfort as a healer and miracle worker must have been great in those years, though Nigerian Catholics talk more of Father Emmanuel M.P. Edeh and Father Ejike C. Mbaka (as healers), who established Catholic "prayer grounds", where people pray especially for healing and other graces. Father Montfort saw and used the place for his personal prayer and meditation, to which he invited others; a place for forming members in the spirituality of the Two Hearts of Love, a place for spreading the Catholic faith and the devotion of the Two Hearts of Love. He continued to establish such centres, wherever he found people who would stay there permanently and live the life described in sub-chapters 2.2.-2.4. Though Fr. Montfort withdrew a lot to the Centre for prayers, he also took a lively interest in the problems of the local Church. Two village communities had built a beautiful church together, then a conflict made them abandon the church and build two new ones. Father Montfort heard: "Please, do not let My Church be abandoned." (M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 100; appendix 6.) He bought a marble altar for the church and began to invite to prayers there. The feelings were so high that the parish priest, according to what the author heard from Fr. Montfort, once called it the "devil's altar". With a lot of patience and endurance he helped the two Catholic communities to reconcile. According to a hand-written testimony of Sr. Matilda Egbusinwa of Umuchima of 4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2003, p. 2-3 (appendix 8), he settled conflicts between the pagan Eze ("King") C. O. Okwaraonunihu of Umuchima and various young women of the town, whom the ruler drove away, as well as with some other groups in the town. With prayer, Father Montfort "perfectly settled all these conflicts and united all people together." Fr. Montfort visited many villages and kindreds in Umuchima, praying with them and inducing them to come to the Catholic Church, always with a lot of success, (This is also the remembrance of the founder in M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 101, appendix 6.) till about 98% of Umuchima was Catholic. (Even if this should not be very correct, there must have been a big difference against the about 58% Catholics for the whole diocese counted in 2007.) He encouraged the people to continue celebrating

There Father Montfort began to give a structure to the SHL. He organised the members in various circles, where they elected officers and began to organize their prayers and programs better. He instituted also a circle of volunteer workers: as every day sick people come to the place of prayer, it is the duty of the volunteers to assist them, and also to visit people in their homes or hospitals.

Father Montfort and his volunteers were often called by people, who requested special prayers. Sometimes, their main problem was fear, lacking the fullness of redemption which is in the Catholic Church, being pagans or having fallen away from the Catholic faith. Father Montfort visited them (if the parish priest in charge permitted it)<sup>433</sup>, prayed with them and induced many of them to come (back) to the communion of the Catholic Church.<sup>434</sup>

On 15<sup>th</sup> November 1987 the vicar general of the diocese of Owerri, Rt. Rev. Msgr. V.A. Chikwe (later bishop of Ahiara diocese, he died 2010), granted ecclesiastical approval (*Nihil obstat*) to the Prayer of the Hearts of Love through the mediation of a lay member of the Hearts of Love.<sup>435</sup>

### **1.3.2.2. The period of “testing” in Nigeria, 1989-1994**

It is to be noted that Father Montfort, after his ordination in July 1983 and till the bishop forced him to go to further studies in Germany in May 1994, was never made a parish priest, but always had to serve as a curate. Those near to Father Montfort presume that the reason was the devotion of the Hearts of Love, which gained him everywhere success among the people and rejection from many fellow clergies, and thus the need to “test the spirit”.

In 1987 at Umuchima some young people felt the call of God to be Brothers and Sisters of the Hearts of Love. Fr. Montfort accepted them as volunteer workers, along with other lay members, adults and youths, religious of other congregations and diocesan seminarians, who helped to realize many projects. When the aspirants had become quite a group of youths who seemed to be steady and serious, in early 1989, Father Montfort informed his bishop about his intention to found a congregation. Some Religious Sisters of other (Nigerian) congregations volunteered to help him as a formatress for his female aspirants (with the permission of their superiors). A small house was built at Amaocha as a “convent” of the sisters.<sup>436</sup> A Marist novice master, Bro. Bernard Okafor,<sup>437</sup> was also very eager to give lectures to the male and female aspirants.

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traditional feasts as the New Yam Festival, but he turned it into a Christian cultural celebration. (As requested by the bishops, cf. subchapter 1.2.1.3.)

<sup>432</sup> The author saw the abandoned place in 1998. A seminarian and neighbour of the Okanwikpo-family, Gerald Akari, helped to build the altar. He later had to leave Orlu diocese and became a priest of Aba diocese. He died in 2012.

<sup>433</sup> The founder habitually respects his fellow priests, and helping and guiding his younger fellow priests in a fatherly way. Thus, for his brochure of the 25<sup>th</sup> priestly anniversary, 24 clerics (bishops, Monsignors and priests) gave him congratulatory letters and messages, and four priests wrote testimonies about him. One priest thanks God “for His gift of you to the entire human race”, and signs “Your Son Fr. Christian Azubuike”, on p. 67. Fr. Nkem Hyginus M. V. Chigere in the same brochure, p. 73, recalls his “spiritual enrichment and support to my common vocation with you in the Priesthood and radical but dynamic encouragement to my God-given endowments and sacred abilities.” (Appendix 9).

<sup>434</sup> The author came to know some of the early volunteer workers, one she met in Germany, where he had emigrated to; the early sisters told her about visits to families in distress, and in 1997 and later she sometimes took part in such activities with Fr. Montfort.

<sup>435</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 100. (Appendix 6). The author never saw the said booklet. Fr. Montfort then began printing the prayer, indicating happily the obtained imprimatur.

<sup>436</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 101.

<sup>437</sup> He died in December 1998, after he had given several lectures to the author and her fellow novices.



In Umuchima, the young “Eze” (King) in 1989 was a pagan. Because of his diminished influence, his authority based on pagan traditions and fear of pagan gods, and more and more people joining the Catholic Church, Eze C. O. Okwaraonunihu of Umuchima began to use all his influence against the pastoral work of Fr. Montfort.<sup>438</sup> The hostility led to the utter destruction of the unfinished “convent” of the sisters at Amaocha in one night. The building blocks were even carried away, crosses were destroyed. It is only in December 2005 that Eze C. O. Okwaraonunihu, who then had become a Catholic himself, was induced by the parish priest to publicly seek reconciliation with Father Montfort and with God.<sup>439</sup> Because of the “persecution” in 1989 in Umuchima, Fr. Montfort moved the place of prayer for the Hearts of Love to Orlu to a little farmland hill belonging to his family, surrounded by palm oil plantations. He started afresh with the members to build up first of all an altar place on the hill top and a small adoration chapel. He informed the bishop about the new prayer centre. His Lordship instructed him to make it an open space, without residential buildings.<sup>440</sup> When the altar on the little hill-top at the “Sanctuary” was built, Father asked his bishop whether he could celebrate Mass there “for the thousands of Catholics who used to gather there”.<sup>441</sup> The place belonged to the territory of the cathedral parish. Bishop Ochiagha sent him to the cathedral administrator who also refused the responsibility to decide. As there was no prohibition, the founder began to celebrate public Masses on Thursday evenings.<sup>442</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1989 twelve girls<sup>443</sup> were solemnly accepted as candidates for the consecrated life in the Hearts of Love in the opening ceremony of the new Centre for the Hearts of Love in Orlu, which people soon began to call “Ugwu Nso” (Holy Mountain). Fr. Montfort built up workshops to train young people in sewing or farming. (This ended in 1994 when Father had to leave Nigeria). As the Centre of the Hearts of Love was growing, the cathedral administrator began to fear that it may “overshadow” the cathedral, and it seems he spoke to the bishop in this sense.<sup>444</sup>

On 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1990, the bishop told Fr. Montfort that he must no longer celebrate Mass at the Sanctuary. He obeyed: only daily rosary processions and Eucharistic adoration remained the preparations for the Feast of Annunciation at the Sanctuary. On 24<sup>th</sup> of March the bishop summoned him again and, calling it a test of obedience, allowed the celebration of Masses again. Father Montfort remembers: “I could sense a heavenly, a wonderful and unspeakable relief in his own spirit. Then he said to me: ‘Go my son, I know who you are. I was your rector in the seminary and I

<sup>438</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 101-102. (Appendix 6).

<sup>439</sup> The author was present at the day of reconciliation, when the “King” and many others of the village asked pardon of God and of Father Montfort. The Eze confessed all he did those 15-16 years ago, and also some others did a public confession, but in Igbo language, and nobody translated into English.

<sup>440</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 102. (Appendix 6).

<sup>441</sup> *Ivi*.

<sup>442</sup> Cf. *Ivi*.

<sup>443</sup> Among them were Amuche Rosanne Iheanacho, Augustina Okereke (who served as preparer, i.e. superior of the sisters in 1997/1998), Ngozi Mbagho (the first female volunteer worker of Hearts of Love in Umuchima), Matilda Egbusinwa (who served as preparer of the sisters in 1994-1997), Philomena Uzoamaka Enwereaku (who served as preparer of the sisters in 2006-2010), Mary Ohineme and Barbara U. Nwagu. The other five went away before 1997.

<sup>444</sup> According to the testimony of Veronica Ofoegbu in 2014 to the author, after Bishop Ochiagha became Emeritus in 2008, younger priests suggested to Bishop Augustine Ukwuoma in a meeting of priests of the diocese to call back Father Montfort and to allow him to develop the Centre of the Hearts of Love. She reported that she heard that in that moment, the Monsignor who was cathedral administrator in the years 1988-92 stood up and said: “It is not possible; if you do so, Bishop Ochiagha would get a heart-attack!”

ordained you priest. I know what you are. Go and may the Holy Spirit continue to guide you to do the work entrusted to you and to lead the people who come to you.”<sup>445</sup>

Father gave the first set of aspirants a blue postulant habit, and in the Chrism Mass on 12<sup>th</sup> of April 1990 they appeared for the first time in public. On 20<sup>th</sup> of April the bishop ordered Fr. Montfort to submit to him the habits and he forbade the annual Easter congress at the Centre of the Hearts of Love.<sup>446</sup> The founder obeyed again, but acts of repression from clerics and others continued till 1992.<sup>447</sup> The cathedral administrator invited two honoured senior priests to come to all his (many) station churches and to condemn in their homilies the Society of the Hearts of Love and the going to the Centre for the Hearts of Love (the Sanctuary).<sup>448</sup> One man went round and controlled the children's prayer groups. Whenever he found the devotion of the Hearts of Love among them, he punished them.<sup>449</sup> Some priests denied Holy Communion to any person who wore a badge or scarf of the Hearts of Love.<sup>450</sup> The cathedral administrator threatened that the members of the Hearts of Love would not get any honour in the Church during life and no Christian burial when they died. He also advised people to withdraw their children from St. Kizito's school.<sup>451</sup>

It was said that Father Montfort was disobedient to his bishop. Indications and prohibitions from his superiors, which were in the limits of their power of governance, the founder used to obey promptly. He obeyed the liturgical norms of the Church, e.g. those indications of the Nigerian Bishops for Masses with prayer for the sick and the troubled, always directing those who were seeking his blessing to accept the Will of God in everything. As Bishop Ochiagha in 1991 began to build a new cathedral and requested all parishes and organizations to contribute, Fr. Montfort offered the financial help of the Society, which was accepted.<sup>452</sup> The cases in which Father Montfort would not obey is when a superior told him to stop the devotion of the Hearts of Love, to stop saying the vigil even in private, to reduce his fasting, to stop prostrating before the Blessed Sacrament: to stop or reduce loving God. On the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1990, during a recollection for priests at Osina, Bishop Ochiagha declared: “I am saying this before the Blessed Sacrament: Montfort is not disobedient to me. He has my approval and blessing to carry on

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<sup>445</sup> M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 103-104. (Appendix 6).

<sup>446</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *A solemn appeal*, Letter to the Nigerian Bishops' conference, 1999, p. 16. (Appendix 6).

<sup>447</sup> According to the testimony of Veronica Ofoegbu in 2014, especially in the years 1989-1992, the family Okanwipko was treated like outcasts in the town. Before, no priest passed the house without saying hello to his parents. Now, any priest who associated with Father Montfort received immediate punishment from the bishop. Seminarians who did so had to change the diocese in order to reach to the ordination. Even lay-people came to him only in secret.

<sup>448</sup> Cf. *Ivi*. Equally the testimony of Veronica Ofoegbu in 2014, who said that the cathedral administrator and some other priests who agreed with him, preached in various places against the Sanctuary of the Hearts of Love. According to her, these homilies received a very negative and disagreeing reaction from the various parish-congregations. E.g. in one place, when the priest asked where God can be found, all the children shouted: “Ugwu Nso!” (Holy Mountain, the popular name of the Universal Centre for the Two Hearts of Love.) In another place, an eminent member of the parish stood up during the sermon and said aloud to the priest he should stop talking against Father Montfort, that “that boy is better than all of you!”

<sup>449</sup> Cf. *Ivi*. One of these children is now a Sister of the Hearts of Love, Sr. Emmanuella Chikodi Anunike. The children believed that the man was sent by the cathedral administrator.

<sup>450</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 17. (Appendix 6). To one member it happened still in 1999, when she was already a novice, as she went for an urgent visit to her home parish.

<sup>451</sup> Cf. *Ivi*.

<sup>452</sup> According to the use in the Catholic Church in Nigeria, a document was given to any person or society donating a higher amount to the Church, especially during projects like the cathedral building, which became an enormous dome among the village houses and palm trees of Orlu, easily recognizable in the Google-map of Orlu. During bishop's masses, it is still insufficient for the many faithful. The founder is holding the “document of recognition” dated on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1991, in which the bishop thanks and recognizes the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love” for the donation.

with the apostolate he is doing!” He requested written information about the Society and Devotion of the Two Hearts of Love from Father Montfort. The same wrote it and submitted it, but without receiving a reply.<sup>453</sup> With direct and indirect (through others) actions, the bishop made Father understand that he was not at ease with the new foundation, while being happy with his pastoral work, without telling the founder any reason. According to how obedience was understood in his culture, it was not right to ask any “Why?” Thus the young priest continued to obey perfectly the clear orders of his superior, while trying his best to continue doing as much as possible the Will of God according to how he understood it.

The bishop proposed to Fr. Montfort in 1991 to go to Europe for studies. Fr. Montfort replied that, if he would go, he would die.<sup>454</sup> The bishop then left his proposal aside for three years. Early in 1992 the cathedral administrator met with the pagan “Eze” of Umuchima and together they met the bishop, on account of SHL. The general relocation of priests took place. Father Montfort was not located anywhere. He carried his things to the bishop’s house, where he “stayed” without having a room or receiving food.<sup>455</sup> In February 1992 Fr. Montfort was sent for a one month retreat into a convent of monastic Brothers. In many places in Africa this is the usual punishment for diocesan priests whom the bishop wants to bring back to their senses.<sup>456</sup> Father went first to Ewu, than to the Abbey of Our Lady of Mt. Calvary Cistercian monastery Awhum (Enugu).<sup>457</sup> Then, through the intercession of the Eze of Orlu, Bishop Ochiagha assigned Father Montfort as curate to St. Teresa’s parish Mbato, with the instruction given to the parish priest not to give any chance to Father Montfort for bringing the devotion of the Hearts of Love into the parish. He was not free to receive visitors there. Later, the bishop told Father to choose one day in the week for celebrating Mass at the Centre for the Hearts of Love. Father Montfort chose to continue on Thursday, the day of the Holy Eucharist. Bishop Ochiagha declared the permission for him to leave his parish work and go on Thursdays to the Centre also to the parish priest,<sup>458</sup> after the same had locked Father Montfort out several times from the parish house on coming back from the sanctuary. Meanwhile, in Orlu, the cathedral-administrator continued his antagonism. E.g. ending of August 1992, during the consecration at Mass, he began to say that Father Montfort is a mad man, because of his fasting and prostrating, and that all those who go to the Sanctuary of the Hearts of Love are mad. As he did not stop talking in this way, all ran away from that Mass which ended thus.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> In M. OKAA, *A solemn appeal*, p. 17, (appendix 6) Father Montfort said that after waiting for a reply for a long time, a senior parish priest got annoyed with him for visiting a family of Father Montfort’s own kindred in the parish under his care. In his annoyance, he began to boast “Do you know that the Bishop has handed your case over to me? [...] Now you will see what will happen.” Despite such threats, the bishop did not close down the Sanctuary or the Society in his diocese.

<sup>454</sup> According to what the founder told the sisters several times.

<sup>455</sup> According to the testimony of Veronica Ofoegbu, sister of Father Montfort, in 2014, the family then heard from many places in which priests of the diocese announced in their parishes that Father Montfort has been excommunicated. The author has the doubt whether the priests maybe used the term “excardinated”, basing their announcement on the knowledge that he has not been given a post as a diocesan priest. The laity may have misunderstood the term. In that month, he was not allowed to come close to the altar, talk less of celebrating Mass publicly, but he sat with the people, attending the Mass in the cathedral, his home-parish, according to the testimony of the same Veronica Ofoegbu.

<sup>456</sup> The bishops used to inform the abbots that the priest is coming for punishment and is to be supervised.

<sup>457</sup> The paragraph cf. M. OKAA, *A solemn appeal*, p. 17-18. (Appendix 6). The first Sisters of the Hearts of Love remember this time as a strong trial, for they did not know where their Father was, nor how long it would last.

<sup>458</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 105-106. (Appendix 6).

<sup>459</sup> According to the testimony of Veronica Ofoegbu, sister of Father Montfort, in 2014. Also Father Montfort had told the author that at St. Teresa’s parish, when he was hearing confession and it was 12 o’clock, he said the Angelus with

The candidates for the consecrated life in the unapproved Institutes grew to about 50. The Society issued a Prayer leaflet English/Igbo in a large quantity. Father Montfort was invited and made journeys to places all over the country: Lagos, Abuja-Suleja, Kano, Jos<sup>460</sup>, and others. Everywhere he taught the prayer and founded prayer groups of the Hearts of Love. In 1993 he got a stomach ulcer.<sup>461</sup>

### 1.3.2.3. The extension of the radius of action to the international field

At the beginning of 1994 the bishop told Fr. Montfort again that now he had to go to Europe for studies, he should leave all about Hearts of Love in the hands of God.<sup>462</sup> The decision to obey the bishop in this case was very difficult for Father Montfort. While many Igbo priests are longing to be sent to Europe for studies, the care for the numerous members of the Hearts of Love in Nigeria seemed more urgent to him.<sup>463</sup> His relations helped him to pack his things, as he was very confused.

On 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1994 Father Montfort had his flight to Germany for further studies, according to the will of his bishop. In 1994/95 he did a language course in Isarlohn, and with some help he translated the Prayer into German. The parish priest of St. Aloysius gave him permission to celebrate Mass and say the Prayer on Thursdays in the chapel of the hospital.<sup>464</sup> In spring 1995 he chose philosophy and started his doctoral course in Paderborn, as he received his study purse from that diocese.<sup>465</sup> Prof. Norbert Fischer accepted him as doctoral father. He suggested to Fr. Montfort to study Kant and Levinas. Later, unsatisfied with the philosophy of the two chosen authors, the student insisted on adding a chapter about the Igbo understanding of God. In 1995 Prof. Fischer got a call to the Catholic University of Eichstätt, and as he changed in autumn to that place, Fr. Montfort went along. He got a room in the seminary of Eichstätt and for prayers he used to go to the near cathedral.<sup>466</sup> In Germany, Father Montfort suffered the change of food, climate<sup>467</sup> and the confusion of living in a not well understood culture<sup>468</sup>.

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the people and then added the prayer of the Hearts of Love, as he usually did. Immediately the parish priest jumped in and stopped him, shouting that the bishop told him not to allow Fr. Montfort to bring 'this leprosy' into the parish!

<sup>460</sup> According to what the author heard from Father Montfort, the then Archbishop of Jos, Mons. Gabriel Ganaka, once wrote a letter to Bishop Ochiagha, asking him to let him have Father Montfort incardinated in his own archdiocese. But Mons. Ochiagha did not agree, neither did Father Montfort ask for it.

<sup>461</sup> According to what he told the author in 2009. Maybe it was only gastric reflux. He said that he did three days of dry fasting, and the problem disappeared until 2007.

<sup>462</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 106. (Appendix 6).

<sup>463</sup> In *Ivi* he remembers: "Through the Secretary to the pastoral council I pleaded with his Excellency to send another priest, but he insisted that I should go. I consulted the bishop's secretary and expressed my concern about abandoning the devotion and Society of the Hearts of Love. [...] Many saw it as an exile. [...] With tears but complete submission to the will of God ever guiding His Church I left for studies overseas."

<sup>464</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 106-107. (Appendix 6).

<sup>465</sup> He received 1500 DM per month, of which he was able to save roughly 500 DM each month.

<sup>466</sup> There he met the author, a student who did her training for primary school teaching at the university and searching for her vocation. He gave her the Prayer of the Hearts of Love in its first German translation. Fr. Montfort tried to evade questions about who wrote the Prayer, and when and where? by answering that it was a small Nigerian boy who is not important at all. When the author, after some investigations, was utterly sure about the identity of that "small boy" and confronted him, it brought him into great embarrassment of being discovered.

<sup>467</sup> The author once saw him vomiting in Eichstätt, he sometimes laughed about the "strange" food served in the seminary. He often suffered a bad cold.

<sup>468</sup> He came to Paderborn with his manual type-writer, which he had used in Nigeria for his studies; he had to beg fellow students to teach him how to use a computer, which he learned quickly. It took him more time to learn how to talk to the people. The simple announcement of the truth, which was successful in Nigeria, in so far as it came from a

The first “pilgrimage” from Germany to the “Holy Mountain” was planned and carried out in March 1997.<sup>469</sup> The founder returned for the first time after three years of absence, together with five German members<sup>470</sup> of the Society. Around 30 of the Sisters and a few of the Brothers were still with the Hearts of Love, in spite of the spiritual and material difficulties; some had changed the program of their life. With the five Germans, Father Montfort visited his bishop, G. Ochiagha; the Archbishop of Owerri, A. Obinna; the Archbishop of Jos, G. Ganaka, and the Bishop of Okigwe, A. Ilonu; they also visited circles of members of the Society in Abuja, in Ahiara (where Bishop Chikwe by surprise passed and was greeted), Enugu, Isele-Uku, Lagos and Makurdi. It was His Excellency Anthony E. Ilonu who on 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1997 gave a field to the Father Founder and told him that he could come with his Sisters and build a convent and a school there.<sup>471</sup> Father Montfort put all his little money into that project of building in Okigwe, and with the help of some volunteer workers, the building was growing slowly also when the founder had gone back to his studies, in April ‘97. After his first journey to Nigeria, a job as curate in a small village belonging to Augsburg diocese was proposed to Father Montfort by the rector of the seminary in Eichstätt. He accepted the proposal and moved to Hütting, a village of 200 inhabitants.<sup>472</sup>

The Prayer of the Hearts of Love in German was newly translated; with it, he went to Paderborn, where he had already spoken with the Vicar of the Vicar General about the Prayer. The same imposed two additions, stressing the motherhood of Mary, and gave the Imprimatur on 8<sup>th</sup> of October 1997. The Prayer was printed as a coloured leaflet. Father Montfort introduced his work and the Prayer to the Vicar General of Augsburg and asked whether he could bring his prayer group to Hütting. The answer was yes, but the group must never grow above the actual 5 members.<sup>473</sup>

On Easter 1998 Father Montfort travelled a second time to Nigeria, participating with many members in the Pontifical beatification Mass of Father Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi on 22.3.1998 in Onitsha. The laying of a foundation stone for the half-built convent in Okigwe was celebrated with a Mass by His Excellency A. Ilonu (1<sup>st</sup> of April).<sup>474</sup> The founder presented the (Original) Constitutions to Bishop Ilonu.

On 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1998 Father Montfort flew again to Nigeria with three European members of the Society. With the little money he brought, the small convent in Okigwe was finished quickly.<sup>475</sup> On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 1998 Bishop Ilonu celebrated a Mass at the “convent”,

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priest, met a lot of resistance in Germany. He once complained that, although people do not practise the Christian life, they feel like professors in Christianity, not accepting any advice.

<sup>469</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 107. (Appendix 6).

<sup>470</sup> Including the author.

<sup>471</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 107-108. (Appendix 6).

<sup>472</sup> He planned to give all the income of this work to the construction work in Nigeria, but his professor did not agree that he did something outside the studies. He told the diocese of Paderborn that Fr. Montfort had accepted a job which bound him permanently, and Paderborn cancelled the study-purse. The pastoral work in Hütting was paid as if he were doing only a vacation job. In Hütting, on the Feast of the Hearts of Love ‘97, 8<sup>th</sup> of June, the author made the solemn declaration to become a volunteer worker of the Hearts of Love, with the intention of becoming a Sister of that congregation, in the presence of her family and friends. The following year, Father Montfort took time to instruct her more about the spirituality of the Hearts of Love, by sharing many of his spiritual experiences with her. She discovered that he was/is able to remain for hours in meditation, prayer and adoration. On 21<sup>st</sup> of June, the Feast of the Hearts of Love ‘98, she became clothed as a Postulant, in Hütting.

<sup>473</sup> As Father Montfort told the author. Among the members was the wife of the president of the university, Josephine Lobkowitz.

<sup>474</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 109. (Appendix 6).

<sup>475</sup> The first set of novices lived two in one room. There was almost no furniture in the first year.

and 13 aspirants were received as novices,<sup>476</sup> 10 as postulants. The Mother General (in office 1998-2010) of the Daughters of Divine Love (DDL) sent one of her novice mistresses, Sr. Maria Chibueze Aligbe DDL. Father Montfort went back to Germany.

On the Feast of the Hearts of Love 1999 a group of lay people from near Frankfurt came to Hütting to celebrate the Two Hearts of Love together with Father Montfort. They were a group with the name "Christus 2000", a Marian charismatic group already devoted to the Two Hearts.<sup>477</sup> They were led by Barbara Rodary, mother of Pascal and Mirjam. Father Montfort became the chief celebrant in the monthly masses with special prayers for the sick and troubled, organised in a convent church in Königstein, and the whole group enrolled in the Society; some of them became very active members. Sometimes Father Montfort had to choose between his mission and a comfortable place with income. The General Vicar of Augsburg heard through the parish priest of the assembly in Hütting in June 1999 and summoned the founder, because he had told him that the prayer group should never be more than five. He gave him an ultimatum: either he should leave the Society of the Hearts of Love and have no more contact with them, or he should leave Hütting. Father Montfort decided without hesitation. So he was told to go in July 2000.<sup>478</sup>

During his five short visits to Nigeria between 1997-2000, the founder continued to approach Bishop Ochiagha on behalf of the foundation of Sisters. In Lent 1999, already nearing the end of his philosophical studies in German cultural surroundings, where no educated person can do anything without knowing a reason for it, Father Montfort did a long prayer and fasting for himself (to get courage) and for his bishop (to not feel questioned in his authority by the question of Father Montfort). On Easter, the founder visited Nigeria for one week. He went and respectfully asked Bishop Ochiagha the reason why he would never allow the congregation to be founded. He received the following answer: "When I was made bishop, people came to me and wanted me to found this and that. Then I made up my mind that I will never found anything in my diocese, and I will never allow anyone to found anything in my diocese!!!"<sup>479</sup> Thus the bishop did not accuse Father Montfort of any fault, but gave a principle decision as the answer.

In the case of unjust accusations Father Montfort wrote apologies<sup>480</sup> and collected testimonies. Bishop Ilonu of Okigwe in 1999 got a problem with people in his diocese who moved some accusations against him. The case reached Propaganda Fide in Rome: Bishop Ilonu had to defend himself. Many other problems weighed on him, among them also the small community of Sisters of the Hearts of Love, as his Metropolitan (Owerri) and the brother bishop of Orlu did not want a new foundation. In a local assembly of bishops they even came to an official "agreement", that no more religious Institute should be founded in their area (unless by a bishop).<sup>481</sup> Father

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<sup>476</sup> Cf. *Ivi*.

<sup>477</sup> This is what the author understood, when she came to know them in the year 2000.

<sup>478</sup> According to what the author heard from Father Montfort.

<sup>479</sup> Whenever Father Montfort told this story, he used to add: because Ochiagha's own bishop, Bishop Nwedo, became involved in a scandal after he founded a female religious Institute. Bishop Gregory wanted to avoid scandal at all cost.

<sup>480</sup> Already in 1988/89 Fr. Montfort issued the first 8 "Come letters", letters to the members, together with a little brochure, presenting in a partly apologetic way the spirituality and the organisation of SHL. The brochure does not carry the name of the author, no year, editor or town. (Appendix 5.)

<sup>481</sup> Religious foundations proliferated in Igboland, and many of them with similar spirituality and goal. Thus, the bishops may have had some "good reason" to decree, against the opinion of Bishop Ilonu, that in Owerri province no new foundation should be permitted. To continue keeping the Sisters of the Hearts of Love in his diocese would have been an act of uncollegiality of Bishop Ilonu. The founder had come to hear about this decision in the metropolitan synod in Germany, and the author heard it from him.

Montfort wrote a long defence of the Hearts of Love (and of Bishop Ilonu) to all the Bishops of Nigeria, as he heard that they would assemble and among others talk about this new congregation. He sent the defence in many copies to Lagos, where it was shared to the bishops in Assembly.<sup>482</sup>

At Easter 2000 Father Montfort travelled to Nigeria, together with Barbara Rodary, her son Pascal, two other members of the Society and the mother of the first German novice. Repeatedly he met Bishop Ilonu. In the Easter Triduum, the bishop finally agreed for up to 5 novices to profess and promised to be present, but the celebration should be secret, in the Bishop's private chapel, and Father Montfort would receive the vows.<sup>483</sup> Father Montfort gave Sr. Chibueze the right to select the 5 Sisters, and she chose Sr. Lucy Okonkwo, Sr. Georgiana Obioma Nnakihe, Sr. Amuche Roseanne Iheanacho, Sr. Philomena Enwereaku and Sr. Maria "Chukwuemeka" Steidl. The celebration was done on Easter Sunday evening, 23.4.2000.<sup>484</sup> It came so sudden that only those relations and friends who were already in Okigwe were able to be present. The next day, the past event was celebrated in the convent's compound with parents and other relations.<sup>485</sup> Father Montfort also saw his bishop in Orlu and presented the results of his doctoral studies to him. It was not Summa Cum Laude, and the bishop told Father Montfort that he has to do a second doctoral work, to achieve better results.<sup>486</sup> The Sisters elected Sr. Obioma Georgiana Nnakihe as their "preparer". The first German sister was sent to Eichstätt to study theology.

Since the Holy Year 2000, Father Montfort started to talk openly and publicly about "messages" from God, Jesus, Mary, Angels and Saints, which he received, based on a commanding message that he should make it clear that this prayer is from God.<sup>487</sup> The six years in Germany,

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<sup>482</sup> The defence is quoted as M. OKAA, *A solemn appeal*, (partly integrated in appendix 6). The founder expressed his conviction that the devotion of the Two Hearts of Love is deeply rooted in the Catholic faith and tradition. He asked for a discerning mind and reminded of the right of the faithful to form Associations. On 7 pages he expounded the history of his foundation, from 1970-1998. He outlined the aim of the Society and its means of work. The defence ended with a strong appeal and prayer for the Will of God to be done.

<sup>483</sup> Father Montfort told the sisters later that at the beginning, the Bishop did not want to permit any profession at all, for fear of what his fellow bishops would say.

<sup>484</sup> "Souvenirs" of the profession or a brochure of the occasion were not printed, not to talk of invitation cards. The author does not know of any written document, apart from the vows signed that day, which can testify to it. Some photos were taken.

<sup>485</sup> Also of this occasion there exist only photos and remembrances of those who were there.

<sup>486</sup> According to what Father Montfort told the sisters.

<sup>487</sup> Due to this rather late date of making it public, and the fact that the apparitions to Father Montfort are not accompanied as such by extraordinary signs visible to others, the apparitions of the Hearts of Love are not in the list of "Marian apparitions of the twentieth century" up to 2007, of the University of Dayton, (updated Nov. 2009, cf. <<http://www.campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/aprtable.html>>, seen on 20/12/2011) and in many other researches on the phenomena. It seems only Mons. Laurentin, who was contacted by French SHL members and who permitted Father Montfort several times to visit him and to celebrate Mass with him, has taken note. Cf. R. LAURENTIN, "Ilorin" in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des "apparitions"*, p. 1147-1149. The text contains obvious mistakes in the historical outline, as calling 1994 the year of first Holy Communion of Montfort, who then was already 11 years a priest, as the members of the Society who contacted Mons. Laurentin did not care to present a clear history of the apparitions. Much has been corrected in the Italian translation of the Dictionary, published in 2010. (The "Prayer of the Hearts of Love", published in the Italian version of the dictionary is a translation of the French Prayer, which was translated by the SHL from the English original. It differs slightly from the Italian version of the Prayer elaborated and used by the SHL in Italy, translated directly from the English original, and for which the imprimatur was obtained from the Roman Vicariate.) The fact that the renowned theologian includes the information on the Two Hearts of Love in his dictionary does not mean automatically that he is convinced of its being a true apparition. He states in his introduction that he included also obvious products of subjectivity and deceit; he underlines the decisiveness of the position of the local bishop. (Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 43-44.)

with the experience of many people<sup>488</sup> who draw spiritual nourishment and direction from the experiences of different visionaries, who recognized the Prayer of the Hearts of Love as given by God and who did not accept excuses in their quest of knowing who was the visionary of the messages of the Hearts of Love, may have further encouraged him to take this step.

When he saw young people in whom there was visible the vocation to the religious life, he did not fail to talk with them, to invite them.<sup>489</sup> So Valentina came, a German-Russian, and with her Carmen, a Schönstatt youth from the diocese of Münster, who was doing her training for nursing.

The Feast of the Hearts of Love 2000 (29/6 - 2/7) was celebrated in Rome: with two buses the Society came from Germany. The main celebrant on the Sunday of the 3-days feast was Archbishop Luigi Accogli,<sup>490</sup> (who died four years later, on Monday 21.6., at the end of the Feast of the Hearts of Love 2004) retired nuncio in South America, Syria and China, and devoted to Padre Pio and the Two Hearts. On this feast, Carmen and Valentina were clothed as postulants.

Soon came Uschi, who loved Eucharistic adoration and volunteer charity work. Uschi was the only child of her parents. Both got extremely upset. In different ways they continued to try to persuade her to go back to her normal life as an expert in civil law in her company, but in vain.

Father had to leave Hütting in summer 2000. The Ursuline Sisters in Königstein (Ts), who used to host the monthly public mass in which Fr. Montfort had become the main celebrant since 1999, voluntarily gave him an apartment. One of the Ursuline Sisters, Sr. Maria-Paula Kozany, became a very dedicated member of the Society. Through her mediation the Prayer was translated into many more languages and got an imprimatur for many more translations.<sup>491</sup> It is now translated into most of the European languages, several African and many Oriental/Asian languages. As Königstein is in the diocese of Limburg, Father Montfort went to see the Vicar General of Limburg to present himself. After the monthly charismatic Mass organised by the group of “Christus 2000” on a Saturday evening, he used to offer weekends (a Vigil with Holy Mass and sermon and Mass on Sunday Morning) of “school of love”. Not only were the charismatic Masses in the Ursuline convent forbidden with the end of the year 2000, the General Vicar of Limburg forbade Father Montfort to celebrate two masses a day in the diocese and urged him to stop the midnight mass.<sup>492</sup> He asked Father Montfort several times to leave the diocese<sup>493</sup> and published a warning against

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<sup>488</sup> It may be noted that people who are interested in visions and messages often need direction on how to digest these mystical experiences without falling into fundamentalist behaviours. They easily forget that the only correct approach to anything divine is simplicity and humility.

<sup>489</sup> Fr. Nkem Hyginus M. V. Chigere calls Fr. Montfort “a promoter of vocations, an evangelizer and courageous provider for our local needs”, in his testimony in the brochure for the 25<sup>th</sup> priestly jubilee of Fr. Montfort, p. 73; appendix 9.

<sup>490</sup> There are only photos to document the participation of the archbishop.

<sup>491</sup> She found a translator into Ciluba, and got the imprimatur of Mons. Bernard Kasanda Mulenga of Mbujimayi, Congo, 19.10.2001. The translation into Czech, with imprimatur by Mons. Milan Kouba of Olomouc, on 1.2.2000. The Polish translation, and the imprimatur by Vicar General Mons. Marek Jedraszewski of Poznan, 28.5.2000. The Portuguese translation and the imprimatur by the Vicar General, Mons. Augusto Zini Filho of Rio de Janeiro, 23.3.2000. The Rumanian translation with imprimatur of Archbishop Ioannes Robu of Bukarest, on 15.5.2002. The Russian translation and the imprimatur by Bishop Joseph Werth of Novosibirsk, 15.8.2001. The Spanish translation with imprimatur from Archbishop Antonio Mereno Casamitjana of Concepcion (Chile), 1.3.2001. The Swedish translation with the imprimatur by Bishop Anders Arborelius O.C.D. of Stockholm, 19.10.2000. Further she asked some priests to prepare a Latin translation of the Prayer, which has no imprimatur, as well as the Ukrainian, Croat and Hungarian translation she obtained. Some other translations and imprimaturs were achieved through other ways.

<sup>492</sup> Father Montfort continued the Vigil Mass, but in the morning Mass he participated like a lay person.

<sup>493</sup> Cf. Letter of Father Montfort to the German members, Nov. 2000, calling all to obedience and prayer, and announcing his leaving the diocese of Limburg, appendix 7.



Father Montfort in the diocesan bulletin. Then he wrote on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2001 a letter to all the Vicar Generals in Germany, in which he warned of the activities of Father Montfort. In the written accusations the spirituality of the founder was rejected, and they contained some misunderstandings or misinterpretations. In the bulletins of four other German dioceses, where Father was never known in person, was therefore published a warning to beware of him.<sup>494</sup> In Europe, as he tried to establish the SHL in various dioceses, Father Montfort experienced several times a prohibitive refusal of his spirituality, his person and the Society.<sup>495</sup>

Meanwhile members of the Society had found a layman who owned a house in Neunkirchen near Bonn. The old house had a private chapel attached to it, with devotional statues: Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Fatima (Immaculate Heart), a Baby Jesus for Christmas, the Holy Child of Prague, St. Joseph, Rosa Mystica (a statue belonging to the unapproved apparitions of Montechiari/Fontanelle, to Pierina Gilli, 1947). The first three statues were reported to have been shedding tears in 1987, even tears of blood.<sup>496</sup> The owner believed that God wanted a religious community in this house. He opened the house to the SHL without asking for any rent. At the end of September 2000 some lay members moved into that house in Neunkirchen and renovated it. In Neunkirchen, for the first time in the history of the Society, a small group of lay members, who joined the Society as (married) adults, began to live together, joining the full prayer life of the religious, and they received the name of “lay apostles of the Hearts of Love”.

#### **1.3.2.4. The approval by Bishop A.-M. Atoyebi and further experiences in Germany**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2000, Father Montfort travelled to Nigeria with some German “sisters”<sup>497</sup>. Bishop Ilonu of Okigwe continued being pressurized by few fellow bishops because of the new foundation. He told the founder that he could no longer sustain the congregation.<sup>498</sup> Bishop

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<sup>494</sup> According to Fr. Montfort, he was accused of “too much prayer” and of having two surnames, Okanwikpo and the abbreviation of it, Okaa; he was accused of being tremendously rich, because some lay-members, hoping in divine providence, went to ask in some places where big buildings as empty monasteries were for sell, how much it would cost? He was also accused of using Voodoo magic to make German girls his slaves, carrying them to Nigeria. Cf. his sermon at Vigil on 10/8/2002 in Oyun, Ilorin, appendix 4. One of the diocesan warnings is published in the internet: <<http://www.bistum-trier.de/goto/?17:7710>>, seen on 27/12/2011. It is the copy of the diocesan bulletin of the diocese of Trier, year 148, article 67, of 9<sup>th</sup> of February 2004. It is a warning of the activities of Father Montfort Okaa, Spiritual director of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love. The society is not denounced as a sect, but as a new spiritual movement within the Church. However, it is emphasized that it has no ecclesiastical recognition in the diocese of Trier, that it has a type of spirituality and theological formation which should make everybody be very reluctant towards them, and that the dioceses of Bamberg, Cologne, Limburg, Mainz, Regensburg and Rottenburg-Stuttgart have already published similar warnings. It ends with the request to send further information directly to the Vicar General. The dioceses who warned about Father Montfort are in alphabetical order; obviously the warnings of Cologne and Mainz came after the one of Limburg. It is noteworthy that, according to the knowledge of the author, Paderborn and Eichstätt did not issue warnings.

<sup>495</sup> It should be rightly expected that bishops and vicar generals in Germany, before concluding anything about Father Montfort, did consult his local ordinary, that time Bishop Gregory Ochiagha of Orlu.

<sup>496</sup> There were ocular testimonies of the tears on 11 different days; almost every day some “pilgrims” visited the chapel. The author has seen the photos of the liquids on the statues and the photocopy of reports in the local newspaper. She does not know of any ecclesiastical investigation.

<sup>497</sup> The author herself, two postulants who entered the noviciate, one candidate who was clothed as a postulant in Nigeria and a 17 year old girl, with the approval of her parents.

<sup>498</sup> According to what the author heard from Father Montfort.

Ilonu suggested contacting his friend Bishop Ayo-Maria Atoyebi O.P.<sup>499</sup> from Ilorin diocese, at the other side of the country. The Dominican bishop, after some investigation about the new congregation, accepted to be the officiating minister at the feast of profession of the second set of Sisters of the Hearts of Love. This occurred on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 2001, when 7 sisters made their vows, in the cathedral of Okigwe.<sup>500</sup> The Yoruba bishop showed himself ready to help to make this congregation an accepted religious Institute in the Church. But for that aim, he told the founder, he had to move the noviciate to Ilorin, and the planning for a new noviciate began.

Some lay members had found a parish priest in Mainz (Liebfrauen parish) who opened his Church in March 2001 (with knowledge and oral approval of the responsible assistant bishop of the diocese, Mons. Franziskus Eisenbach) to the Society of the Hearts of Love, for Mass and prayers on each first Friday of the month. Whenever Father Montfort was hindered to come to Mainz, one of the three German priests who enrolled in SHL would celebrate. This lasted only till April 2002 when the approving assistant bishop was accused of sexual abuse by a mentally disturbed woman, and was urged by his metropolitan to resign in order to face the trial at court which later declared him innocent.

March 2001 Father Montfort moved out from Limburg diocese and packed into a small house by the side of the house of the lay-apostles in Neunkirchen.<sup>501</sup> At Easter 2001 Father Montfort had his 7<sup>th</sup> journey to Nigeria. The founder was able to buy (with the money the sisters were bringing) a big piece of land in Ilorin, with an (occupied) house on it. (It took some months before the house on the new land was free and renovated. Then the novices with their mistress moved in.) On the flight back, on 23<sup>rd</sup> /24<sup>th</sup> of April 2001 Father was stranded for two days in Ethiopia, because of a fault of Ethiopian Airlines, which provided two days visa and the hotel. In these two days he found some people who were interested in the Hearts of Love and they translated the prayer into Amharic language and printed the translation. Then Father went to the Catholic cathedral for morning Mass, where he met the archbishop, Abbe Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel. The

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<sup>499</sup> Fr. Jude-Mary Obiechina Cmf, who helped the congregation of sons of the Hearts of Love as a novice master from 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2008 till after the first profession of the second set of “sons” on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2009, described the bishop as “very kind and hospitable”, “simple and unassuming”, “a most appreciative Bishop”. Cf. the testimony of the novice master in the brochure of 25<sup>th</sup> priestly jubilee of Fr. Montfort, p. 22. (Appendix 9). The author fully agrees with this description, adding the testimony about his faithful devotion to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, to “Mama Maria” and to the Precious Blood of Jesus. The devotion to the Two Hearts of Love has also become a personal devotion for him, which he would like to see growing in all parishes of his diocese. He requested several times from the founder and the Sisters to go everywhere in his diocese to establish the Society. Cf. excerpts of his preaching at the Feast of Hearts of Love 2003, translated into French and published by the parents of the first French Sister of the Hearts of Love in S.a. (P. SORIN, editing preachings of Bishop A.-M. Atoyebi), “Les deux Cœurs d’Amour”, in *L’étoile Notre Dame* 16, 9 - 1 (out of series) (2008), p. 8-9: “Les Deux Cœurs d’Amour sont une réalité qui existe depuis l’éternité. Mais à travers l’humble serviteur Père Montfort, elle a été renouvelée de nos jours. [...] la devotion aux Deux Cœurs est bien fondée dans le centre de l’Eglise. [...] Vous vous êtes sacrifiés vous-mêmes en victimes d’amour. N’ayez pas peur des conséquences d’un tel vœu. Cette consécration aux Deux Cœurs d’Amour est très, très importante. C’est ce qui peut sauver le monde. [...] Alors, chers frères et soeurs, cher fondateur, cette spiritualité des Deux Coeurs doit être propagée dans le monde entier.” Finally, bishop Ayo-Maria has experience also with dubious apparitions; he scrutinizes things carefully. As a religious, he knows the importance of the fulfilment of the vows and of community-life, and he insists on it in the new congregations in his diocese.

<sup>500</sup> Apart from photos of the event, there was printed a brochure for the occasion, showing pictures and names of those seven to be professed, and a picture of the five of “the first set who professed in Easter 2000”, as well as a picture of seven postulant “Brothers of the Hearts of Love”.

<sup>501</sup> To the former agricultural compound belonged three buildings: the former house of the farmer, a building of 4 floors where the lay-members and later also the sisters went to live, the former pig-house, a little half-timbered house where

archbishop hospitably invited him to breakfast and generously gave the imprimatur for the Amharic translation.<sup>502</sup>

In Eichstätt, where the bishop had permitted (orally) the prayer group of the Hearts of Love, one professed Sister stayed with two postulants for one year (2000/2001) for studies. They were tolerated, but there was no sign of official acceptance. In summer 2001, when all the Sisters and Father had already left Eichstätt or were preparing to do so<sup>503</sup>, Father Montfort offered himself again, applying formally for recognition of the Society to Bishop Mixa, who discussed the matter with his council and on 8.6.2001 gave a final negative answer.<sup>504</sup>

The Feast of the Hearts of Love 2001 was celebrated again with a pilgrimage to Rome, at Domus Mariae, for the first time with Bishop Ayo-Maria coming from Nigeria and joining the whole Feast from Thursday to Sunday; Archbishop Accogli joined again on Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>505</sup> The summer holidays, from 5.8.2001 on, the founder stayed in Nigeria. He informed Bishop Ayo-Maria about his decision to excardinate from Orlu diocese and to incardinate in Ilorin, receiving his permission and the condition to bring some testimonies of Orlu priests about him. In October 2001, Father Montfort enrolled at the university of the Verbites in St. Augustin near Bonn for a doctorate in dogmatics, as Bishop Ochiagha told him to do a second doctorate.

In December 2001 Father went to Nigeria and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month there was the profession of six Sisters in Ilorin. Bishop Ayo-Maria, with the date of 8<sup>th</sup> of Dec. 2001, had formally approved the female Institute as a public association of Christ's faithful which is heading for the approval as a religious institute.

Back to Germany, Father Montfort earnestly sought for a possibility to see Cardinal Meisner, the ordinary of Cologne archdiocese, as Neunkirchen belongs to it. On 6/1/2002 Father Montfort went to see the Cardinal after the Mass of Epiphany in the cathedral and gave him a letter from Bishop Ayo-Maria, requesting the acceptance of the Society in the archdiocese. He received not only a negative answer (from the curia section for pastoral care), but also the prohibition of pastoral work in the diocese. The reason given was that there is already a community of the "Two Hearts" in the archdiocese. Fr. Montfort had no official pastoral responsibility, but he used to celebrate mass every Thursday in the 18-seats chapel of the house in Neunkirchen, which was open to the public; after the prohibition of pastoral work in early 2002 he stopped it, in order to keep the peace in the Church<sup>506</sup>. On 21.1.2002, through Prof. Zepp (Emeritus), Father Montfort pleaded for an audience with Card. Meisner, but the same related a bad experience he had with another priest from Nigeria and refused to see Father Montfort.<sup>507</sup>

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Father went to live with the brothers, and the former barn, of which the part which was the horses' stable was transformed into a nice chapel. Before the buildings were given to the Society, they served as hostel for asylum-seekers.

<sup>502</sup> The author was present.

<sup>503</sup> Already in summer 2000 Father had told the author that she should change to Rome and continue her studies there. She began to plan the change and learn Italian. On 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2001 she arrived in Rome, hosted first by the Philippine College and then (with other three sisters SHL) by the Mexican Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Refuge.

<sup>504</sup> The author saw the letter, but holds no copy of it.

<sup>505</sup> Only some photos are the evidence of the occasion.

<sup>506</sup> In the commemorative brochure of the 25<sup>th</sup> priestly jubilee of Father Montfort, his elder brother, John Okanwikpo, expressively hails the Jubilarian on p. 72 as a "peacemaker", "humble to the core", and also Mrs Rosemary Ngozi Okolo, on p. 63, thanks God that through Father peace and love has been "established amongst people, families and communities at large". (Appendix 9).

<sup>507</sup> According to what Father Montfort and the lay members present at Neunkirchen told the author.

In 2002, near Rome, Father Montfort met Father Arellano “Bing”, Father Founder of the Philippine American “Alliance of the Two Hearts”. The two founders encouraged each other.<sup>508</sup> For the Feast of Hearts of Love, 6/6 – 9/6/2002, three Nigerian Sisters, Sr. Matilda, Sr. Fidelia and Sr. Philomena, came to Italy (to stay for studies). Bishop Ayo-Maria<sup>509</sup> came from Nigeria again to be the main celebrant for the feast. Archbishop Accogli joined the Mass on Sunday. That Sunday (9/6/2002), after the Angelus, Pope John Paul II greeted the group, welcoming ‘in a special way the pilgrims of the Society of the two Hearts of Love’.<sup>510</sup> Bishop Ayo-Maria stayed on in Rome and Father Montfort with him, till the canonization of P. Pio, on 16<sup>th</sup> of June, where Father and the sisters shared thousands of the Prayer of the Hearts of Love in Italian and other languages. Then the bishop followed the plea of Father Montfort to come and see the Society in Germany. He went with the founder to try in person to see Cardinal Meisner, but even the bishop was received (and sent away) only by a lay collaborator of the section for pastoral care.<sup>511</sup>

On a journey in Germany in June 2002, Bishop, Father Founder and three Sisters (one Sister was driving) had a serious accident which damaged the car completely. The five were brought to hospital, but their injuries healed quickly.<sup>512</sup> The mother of Father Montfort in Nigeria unexpectedly died at the same time (28.6.2002). Father Montfort was convinced that she had died for him and for the Hearts of Love.<sup>513</sup> He travelled immediately back to Nigeria. At the burial mass were present: the local ordinary, Bishop G. Ochiagha; the ordinary of Father Montfort, who came purposely to the East, Bishop A.-M. Atoyebi, and another three bishops, who happened to be near because of a meeting: His Exc. A. Ilonu, His Exc. M. Uzoukwu, Bishop of Minna<sup>514</sup> and His. Exc. M. I. Audu,

<sup>508</sup> The author was present at the cordial meeting.

<sup>509</sup> In that occasion, Father Montfort presented three “messages” of the Hearts of Love to the Bishop and requested the imprimatur (which was granted. Such ecclesiastical favours as imprimatur given to the writings belonging to a certain devotion do not mean a recognition of the supernatural facts which may be at the origin of the devotion. Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Droit de l’église et apparitions” in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 275.) If someone would criticise, why the bishop did not try to judge officially the veracity of the apparition first, instead of granting an imprimatur to three meditative texts on the Prayer and the Holy Eucharist, talking of Christ in the form of “I”, the following answer can be given. In the first place, the “Hearts of Love” is not perceived in Nigeria as an apparition like Aopke (Nigeria, 1992-98), where tens of thousand went to see the visionary in ecstasy and to be there when Our Lady came. Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Aokpe” in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 1036-1037. The “Sanctuary” of the Hearts of Love is seen as a place of a “prayer ministry”, the timetable there, rallies around times fixed for communal prayers, not around times of apparitions. Fr. Montfort does not make it known when apparitions occur to him and very often he retreats into his private room when they occur, in order to write down the message. Some messages he keeps secret; if he judges it pastorally opportune, he reads some out during a sermon, often without mentioning when he received that particular message. The movement is seen by many as a “normal” pious society. Due to the fact that many Pentecostal “prophets” in Nigeria claim to have received messages from Christ, Father Montfort avoided for long to talk publicly on what “Jesus told me...”. Thus, Father Montfort made people not to seek him as a visionary, but as a spiritual director, or because they were attracted by his spirituality and wanted to join the prayers. Secondly, the apparitions have not ended yet, and the Church usually waits prudently to the end, to avoid being embarrassed by a later derailment, as a visionary is not exempt from temptations and retains his human freedom. Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Déviations” in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 242.

<sup>510</sup> He said it in German, as the group was announced to the Secretariat of State in the German language: “Insbesondere heiße ich die Pilger der “Vereinigung der Zwei Herzen der Liebe” willkommen. Gerne erteile ich Euch allen den Apostolischen Segen.“ In OR 142 (10-11/6/2002) 4, col. 3, and, seen on 2/1/2012: <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/AngelusDomini/2002/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_ang\\_20020609\\_ge.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/AngelusDomini/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_20020609_ge.html)>.

<sup>511</sup> It should be noted here that in December 2012/January 2013, when Bishop Atoyebi was very sick and brought by the Society to Germany for treatment, it was the Curia of Cologne who carried the major part of the costs for the treatment.

<sup>512</sup> According to what the author heard from Father and the Sisters.

<sup>513</sup> He wrote it on the marble over the grave of his mother: “She died for the Reign of the Hearts of Love”.

<sup>514</sup> Bishop Uzoukwu is from the Igbo tribe and was ordained two years before Father Montfort; in 2012 he ordained a priest associated with SHL who then came to work in Ilorin, helping in the noviciates of the Society.

the young Bishop of Lafia, a new diocese. Bishop Audu knew Father Montfort from the seminary and showed his special sympathy<sup>515</sup>. Bishop Atoyebi delivered the homily, using the opportunity to talk about the Hearts of Love.

After the burial, on 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2002, on a journey from Orlu to Ilorin, shortly before Auch, the founder had an accident when the tyre burst while the driver was going at high speed. Father had a broken bone in the right shoulder and a wound on the back of the right hand. Also the wound in the hand was very painful and healed slowly as various nerves and blood vessels were cut. The doctors only disinfected and bandaged the wound. He continued his usual prayers in his time of convalescence.<sup>516</sup> In this time, Father Montfort completed his change from incardination in Orlu to Ilorin diocese, thus leaving the security of his kindred and tribe. In October he continued his studies in St. Augustin, but with little zeal, since his new bishop did not enjoin on him to finish it. He dedicated much time to prayer and preaching to the lay-apostles in Neunkirchen.

### **1.3.2.5. Testing by Propaganda Fide and further spreading**

In late November 2002 Father Montfort travelled to Nigeria. At the beginning of December 2002 the noviciate in Ilorin counted 13 Nigerians and 5 Germans and the professed members were 18. A celebration of profession was supposed to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> of December. But on 5<sup>th</sup> of December Bishop Ayo-Maria told the Father Founder that he got a letter “from Rome”, forbidding any new first profession. The bishop ordered that the noviciate must be closed completely, the novices should be sent home, and only the already professed were allowed to remain. He also told the Father Founder that he would reply (to Propaganda Fide)<sup>517</sup> and defend the Hearts of Love, but that he must wait for the answer. Thus the noviciate was closed. Most of the novices continued to live the prayer life of the Hearts of Love, knowing that when the trial was over, they would still have to do the canonical year of noviciate.

Father Montfort went at the end of January 2003 to Rome and happened to meet the then Archbishop Robert Sarah, General Secretary of Propaganda Fide. The Archbishop told Father that they had asked more information from his bishop and from the Papal Nuncio in Nigeria, Mons. Osvaldo Padilla, but that no answer had yet arrived. He encouraged the founder to trust God and to continue his prayers as the surest way to overcome the problem.

In February 2003, he and all the early German members wrote more defences and testimonies. Father also travelled quickly to France. He visited and encouraged people there who wanted to join and to do more for the propagation of the Hearts of Love, and he visited the grave of his patron saint.<sup>518</sup> The founder then took the testimonies to Bishop Ayo-Maria. Arriving in Lagos, he got malaria. He gave himself two days of rest and he continued the journey. He rarely permitted himself a time of rest, since he is convinced that his time is short and a lot remained to be done.<sup>519</sup> The Bishop, after a first, short letter, wrote a second one with the help of the testimonies he

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<sup>515</sup> By coming to eat in the berieved house.

<sup>516</sup> The author was present in the accident and after. Father had offered the driver two times to change him, as he felt that the man was tired, but the driver refused.

<sup>517</sup> Bishop did not say from where the letter came; the sisters in Rome found it out later on.

<sup>518</sup> According to what the author heard.

<sup>519</sup> Cf. a sermon at Morning Mass on 15/9/2004, in Neunkirchen, in which he mentioned the experience of Jesus and Mary scolding him for not doing enough to make the messages known. Appendix 4.

received from Germany. He showed it to the founder; in it he stated that he had examined the matter and found all the accusations against Father Montfort to be false.<sup>520</sup> He gave him the letter to bring it to the Nuncio in Abuja, which was done on 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2003. The closure of the noviciate of the Sisters remained till December 2004 when Propaganda Fide notified Bishop Ayo-Maria on the withdrawal of the command to close the noviciate. (Most of the former novices returned to their noviciate house. Sister Philomena SHL became the novice mistress.)

At the beginning of 2003, some Sisters of a German congregation had to give up their boarding school for girls in difficulty to find a job, a school with additional courses, in Würth, in the diocese of Würzburg. The school was handed over to the Caritas, but the Sisters wished to call the Sisters of the Hearts of Love to live with and guide the girls. The diocese had just received an auxiliary bishop from Cologne diocese as the new ordinary. He permitted it provisionally and one professed Sister began the work with three lay members, who had already been novices before the closure of the noviciate. Soon, all spoke well of the hardworking “Sisters”, but when, after one year, Father Montfort came to encourage them, the parish priest told him that he is not permitted to celebrate Mass in the diocese.<sup>521</sup>

In 2003, a woman wished to give her house of several apartments, in Essen, to SHL. The house is under debts (hypothec). The diocese of Essen is under the metropolitan diocese of Cologne. The Society accepted the house and requested permission from the diocese of Essen to have a chapel, a community of lay people and a community of Sisters in the house. The Monsignors in the curia were divided in their opinion, but the permissions were granted (orally).

In 2003 the lay members in Europe began to organise pilgrimages (to various holy places e.g. in Poland, Italy, France, Portugal, and to Medjugorje) and retreats (e.g. in Ars, Banneux, in Ireland and since 2006 also in the Czech Republic), generally requesting Father Montfort to accompany them or to preside. For the Easter period (17.-21. May) he accompanied a pilgrimage of the Society to the birthplace of Pope John Paul II in Wadowice, to the convent of St. Faustina Kowalska, to the Polish National Shrine of Black Madonna, and to the convent (mountain) of St. Anne. Every year, the Feast of the Hearts of Love was organized as a pilgrimage of the members to Rome with many masses and prayers in honour of the Two Hearts. On 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> June 2003, Bishop Ayo-Maria and the founder came to Rome for the Feast, which was registered on a video.<sup>522</sup> End of July, the founder held a retreat for priests and lay-members of the society in Ars, end of October he accompanied a pilgrimage of the Society to Medjugorje.

June 2004, Bishop Ayo-Maria decided to attend a congress in Nigeria and not to come for the Feast, which was however celebrated with the Society and Father in Rome, with many German, French and Italian members joining. Father Montfort sent a letter to John Paul II, presenting the wish of the Society of the Hearts of Love for a liturgical Feast of the Two Hearts.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> According to what Father told the sisters.

<sup>521</sup> The Sisters did not wish to continue to work in a diocese where their Father Founder was not welcome. With the occasion of the re-opening of the noviciate in December 2004, the community in Würzburg diocese was closed.

<sup>522</sup> It is to be noted that the Bishop came during the time of the prohibition by Propaganda Fide concerning the acceptance and formation of new Sisters. This video, pictures and some information were shown later to Mons. René LAURENTIN, who, hearing the Bishop encourage the members in the devotion of the Hearts of Love, wrote in French a very positive report titled “Le père Montfort et la dévotion des «Deux Cœurs d’Amour»”, in his magazine *Chrétiens magazine* 17, 4 (2004) 18-20.

<sup>523</sup> The letter contained a humble introduction and several messages of November 2003, which can be found in appendix 4.

2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2005 in Nigeria, Father heard of the death of Pope John Paul II in radio, he let the Sisters follow all the happenings on a newly bought TV at the Sanctuary; he travelled to Rome on 6<sup>th</sup> of April, joined the queue to give the last greeting to this “saint” and participated in the funeral mass and in the Novendial-masses. Then he travelled to France, thus missing the decisive day of the short conclave. He was present in the Inauguration-Mass of Pope Benedict XVI, then he travelled back to France (Longpont)<sup>524</sup>, and after that to Nigeria.

In Rome, the Sisters began renting a small apartment on their own. After a request by Bishop Ayo-Maria, the Vicariate of Rome granted the official permission to have a community of Sisters (students) in Rome, in June 2005.<sup>525</sup>

On the Feast of the Hearts of Love, 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> of June, Father Montfort was in Rome with Bishop Ayo-Maria. 2005 was the first year there was a Feast in which was organized a “congress” on the spirituality of the Hearts of Love, which then became annual.<sup>526</sup> During the World Youth Day, hosted by the archdiocese of Cologne on 16-21<sup>st</sup> August 2005, Father joined the occasion with several members who shared ten thousands of the Prayers of the Hearts of Love in different languages to the youth.<sup>527</sup>

On Easter 2006 (17<sup>th</sup> of April), the Bishop of Ilorin presided at the celebration of profession of the first three Sisters<sup>528</sup> admitted for final vows and of the first profession of 16 novices. In July 2006, Father Montfort had a formators’ course for rectors of seminaries/novice masters in Italy, according to the request of his bishop.

In August 2006, the permission for the chapel and the reservation of the Holy Eucharist in the house in Essen was withdrawn, and with it the Nulla Osta for a religious community. Two monsignors came to take the Holy Eucharist out of the chapel, while the members were singing the Vespers. Father Montfort encouraged the lay members to go to the cathedral for Mass and prayers. He himself prepared to leave Essen and Germany. On 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2006, Father Montfort returned to Nigeria, not for a visit, but to have his main base again in his home-country. He left his second doctorate unfinished in order to follow up the foundation and formation of the male branch of Religious of the Hearts of Love, in agreement with his bishop. In 2007, the “Sons of the Two Hearts of Love Noviciate” was solemnly opened. The founder also put a lot of energy into the building up of the “Sanctuary” in Orlu: a small church (for 70-100 people) for the daily Mass and 100 “holy steps” leading to the main altar, which was turned into an altar solely for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. During Holy Hour, the steps would be climbed on the knees, while praying the Prayer of the Hearts of Love in front of the Holy Eucharist and receiving the Eucharistic Blessing at the end of the 100 acts of love.

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<sup>524</sup> It is there that people discovered and began to talk about the phenomenon, that a vein in the forehead of Fr. Montfort would swell whenever he prayed with concentration, forming either a heart or a cross.

<sup>525</sup> It is the first ecclesiastical “recognition” of Sisters of the Hearts of Love in Europe.

<sup>526</sup> Thus, since 2005, the Feast became two days longer: on Wednesday before the Feast, the group began to attend the Papal general audience every year, and then hold the Congress on Thursday, before entering into the solemnity of the Sacred Heart. 2006, end of June, the congress was held with Bishop Atoyebi presiding, two American Marianists, Mrs. Virginia Kimball, president of the American Mariological Society and Sister M. Catherine Nolan OP, gave their speeches, equally Prof. Pietro Messa OFM of the PAMI. Prof. Giuseppe De Virgilio of the AMI gave a talk on “the spousal dimension of the Heart of Christ and of Mary: prospects of the Biblical Theology”, cf. the contribution in appendix 11, as it was used for this doctoral work.

<sup>527</sup> The author was present in all the reported events of 2005.

<sup>528</sup> The three Sisters were Sr. Philomena, who took the name Sr. Montfort Maria, Sr. Amuche Rosanne, who took the name Sr. Louis Maria, and the author, who took the name Sr. Chukwuemeka Maria.

Though having his base in Nigeria, in the years 2007-2014 the founder continued coming to Europe (and to America) for visits. In the years 2006/2007 the lay members in Portugal had grown to a number and conviction that Father Montfort began thinking of founding a community there. He went with some German Sisters and some Portuguese lay members to the Bishop of Leiria-Fatima, presenting the Society and asking for the permission to open a religious community in the diocese and to do apostolate work in the diocese. The Vicar General gave a completely negative answer on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007.<sup>529</sup>

Through the encouragement of the founder and the incidental/providential meeting with the then Vice president of the FACI, Don Mariano Assogna, the sisters in Italy were able to found a first working community in the archdiocese of L'Aquila on 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2007. The sisters in Rome met with the then bursar of the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI), Mons. Giampiero Fasani, who decided with Mons. Mauro Rivella, then under-secretary of the CEI, and with Don Massimo Gallina, to give a trial to the sisters with domestic work in one of their houses in Rome. Also in Nigeria Father encouraged the Sisters to found new communities and to accept responsibilities for the evangelization and education of the people.

On 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2007 the first French member, Marie-Pierre Sorin, was accepted in the noviciate. She was a late vocation, speaking several languages, prayerful, very gentle, cheerful, intelligent, but of very delicate health. Despite her fragile constitution, she chose to join the noviciate, ready rather to die than to lose her vocation.<sup>530</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2008, Marie-Pierre died, as her body was unable to sustain the treatment of a simple sickness. Father Montfort symbolically "professed" her posthumously, and as the first Sister of the Hearts of Love she was buried in the white habit of the congregation at the sanctuary of the Hearts of Love. Her burial and the funeral of other members of the Hearts of Love at the sanctuary in Nigeria was a very painful event for the founder and the members, though they rejoiced in her saintly life and death.

On 21<sup>st</sup> September 2008, the first 9 Brothers of the Hearts of Love made their first profession. In summer 2009, Father went for a short time to Canada, invited by some lay people. In October he came to Italy, joined the opening Mass of the African Synod, visited the new community of Sisters in Sicily and then went to Israel<sup>531</sup> for one week, accompanying a pilgrimage organized by SHL of Portugal and Germany. Sometimes, Father Montfort was invited as a "guest speaker" by another association or congregation, as in early 2010 at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of an Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary at St. Patrick's Church Alaba, Lagos. An accident happened in March 2010 in Orlu (on the road to Mbee) when, due to a damaged road-side, the car fell in the night from the road, somersaulting down a hill. Father (who was driving) was wounded by the broken glass all along the left arm which he ignored as he hurried to be at the "Sanctuary" for the Vigil.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> The answer is published under <[http://www.leiria-fatima.pt/noticia\\_imp.php?recordID=50&seccao=18](http://www.leiria-fatima.pt/noticia_imp.php?recordID=50&seccao=18)>, seen on 27/12/2011. Father Montfort showed himself convinced in a comment to the author that the vicar general informed himself in Cologne about the Society.

<sup>530</sup> Cf. the testimonies of parents, relations and friends in P. SORIN, (ed.) *L'étoile Notre Dame* 16, 9 - 1 (out of series) (2008).

<sup>531</sup> Visit to Carmel, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jordan, Mount Tabor, Capharnaum, Mount of Beatitudes, Tagba, Cana, Joppa and the main places of Christian worship in Jerusalem.

<sup>532</sup> According to Sr. Chidebere Muokar, who was also in the car. The Sisters later washed his bloodstained alb, which he used to cover the wounds.



In 2010, the Feast of the Hearts of Love fell together with the closing of the Year of the Priests, which Pope Benedict wished to conclude with the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, consecrating all priests to the Immaculate Heart, as St. John Vianney had consecrated all his parishioners. The members joined all the retreats and ceremonies.<sup>533</sup> The work of the Roman community of Sisters in the house of the CEI terminated November 2012.

In the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> of December 2012, the Father Founder pronounced the three vows and four “obligations” of the Congregation “in perpetuity” into the hands of his local ordinary; the day after the first four brothers of the Hearts of Love made their final profession at the hands of Father Montfort. On 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2013, the first two Brothers, a Nigerian and a German, were ordained priests by bishop Atoyebi.

In December 2014 Bishop Ayo-Maria Atoyebi requested the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop A. Kasujja, to ordain the second set of priests of the Hearts of Love. He requested the Nuncio and the Bishop of Orlu, Mons. Ukwuoma, to allow the celebration to take place in the diocese of Orlu, in order to spare the families of the “ordinandi” the 10 hours journey to Ilorin. Bishop Ukwuoma did not allow it: the ordination had to be in Ilorin.

#### **1.3.2.6. The situation of the founder and the society in 2015**

The founder used to find the Will of God in all circumstances and painful or happy incidents. He continued to keep the criticized prayer and he continued to seek approval from bishops for his ministry. Having the concern of a pastor for the soul of each person,<sup>534</sup> Father Montfort acts as a formator for all those who entrust themselves to his direction. He has a “prophetic” and calm hope for the future, proclaiming that the Love of God must reign in the end.<sup>535</sup> He believes that he has a mission which is important for the salvation of souls.<sup>536</sup> Persecutions and testing became helps for the spreading of the devotion to new places.<sup>537</sup>

Father Montfort now stays mainly in the Universal Centre for the Two Hearts of Love, Orlu, concentrating on prayer and a better organization of his foundation. The members continue the work of propagating the Prayer and messages of the Hearts of Love.

The financial difficulties of the new foundation give many worries and embarrassments to the founder. Many people give generous donations and the income from donations is sometimes higher than income from work. But for buying of necessary land, building of convents, structures at

<sup>533</sup> Cardinal Meisner and some other Cardinals gave a retreat to the assembled priests, preparing them for the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, performed by the Holy Father Benedict on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart. There was no personal encounter of Father Montfort with the Cardinal.

<sup>534</sup> E.g. he is praying for the fulfilment of their hearts’ desire, i.e. for a meaningful life which reaches the goal God has fixed for it. Cf. the prayer on the souvenir of his priestly ordination: “May Almighty God bless, take you into his love and grant your heart’s desire, Amen.” (On top of the souvenir is the writing: “COME. Let us go to the love of God”)

<sup>535</sup> Cf. the “promises of the Hearts of Love”, appendix 2, giving this promise of Jesus at the end: “It is My will to establish the Reign of My Infinite Love and Mercy in every heart and home, everywhere and every time, in the whole world and in all creation. O! My Love will reign on earth as in Heaven. O! My Heart will reign! O! My Love will reign!” A. MATTEO, *La prima generazione incredula*, p. 60-61,83, emphasizes that only in the atmosphere of genuine interest in the person and trust in God, a formator can then help the person to overcome bad habits and fears, lead to forgive offences and cultivate the attention to the will of God.

<sup>536</sup> Cf. “the Lord Jesus revealed to me that the solution of the problem of souls, the Church and the world is to unite to the two Wounded and Bleeding Hearts of Love (Jesus and Mary).” TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 12.

<sup>537</sup> Cf. the expressions of joy in the persecutions, e.g. at Holy Hour in Orlu on 14/9/2007, appendix 4.

the “Sanctuary” and schools, drilling of bore-holes for water, paying teachers in a school for the poor, feeding and clothing Brothers, Sisters and an epileptic orphan at the “Sanctuary”, medical care, printing of prayer leaflets and other material, paying school fees of student religious and necessary journeys and means of communication of members, the money was/is always too short.<sup>538</sup>

The financial difficulties were faced first of all with work. The sisters and brothers of the Hearts of Love started 1994 two little schools (in Orlu and Mbee) and sanitary help for the people in a building which had been donated to Father Montfort as a home for himself, as well as vocational training for jobless youths. In 1999 the novices in Okigwe began to do some apostolate. They organized first one, then two classes of nursery school and gave catechism in parishes. The student Sisters in Italy accepted work when it became possible.

In January 2015, the professed Sisters are 125, of which 54 are finally professed. The professed Brothers count 197, of which 44 are finally professed – including the founder and the first six priests ordained for SHL: on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2013, Fr. Pascal Chukwuemeka Rodary SHL and Fr. Louis Innocent Ofonedu SHL, and on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014 another four. In Nigeria, Germany, France, Portugal, Italy, Poland and Czech Republic there are some dedicated lay members in constant contact with the Sons and Sisters of the Hearts of Love. The Society (associated lay people, sisters and brothers) was able to bring the devotion of the Hearts of Love to many people and countries. Over 100.000 copies in over 30 languages went to interested people all over the world so far; websites with the prayer and explanations for the devotion were published in English, German, French, Czech and Italian.

While most brothers are in various seminaries in Nigeria, the Sisters have 15 communities in nine dioceses: three Nigerian dioceses (8 communities), five Italian dioceses (six communities), and a small community in Germany.

Many sisters have been sent for studies and they have received (or will receive) higher degrees in theological, catechetical, medical, administrative or educational courses. Many sisters have been trained in sewing (especially liturgical vestments) and other manual work. Several sisters have concluded a course for formators, both in Nigeria and at the Salesian University in Rome. Many sisters know several languages and have working experience in administration, education, sanitary work and catechesis/counselling, both in Nigeria and in Europe. But many sisters need further professional and catechetical formation in order to be able to face the challenges of an evangelizer at the present time.

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<sup>538</sup> Cf. the sigh concerning lack of funds for enough habits and food for brothers and sisters by Montfort in the sermon of the evening Mass of Holy Thursday in Orlu, 1/4/2010. (Appendix 4). Cf. also the greater attention to the good of souls than to guard one's resources, in the sermon at Holy Hour on 28/11/2011. (Appendix 4).

## **Chapter II. The congregational sources of the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love”: a plan for union**

The first chapter gave the reader an African concept of unity, with its inspiring and its problematic aspects, and a presentation of the actual situation of human society, which, despite it being limited to the society belonging to the Church of Christ, is signed by various situations of disunity. However, the Gospel is believed by Christians as a perfect plan of union of all hearts in God. The whole Church and all religious institutes are trying to put this plan into action. Among them, also the sources of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love present a plan for union of all in Jesus and Mary. Since union in the Two Hearts consists of all souls being guided by the Holy Spirit, who uses everyone according to his own charism and vocation, it is mainly a plan for prayer, for all to learn to become docile to the Holy Spirit. This plan for union has some importance for the main theme of this research: it serves to understand how Mary, like every human being, built her union with Christ in a dynamic and reciprocal relationship. It also gives an idea of the life in the Society of the Hearts of Love.

The sources of the SHL are partly not yet published, and due to their vastness, also the appendix gives only excerpts. For the purpose of this research they should be sufficient, also because the sources in their completeness contain many repetitions.

In this chapter, first the role of Jesus and his mother for religious shall be looked at. The understanding of the three evangelical vows and the four “obligations” shall be looked at, and the specific apostolate of the Society. The understanding of Church and Constitutions on prayer shall be compared, and a final, long sub-chapter analyses the different elements in the life of the congregation, which may be called special or “inspired”.

### **2.1. Christ and Mary in the religious life and in the sources of SHL**

This sub-chapter shall give a short summary on the basic historical developments and inspirations in Jesus and Mary concerning the religious life, and on the teachings of Vatican II and later documents on religious life and then compare the congregational sources of the Society of the Hearts of Love with them.

#### **2.1.1. Christ and Mary in the religious life**

G. Zarri sees a difference in the beginning of religious life according to the two sexes: men were more inspired by the sequela Christi, “militia Christi”, not underlining first of all the virginal life for the sake of Christ, but the obedience to a common rule of life, while women had from the beginning a liturgically confirmed consecration to Christ, developing the idea of the virginal

“spouse of Christ”.<sup>539</sup> These two aspects later were united to form the foundation of religious life for both sexes. Religious life is today seen as having the four dimensions of *testimony* (by giving an example of love of God in prayer, words and deeds, in the public), *consecration*<sup>540</sup> (by the evangelical vows: offering up one’s will as creature, receiving the will of God as one’s own; offering up the attachment to things and persons, receiving the joy of heavenly freedom already on earth, and offering up one’s body to God for him to use, receiving the presence of God in one’s own life), *communion of Love* (being a sign of fraternity in the world) and *mission/apostolate* (being a gift from God to others by charitable service). In all aspects, Christ is the highest model (as source of inspiration to live these aspects in one’s situation and time), and Mary with him.<sup>541</sup> Christ is the “anointed”, i.e. the Consecrated One by excellence, the source of every human consecration. According to 2 Cor 1,21-22, God the Father anoints the Christians in the Son, by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts: the anointing/consecration is a Trinitarian action. Christ in his life and teaching was from the beginning the main inspiration for Christians to live this life of consecration, with an ardent desire for the second coming of Christ.<sup>542</sup>

Jesus is not only a model, but in the Gospel he urges charity and mercy towards the poor and the sinners, and Mary must be seen in union with Christ also in this aspect. E.g. St. John Damascene († ca. 749)<sup>543</sup> defined works of charity a cultic action in honour of God and Mary.<sup>544</sup> Of many Christian charitable institutes, such as hospitals, orphanages and old people’s homes, it is known that they were founded “in honour of Mary”.<sup>545</sup> The same was done by the great number of new religious families founded in the modern era when female religious had won the struggle to be

<sup>539</sup> G. ZARRI, “Disciplina tridentina. L’istituzione dell’identità femminile nell’Italia moderna”, in M. BORSARI - D. FRANCESCONI (ed.), *Maschio e femmina le creò. L’elaborazione religiosa delle differenze di genere*, BPER, Modena 2004, p. 153-154.

<sup>540</sup> For the particular type of consecration which is religious profession, in difference to the sacramental consecration of human persons in baptism, chrism, ordination and matrimony, in difference to the sacramental consecration of bread and wine in the Holy Mass and the non-sacramental consecration of other things that are being dedicated to the use in worship, as churches, and in difference to the private consecration of faithful with devotional prayers, cf. J. C. R. GARCÍA PAREDES, *Teologia della vita religiosa*, p. 93-95. For the “questio” “consecration” cf. also sub-chapter 3.4.2.3.

<sup>541</sup> Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 301, summarizing JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata* (25/3/1996), p. 304, 306.

<sup>542</sup> M. AUGÉ, “Dalle origini a S. Benedetto”, in CLARETIANUM (ed.), *Storia della vita religiosa*, Queriniana, Brescia 1988, p. 20-22. Cf. also the three places in the NT, where celibate life for the sake of the Lord is praised and taken into account: 1 Cor 7, 25-34; Acts 21, 9 and 1 Tim 5, 9-16.

<sup>543</sup> Father of the Church. Well educated, he renounced his post and became a monk at Mar Saba monastery near Jerusalem, and was ordained priest. He preached in Jerusalem, counseled bishops and wrote theological works. In the controversy over the veneration of icons he is seen as a vehement supporter. He composed biographies of some saints, left some preachings on Mary and composed hymns. Cf. B. KOTTER, “John Damascene, St.”, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 1047-1049.

<sup>544</sup> Cf. *Omelia II sulla dormizione*, n. 16, in *TMPM*, Città Nuova, Roma 1989, vol. 2, p. 532, quoted in C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 143.

<sup>545</sup> In Jerusalem, around the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, there was an ‘Old age asylum for poor women, founded in the name of the Mother of God’ by two persons from Byzantium, and a hospital of over 3000 beds was built by the side of the church of St. Mary the New (a sanctuary where healings were reported). In 1006, the countess Berta opened at Chartres a charitable house in honour of Mary. In the MA, the confraternities assembled to contradict a tendency towards individualism. They formed for very various aims, as penitence, music, arts or social engagement with the poor, but the statutes of all of them, according to Besutti, dedicated their activities to the honour of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and other saints. In modern times, religious congregations, always with attention to Mary, took the lead in the care of the sick and the poor. Cf. G. M. BESUTTI, “La presenza della pietà verso la Vergine nell’azione caritativa della Chiesa”, in *La Madonna* 25, 3-4 (1977) 74, 78-83.

permitted to combine religious profession with apostolate work among the people.<sup>546</sup> Sometimes the apostolic work consisted in the promotion of education and culture, i.e. in a spiritual work of mercy, not less important than the material works of mercy as medical care and catering service for the poor. Also a reformator – Zwingli († 1531)<sup>547</sup> – considered Mary as the model of the ecclesial diaconate, the devotion to her urging the mission of charity.<sup>548</sup>

The following sub-chapters will be limited to some comments about Mary in the origin and history of religious life in general, and to Jesus and Mary in recent Magisterial documents and studies.

### 2.1.1.1. Devotion to Mary in the history of religious life

Mary is a sign and model of consecrated life by her relationship with the Holy Trinity, who destined her and consecrated her for her mission to help Jesus, a consecration wholeheartedly embraced by Mary.<sup>549</sup> An influence of the veneration of Mary, and of Mary herself, on religious life from its very beginning is to be supposed. Christian religious life began in Egypt, and quite

<sup>546</sup> A first possibility for women to live “religious life” (living in community the three evangelical counsels, not as vows, however, but practising them) and be active in the educational area and hospitals is the ‘Company of St. Ursula’, founded in 1535 by the Franciscan Tertiary St. Angela Merici († 1540), which due to the early death of the foundress soon divided into various forms and parties. Most of them were soon locked up in monasteries. Another trial were the Visitandines of St. Francis de Sales, who should have visited the poor, but ended up in monastic enclosure. St. Vincent de Paul († 1660), spiritual son of Card. De Bérulle and of St. Francis de Sales, founded the Daughters of Charity in 1642 (the first group professed), and avoiding the impression that they might be religious, he conserved for them the freedom to serve the poor, becoming what today is called a “secular institute”. Cf. A. LÓPEZ AMAT, *La vita consacrata*, p. 297-299; 379-403. Only under Benedict XIV, in 1749, did women get permission to do apostolate as recognized religious. L. SCARAFFIA, “Sentimenti religiosi. La femminilizzazione del sacro nell’Italia post-unitaria”, in M. BORSARI - D. FRANCESCONI (ed.), *Maschio e femmina le creò*, p. 177-181, sees the Church in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century paralysed and still rigid in front of the need of the time of active religious women without strict enclosure: the French Revolution took away the patrimony of monasteries and the juridical possibility for an ecclesiastical body to own something. Nuns were forced to organize themselves in a different way. The following sub-chapter will show that religious life always goes with at least some veneration of Mary. This proves only that diaconical service and Marian devotion were combined; it does not give assurance that the former was inspired by the latter. For proving such, it would be necessary to investigate deeply into the foundation of each Institute, which would exceed the limits of this research.

<sup>547</sup> H. Zwingli was a promoter of the Protestant reformation in Switzerland (Zürich), wishing to simplify the Church back to Biblical level, eliminating dogmatic developments, and in the ethical sense of charity. He favoured the matrimony of priests and the vernacular in liturgy and wrote his own theology in opposition to Catholics, Luther and Anabaptists. The sacraments had for him the character of only a sign. He defended himself vigorously against the false accusation that he would have denied the virginity of the Mother of God. He praised her as the Virgin who conceived Christ, the Saviour, for mankind, and who is most loved by God. He recognized her as being ‘rich and full of grace’, underlining that this grace is not her own, but from God. Mary was to him a proof of the true humanity of Christ. He saw Is 7,14 and Ez 44,2 as Marian texts. He said that Christians should learn from Mary the desire that God may act in and through them as it pleases him, taking them as his servants and property. They should learn her constant faith and remain united with Christ, even if they do not see his Reign. Mary and other saints were seen as witnesses to the glorious end of following God. He praised the “Hail Mary” as inspired by the Holy Spirit, especially in the Biblical (first) part. He believed in the assumption of Mary, her being elevated above all creatures, and he believed in the communion of saints in heaven. His fight was against attributing fabulous things to Mary, which are not attested in the Scriptures, (indirectly) attributing divinity to Mary, against seeking indulgences when praying and against seeing the intercession of saints as a necessary help to calm God down. He died in the Reformist-Catholic war of 1531, at only 47 years of age. M. BENDISCIOLI, “Zwingli, Huldrych. I. Il riformatore” in *Enciclopedia filosofica*, 2° ed., vol. 6, col. 1223-1225, and R. LÜSDORFF, “Maria nella teologia di Zwingli († 1531), Ecolampadio (†1531), Calvino († 1584)”, in E. BOAGA – L. GAMBERO (ed.), *Storia della Mariologia. Dal modello letterario europeo al modello manualistico*, Città Nuova, Roma 2012, vol. 2, p. 231-236.

<sup>548</sup> Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 144-146.

<sup>549</sup> Cf. L. DE CANDIDO, “Vita consacrata”, in *NDM*, p. 1338; cf. also the sub-chapter 2.1.1.2.

contemporally in various places in Palestine and the oriental part of Syria (Mesopotamia), very visibly in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> century. The roots of Christian monastic life should be sought in the Judaic monasticism (with elements of it visible in Hosea, Amos and Jeremiah; the Palestine Essenes and the Alexandrian Therapeuts), and in a universal call to seek God in radical ways.<sup>550</sup> Many important “fathers” of religious life were Egyptians: Origen (ca. † 254), who would have wished to go into solitude and who was a spiritual father to his disciples;<sup>551</sup> St. Paul of Thebes<sup>552</sup> (born ca. 228, † ca. 341; around 250 he went into the desert and became the first Christian anchorite<sup>553</sup> known by name); the “house of virgins”<sup>554</sup>, where St. Anthony of Egypt, († 356), around the year 273, as a young man made his sister to enter, the eremitic life he lived with prayer especially from midnight till morning, and the monastery he founded,<sup>555</sup> and Pachomios († 346) and the first coenobites in Tabennisi, founded in 320 with a first written rule,<sup>556</sup> while the sister of Pachomios directed a

<sup>550</sup> Cf. M. AUGÉ, “Dalle origini a S. Benedetto”, p. 13, 17-20. The Essene “monks” are here presented as having begun most probably in the anti-Hellenist Hebrew reaction of the second century BC: living in chastity, having only communal property, dedicating their time to prayer and work. The Therapeuts stressed even more prayer and silent contemplation. The Essenian community of Qumran ended around 68 AD, and the Therapeuts ended their communal existence around 134 AD. The universal monastic archetype is presented through the Indian monachism, both the eremitical and pilgrim monks of Hinduism and the life in community of Buddhist monks, and in the Greek Hellenistic search for communion and for God in personal experience of the followers of Pythagoras.

<sup>551</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLIK – M. TENACE – R. ČEMUS, *Il Monachesimo secondo la tradizione dell’Oriente cristiano*, Lipa, Roma 2007, p. 27-28: Gregory Taumaturgos gave testimony of his positive experience in the community of Origen. Origen was the head of a catechetical school and lived in community with some disciples, in a life of prayer and study. He taught virginity as a substitute for martyrdom, which became a basic thought in the early monastic literature. Cf. M. AUGÉ, “Dalle origini a S. Benedetto”, p. 24-25.

<sup>552</sup> Cf. EUSEBIUS HIERONYMUS, *Vita S. Pauli primi eremitaie*, in *PL* 23, 17-30: the first motivation given by St. Jerome for Paul to leave the town and go into the desert was the persecution of Decius; experiencing the sweetness of staying alone in prayer, he continued till the end of his long life.

<sup>553</sup> Anchorites means those who live alone (e.g. in a small cell, or a cave) an austere life for the sake of Christ. They generally pray, work and eat alone, but do not hide themselves from those who come to them for counsel. In the historic development of religious life, they are the intermediary between a primitive ascetic Christian life and the cenobitic monastic life. They have no superior; in the West they are called hermits. Cf. F. ANTONELLI, “Anacoreta”, in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, Ente per l’enciclopedia, Città del Vaticano 1948, vol. 1, col. 1128; G. SCHWAIGER, “Anacoreti”, in G. SCHWAIGER (ed.) *La vita religiosa dalle origini ai nostri giorni. Dizionario*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1997, p. 62.

<sup>554</sup> Women who refused to marry for the sake of Christ, or widows who decided not to marry a second time, were held in special esteem and encouraged by the church, not only with words, but also with sustenance, right from the beginning. In exchange, the community of the faithful expected them to be serious in prayers and good works, cf. 1 Tim 5, 16. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century appear the first signs of institutionalisation: it had become desirable and possible for them to live together in one house. It is likely that there was an elder virgin or widow directing the spiritual and material affairs of the house, and the bishop had a special care for them. Cf. M. AUGÉ, “Dalle origini a S. Benedetto”, p. 24. The single wandering “apostles” founded communities of the faithful, the single desert fathers founded monasteries, the single virgins united together: community life belongs to the heart of Christianity.

<sup>555</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 27-29, 35-39: St. Anthony was not the first to withdraw to the desert and to form others in the life of solitude, but his suggestions and his life as presented by St. ATHANASIUS († 373), in *Vita S. Antonii*, in *PG* 26, 835-978, influenced all anchorites in Egypt: the Holy Scriptures as rule of life, seeking solitude (to receive a spiritual paternity), and knowing to be in battle with the devil (and the passions in one’s heart). St. Athanasius, the patriarch of Alexandria, paid a pastoral visit to the monks of his patriarchate as early as 329, recognizing the value of their form of life for the Church. This main defender of the Catholic faith in the time when most bishops, many out of fear of the Arian Emperor, followed the teachings of Arius (denying the godhead of Jesus Christ), had to flee five times into exile. Several times he hid among the desert fathers and knew St. Anthony (and Pachomius) personally. The biography was written in 365 (according to Migne in *PG* 25, 802) and addressed to all monks, to give them a good example of monastic life.

<sup>556</sup> Cf. J. LENZENWEGER et al. (ed.), *Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche*, Styria, Wien 1999, p. 132-133, and cf. M. AUGÉ, “Dalle origini a S. Benedetto”, p. 41-52: the monastery became a village, the monks lived in several houses of roughly 40 monks each. Pachomius founded 9 such monasteries and retained the responsibility for all; two times a year all met together. Community life and service for each other, as well as obedience to the founder and his near collaborators were the main themes of his rule. At morning and at evening, the prayer was made in community. Some of the produce of the work of the monks was given to the poor. Roughly at the same time, between 323 and 330, St.

female monastery of 400 virgins.<sup>557</sup> Palestine, Syria and Egypt present also the earliest remembrances of the life and death of the Virgin, narrations similar to those of the “Protogospel of St. James” or “Nativity of Mary”<sup>558</sup>, on the nativity and childhood of Mary, written between 145-200 AD in Syria or Egypt. In the latter country, the first invocation and special veneration of Mary is attested from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (in the Church of Alexandria) with the *Sub tuum presidium*, “Under your refuge of mercy we fly, O holy Theotokos”.<sup>559</sup> The first Marian churches known are the buildings over the “house of Mary” at Nazareth, and the “tomb of Mary” in Jerusalem, both 2-3<sup>rd</sup> century. In Egypt in Alexandria, the first Christian church built by Patriarch Teona († 300), was dedicated to “Holy Mary, Virgin and Mother of God”, probably right from the beginning.<sup>560</sup> Origen (ca. † 254) expressively called Mary the first among “the virgins”,<sup>561</sup> and the Coptic Christians are convinced that the flowering of monastic life in Egypt was due to a special blessing given by Our Lady to the land during the stay of the Holy Family as refugees there.<sup>562</sup> St. Athanasius († 373) reminded the virgins of Alexandria that in the type of life of Mary they have the model and image of the heavenly life,<sup>563</sup> and he pronounced the first known Marian homilies, describing and praising the life and virtue of the Virgin in many pious details, in order to arouse the desire to imitate her.<sup>564</sup>

From Palestine/Syria/Egypt, both religious life and Marian devotion spread quickly.<sup>565</sup> Well known are the thoughts of St. Ambrose († 397)<sup>566</sup>, inviting the consecrated virgins to mirror the life

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Cariton founds the “Laura” of Faran, north of Jerusalem, where a group of hermits lived together in one valley, coming together for Mass. Cf. T. ŠPIDLIK – M. TENACE – R. ČEMUS, *Il Monachesimo*, p. 276. Jerusalem and Bethlehem quickly became centres of monastic life.

<sup>557</sup> Cf. L. HOLTZ, *Geschichte*, p. 60. According to this author, in Rome, around the year 310, the widow Marcella founded a community of women who refused to marry and to have personal property, for the sake of Christ. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 62-63. According to T. ŠPIDLIK – M. TENACE – R. ČEMUS, Marcella built the first monastery in Rome with the council of St. Athanasius, cf. *Il Monachesimo*, p. 94, i.e. the building cannot have been done already in 310. Athanasius came (on exile) to Rome from 338-343.

<sup>558</sup> It is an apocryphical narration on the virginal birth of Jesus. The New Testamental Apocrypha are writings (from the first till tenth century) which were excluded by the Church from the New Testamental canon; texts concerning Jesus, his family and/or disciples, presented in direct narration or as a collection of sayings of Jesus (not as a comment on the gospels). Cf. E. NORELLI, “Maria nella letteratura apocriфа Cristiana antica”, in E. DAL COVOLO – A. SERRA (ed.) *Storia della Mariologia. Dal modello biblico al modello letterario*, Città Nuova, Roma 2009, vol. 1, p. 149-151, 169, and A. GILA, “Apocriphi”, in S. DE FIORES – V. FERRARI SCHIEFER – S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 130-131.

<sup>559</sup> Cf. E. LODI, “Preghiera mariana”, in *NDM*, p. 1027. The papyrus can be found in Rylands’ Library, Manchester, 470. (It is the earliest known Marian prayer - apart from the NT texts which even show a beginning cult of the Virgin.) Cf. also G. GIAMBERARDINI, “Il ‘Sub tuum presidium’ e il titolo ‘theotokos’ nella tradizione egiziana”, in *Marianum* 31 (1969) 350-362, who has the opinion that the title ‘theotokos’ comes up in the time of Origen, or is translated by him from the Egyptian pagan use to the Greek Marian title. The historian Socrates of the 5<sup>th</sup> century reports of a lost work of Origen, which would defend the legitimacy of this title for Mary.

<sup>560</sup> Cf. I. CALABUIG, “Liturgia (origini)”, in *NDM*, p. 698-699, 705.

<sup>561</sup> Cf. *Comment to Matthew*, X,17, GCS 21, p. 16ss, quoted in S. DE FIORES, “Consacrazione”, in *NDM*, p. 359. Origen had a vast Marian teaching. Cf. C. VAGAGGINI – I. HAUSHERR – W. d. VRIES, *Maria nelle opere di Origene*, Pontificio Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Roma 1942; H. CROUZEL – E. M. TONIOLO, *La Mariologia di Origene*, Patristiche, Milano 1968; E. PERETTO, “La lettura origeniana di Lc 2,41-52”, in *Marianum* 37 (1975) 336-357, IDEM, “Origene: l’esegesi biblica nelle Omelie XV. XVI. XVII. Sul Vangelo di Luca”, in *Marianum* 39 (1977) 397-411.

<sup>562</sup> Cf. G. GHARIB, “Oriente cristiano”, in *NDM*, p. 931.

<sup>563</sup> Cf. St. ATANASIUS, *Lettera alle vergini*, in *CSCO* 151, 76, quoted by L. GAMBERO, “Culto”, in *NDM*, p. 388.

<sup>564</sup> Cf. St. ATANASIUS, *Homily on the Holy Virgin Mother of God*, *Le Muséon* 71 (1958) 209-239, and IDEM, *On virginity*, in *CSCO* 151, 58-62, both quoted by E. TONIOLO, “Padri della Chiesa”, in *NDM*, 953. Marian homilies are a indication that the community celebrated a liturgical feast in honour of Mary, or commemorating an event of the life of Christ, in which the mother is closely associated.

<sup>565</sup> Cf. M. AUGÉ, “Dalle origini a S. Benedetto”, p. 52-62, that treats of the rigid asceticism of the monks in Syria (Patriarchate of Antioch), and of the monasteries in Palestina, partly inhabited by Latin men or women, and A. LÓPEZ AMAT, *La vita consacrata*, p. 46-55, presenting the beginnings of religious life in the West.

of Mary. An equal invitation he gave to all Christians. St. Augustine († 430) spoke of a vow of virginity of Mary.<sup>567</sup>

In the MA devotion to Mary among religious began to grow from mere imitation to consecration. The religious, consecrated to God, wanted to belong also completely to Mary, so that she would form them into true children of God. The first devotional consecration to Mary was done by a Benedictine bishop, who could still be counted in the Patristic time.<sup>568</sup> St. Bernard of Clairvaux († 1153),<sup>569</sup> presented Mary as the model of the Christian soul in its final state of “kiss of the bride”, and declared Our Lady the patroness of the abbey. She was proclaimed the Abbess of some Abbeys.<sup>570</sup> Cistercians and Premonstratensians<sup>571</sup> generally dedicated their churches to Mary and

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<sup>566</sup> E.g. in *De Virginibus* I, 6,31; in *PL* 16, 208B-C, speaking of “sancta Ecclesia” with clear reference to Mary. The bishop of Milan (reigning from 374) lived a very ascetic life in poverty, prayer and pastoral service, sustaining a male monastery near Milan and having correspondence with all bishops of his time who had a concern for the urban monachism. Cf. M. AUGÉ, “Dalle origini a S. Benedetto”, p. 96-97.

<sup>567</sup> St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa from 395, lived since his conversion a community life with fellow God-seekers. As bishop, he wanted his priests to live community life with a regime of prayer and studies, withdrawal and apostolate. He also encouraged female communities. Cf. M. AUGÉ, “Dalle origini a S. Benedetto”, p. 84-85. According to De Fiores, one of the Marian interests of St. Augustine is her perpetual virginity as a high value and as a model for virginity for the Reign, against Jovinianus, who sustained that matrimony and virginity had equal value. It is in this context that St. AUGUSTINE, in *De Sancta Virginitate* I, 4,4 in *PL* 40, col 398, commenting Luke 1,34, sustained that Mary would not have responded so to the angel, if she had not earlier vowed herself as virgin to God (“nisi Deo virginem se ante vovisset”). He deduced from the fact of her election that she was previously consecrated to God (“Deo dicatam”). Thus, in St. Augustine can be seen the interest to connect the beginning religious life with the Mother of God, in order to give it the proper value. And since Mary in the Fathers and also in St. Augustine is an ecclesiological figure, anything concerning her was planned by God as an image and model for the Church. Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Agostino d’Ippona”, in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 3, p. 3-4,8-9.

<sup>568</sup> The first written prayer of devotional consecration to Mary which is known today is of ILDEPHONSUS OF TOLEDO († 667), cf. *De virginitate sanctae Mariae*, 12, in *PL* 96, 105B – 106B, in the Italian translation in L. GAMBERO, *Maria nel pensiero dei teologi latini medievali*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2000, p. 27-28: “E ora vengo a te, o sola Madre di Dio e Vergine; dinanzi a te mi prostro [...]. Permettimi pure di aderire a Dio e a te; di servire il Figlio tuo e te; [...] a lui come al mio redentore, a te come all’opera della mia redenzione. Infatti ciò che egli ha operato per la mia redenzione [the union of divine and human nature in the incarnation], lo ha fatto nella realtà della tua persona”. On Hildefons, cf. *Ibidem*, p. 19-28 and R. LAURENTIN, “Ildefonso”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dizionario delle «apparizioni»*, p. 389-390.

<sup>569</sup> ST. BERNARD, *Sermone in Cantica Canticorum*, XXIX, in *PL* 183, col. 931-933. The Cistercian Order was founded in 1098 in Cîteaux, a place deep in the forest, by Robert, former abbot of Molesme, and 6 Benedictine companions with the wish to live the Benedictine rule strictly. (E.g. they wanted to abolish personal purses of monks.) Robert was forced to go back to Molesme, his successor died, no novice came – until on Easter 1112 Bernard entered with 29 companions. Then followed daughter foundations in great number. St. Bernard became the abbot in the daughter monastery of Clairvaux in 1115. The 3<sup>rd</sup> abbot of Cîteaux, St. Stephen Harding († 1134), wrote an additional document to the Benedictine Rule for his own abbey and the daughter foundations, which was recognized in 1119. This marks the foundation of a new Order. Cf. A. LÓPEZ AMAT, *La vita consacrata*, p. 144-148, 154-155. The Cistercian movement contributed to the monastic renewal, e.g. with new liturgical texts for Mass and Office of Marian feasts, with new antiphons inspired by the Song of Songs. The connection of Mary-Church, the theme of Mary as bride of Christ and the Church as Bride is being consolidated in the prayer of the Church. As already in Cluny, Mary is the model, the queen, the owner, the teacher. Blessed Guerric, Cistercian abbot of Igny († 1157), called Mary also formatress, forming her First-born in all her adopted children. She does that in the Cisterciensan experience by communicating with the monks. Cf. M. F. RIGHI, “La presenza della Beata Vergine nel rinnovamento cisterciense”, in E. DAL COVOLO – A. SERRA (ed.), *Storia della Mariologia*, vol. 1, p. 620-621, 628-629 quoting GUERRICO D’IGNY, *Sermoni*, Qiqajon, Magnano 2001, p. 606; p. 634. The Marian teaching of St. Bernard remains in the frame of admiration. Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Bernardo di Chiaravalle (S.)” in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 3, p. 89-115.

<sup>570</sup> Cf. L. M DE CANDIDO, “Vita consacrata”, p. 1342: a Cluniac female foundation by St. Hugo of Cluny in 1056 and the male monastery of Clairvaux. Also the monastery of Marcigny proclaimed Mary as Abbess under the influence of the mystic Hugo of St. Victor († 1141. St. Victor in Paris was founded by Prof. Wilhelm of Champeaux in 1113 as a community of regular canons, strictly observing the rule of St. Augustine). In the reformist time of the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century, many individuals sought to come back to the religious ideal of poverty, not observed by the majority of clerics. Many “canons”, priests who saw as their main duty the singing of the liturgy, which gave them the right to receive offerings



offered themselves by vow to the “Church of Our Lady of XY”, the church and monastery in which they then would live in stability.<sup>572</sup> This custom developed in itinerary preachers to a new level. E.g. St. Dominic († 1221) used the Premonstratensian (version of the Augustinian) rule (with several adaptations), but Dominican preachers first did not have their own churches. Thus the Dominicans professed directly to the person of Mary.<sup>573</sup> Into this new wave of religious life and Marian devotion in the West are inserted also the Carmelites<sup>574</sup> and many other Orders who helped to divulgate the monastic spirituality among the Christian laity, e.g. the Franciscans<sup>575</sup>, the first Augustinians<sup>576</sup>, and

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and dues from Ecclesial properties, kept it for themselves. Soon they were called “secular canons”, to distinguish them from the “regular canons”, who renounced personal property. The rule mostly adopted by regular canons was the third rule of St. Augustine. Cf. A. LÓPEZ AMAT, *La vita consacrata*, p. 159-160.

<sup>571</sup> The Premonstratensians were founded by St. Norbert († 1132). Of noble descent he became a canon subdiacon. Struck in 1115 by lightning which nearly killed him, he became a priest and itinerant preacher around Cologne. Bishops forced him to settle down in a place, and he had a vision on his future Order. He called the forest donated to him “Prémontré”, and with several followers he adopted the rule of St. Augustine in 1120. He combined severe monastic discipline with apostolate as leading a parish. 1126 he was elected bishop of Magdeburg. His followers had an important role in the evangelization of the area. Cf. A. LÓPEZ AMAT, *La vita consacrata*, p. 157, 160-161. The Orders founded in the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century: Premonstratensians, Trinitarians, Mercedarians, Augustinians and Servants of Mary, they all consider Our Lady as their Foundress. Cf. L. M DE CANDIDO, “Vita consacrata”, p. 1343. The Servants of Mary, “dedicate” themselves to Mary, the “Domina”. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 1346, quoting n. 6 of their actual (renewed) rule.

<sup>572</sup> Cf. P. F. MANDONNET, *Saint Dominique: L’Idée, l’homme et l’œuvre*, Desclée, Paris 1937, p. 226, footnote 65, quoted by D. V. WISEMAN, “Devotion to Mary among the Dominicans in the thirteenth century”, in <<http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/dominic3.html>>, seen on 2/3/2014.

<sup>573</sup> Historians assert that “Dominic had a decisive hand in the creation of the *Primitive Constitutions*, both in its initial version in 1216 and [...] in 1220.” The formula for profession of obedience in the Dominican “Primitive Constitutions” is directed “to God and to Blessed Mary” and to the “Master of the Order of Preachers.” Cf. M.-H. VICAIRE, “Appendix V”, in *St. Dominic and his times*, Alt, Green Bay 1964, p. 413-417, quoted by D. V. WISEMAN, “Devotion to Mary”. (In the early male Orders, the only vow was the vow of obedience, which included the promise of complete continence and poverty.) The Constitutions received Papal approval in 1216. The religious profession takes up the ceremony of the feudal “homenagium”, in which a knight knelt before his lord, putting his own hands into the hands of the lord and then swore fidelity. After which the knight received the sign of being accepted as vassal, and often a kiss of peace. E. BOAGA sees in the dedication of the religious not only to God but also to Mary the significance of the expression of the will to reform the Church: “Il parallelismo tra momento di riforma [Gregoriana, del XI secolo] ecclesiale e introduzione del nome di Maria nella formula della professione [dei Domenicani, seguito da tanti altri ordini fondati nel XI-XIII secolo, e dai Carmelitani] induce a dare a questa espressione di dedizione mariana il valore del proprio impegno nella ‘reformatio Ecclesiae’.” E. BOAGA, “Maria patrona e madre”, in L. BORIello – L. GAETANI (ed.), *Per una mariologia Carmelitana*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2014, p. 124-125.

<sup>574</sup> According to the study of J. Smet, in 1187 Latin-speaking monks had to flee from the Moslems to the few coastal cities that remained under Christian rule. The only place outside cities but under protection of the Latin-speaking Christians was Mount Carmel, where some monks lived at the “fountain of Elijah”. Prophet Elijah was already for St. Anthony of Egypt a model of eremitic life. They requested the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, St. Albert Avogadro († 1214, residing in Acri), to put in writing their way of life. His rule echoes the style of life of the Oriental monks of Palestine. Their chapel was dedicated since at least 1231 to Mary. In 1238, Carmelites began to flee from the Moslems to Europe, founding monasteries generally dedicated to Mary. There, the eremitic life was changed to a comunitarian life, after requests of the General Chapter approved by Pope Innocence IV in 1247. In 1252 they were designated in a Papal document as “Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel”. 1250-1280 was a time of growing prestige and gaining of rights of the mendicant orders as Franciscans and Dominicans. Augustinians, Servites and many Carmelites changed to the new style of religious life. Nicola Gallico, prior general from 1266-1271 wrote in 1270 a first important Carmelite spiritual work, the “Ignea Sagitta” (Arrow of fire), recalling the importance of prayer. The Carmelite scholar John Baconthorpe († 1348) presents his Order as founded with the aim of venerating Mary, calling it opportune that Mary should have people consecrated to her. He sees the Carmelites called by the rule to live like Mary in virginity. Cf. J. SMET, *I Carmelitani. Storia dell’Ordine del Carmelo. Dal 1200 ca. fino al Concilio di Trento*, Carmelitanum, Roma 1989, vol. 1, p. 16-31, 34-35, 43, 53, 114, 116. Cf. also H. BLOMMESTIJN, “Il primo periodo della mistica nel Carmelo”, in L. BORIello (ed.) *Mistica e mistica carmelitana*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2002.

<sup>575</sup> Founded by St. Francis of Assisi († 1226). His Marian devotion can be proved with his “last will”, written to St. Clare, with a comment on the “Our Father” and a short Marian prayer he composed and used for the liturgy: as an antiphon in every hour and every day, also as responsory and concluding prayer, and with the mentioning of Mary as

the Conceptionists<sup>577</sup>. There is no religious Congregation in the Catholic world that would not have a certain devotion to Mary; many see themselves as propagators of her veneration.<sup>578</sup> The consecration of the members of a whole institute to Mary was taken up variously since ca. 1650.<sup>579</sup> Some Institutes made the consecration to Mary a fourth vow.<sup>580</sup>

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first intercessor in the “regola non bollata” (chapter 23). Cf. F. OLGATI et al. (ed.), *Fonti Francescane*, Messaggero, Padova 1977, p. 99-199, esp. p. 120, 136, 181, 185.

<sup>576</sup> The Augustinian Order began with a “chapter of foundation” in 1244, when Pope Innocence IV responded to the request of some groups of hermits in Tuscany to unite them under the rule of St. Augustine. Some other groups of hermits were successively united. Cf. A. LÓPEZ AMAT, *La vita consacrata*, p. 222-224. They declared Mary the foundress of religious life, unjustly claiming St. Augustine as their source. Cf. L. M. DE CANDIDO, “Vita consacrata”, p. 1340.

<sup>577</sup> Founded in 1489 by Beatrice da Silva († 1491/92), the “oblation” to Mary was here called Marian “slavery”, which was taken up in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Bérulle. Cf. L. M. DE CANDIDO, “Vita consacrata”, p. 1343.

<sup>578</sup> Cf. I. CALABUIG, “Editoriale”, in *Marianum* 57 (1995) 504-505. E.g. the Marist Brothers of the Schools, founded in 1817 by Champagnat († 1840), wanted to lead all the world to God through Mary. The White Fathers (founded in 1868 by Card. Lavigerie) have entrusted their lives and apostolate to ‘Mary Immaculate, Queen of Africa’. The White Fathers from the beginning were open to inculturation. Cf. G. SCHWAIGER, “Padri Bianchi”, in IDEM, *La vita religiosa dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1997, p. 349. Cf. also L. M. DE CANDIDO, “Vita consacrata”, p. 1342-1343, 1347-1350. The article gives a general overview on Institutes and the importance they give to Mary.

<sup>579</sup> E.g. in the Congregation of Jesus and Mary founded by John Eudes. In their post-Vatican II rule, they speak of “uniting” with Mary. The Montfortans (Missionaries of the Company of Mary, founded in 1705 by L. M. Grignon de Montfort, in 2011 counting 903 members) consecrate themselves to Jesus *through Mary*. The Passionists, founded in 1728 by St. Paul of the Cross († 1775) want to participate with her in the mystery of the cross, recognising her as the superior of every community. (Cf. F. GIORGINI, *Storia della Congregazione della Passione di Gesù Cristo. L'epoca del fondatore*, Stauròs, Pescara 1981, vol. 1, p. 326, 330-331.) The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (“Picpus”, founded in 1800 by Pierre “Marie-Joseph” Coudrin, † 1837, and Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie, † 1834) state in their post-Vatican II rule, n. 78: “Il cuore della vergine Maria è totalmente ordinato a quello di Cristo: è per questo che [...] ad essi ci consacrano con un unico impulso”. (To this Congregation belonged P. Mateo Crawley-Boevey, † 1960, who propagated an “enthronement” of the Heart of Jesus in families, in South America, Europe and Asia. Cf. J. SCHMIEDL, “Herz-Jesu- und Herz-Mariä-Frömmigkeit”, p. 154. In Nigeria, an association of the Two Hearts refers to P. Mateo till today.) The Marists (founded by Colin in 1816) take her as their “Superior General” and consecrate themselves to her. The Little Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Parma 1865) consecrate themselves to Mary. Cf. for all these L. M. DE CANDIDO, “Vita consacrata”, p. 1342-1343, 1347-1350. The Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Claretians) see the religious profession as a “traditio” or consecration to Mary Immaculate. They were founded in July 1849 in Cuba by St. Antonio María Claret († 1870). As archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, 1849-1857, Antonio María founded and helped to found various institutes and associations dedicated to Mary. Mary is for St. Antonio María the ‘heart of the Church’. Consecration to Mary or her Immaculate Heart means to him offering oneself as child or “slave” to Mary. He perceived it as an *unfailing* way to become a true disciple of Christ. Thus, in his congregations, the consecration to Mary originally replaced the vows. In 1857, he became the adviser of Queen Isabel II of Spain and of the apostolic nuncio in Spain. The SACRED CONGREGATION OF RITES, decree *Regni Hispaniorum* (26/6/1862) gave the positive outcome to his attempts to obtain a liturgical feast of the Immaculate Heart for Spain. Cf. I. von GAÁL, “Die Herz-Mariae-Verehrung im Leben und Denken des Hl. Antonio María Claret (1807-1870)”, in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 134-135, 137-140, 144. The founder J. Escrivá consecrated the “Opus Dei” in 1951 to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Cf. J. STÖHR, “Die Rezeption der Marienweihe von 1954 in Deutschland”, in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 208. The membership among the priests of the apostolic movement of Schönstatt, founded in 1953 by P. Joseph Kentenich, is achieved through a consecration to Mary after several years of preparation. Cf. J. STÖHR, “Die Rezeption der Marienweihe”, p. 214-216.

<sup>580</sup> The Marianists (Society of Mary), a clerical congregation founded in 1817 for the education especially of future leaders by William J. Chaminade († 1850), consecrate themselves daily to Mary, “animated by the love of Jesus for his mother”. They have a fourth vow of “stability” which obliges them to belong to Mary. (Cf. J. STÖHR, “Die Rezeption der Marienweihe”, p. 211.) The Franciscan Brothers of Mary Immaculate, founded in 1970 in Italy by S. Manelli and G. Pellettieri, have a vow of “total consecration to Mary Immaculate”. (In 1998 they were approved with Pontifical right. In 2012 they were intercontinental, with 384 brothers and 400 sisters. In 2013, the Holy See gave them an apostolic commissioner, because the founders were leading their institute in an autocratic way, with relations of theirs having key functions, and with some members having affinity to Lefèbvre.) Cf. L. PREZZI “Kolbe. Non Lefebvre. Intervista a P. Alfonso Bruno, responsabile dell’informazione dei Frati Francescani dell’Immacolata. I perché dell’intervento della Congregazione dei religiosi e il servizio del commissario, P. F. Volpi. Tradizionalismi impropri e disinformazione non casuale”, in *Testimoni* 37 (3/2014) 39.

### 2.1.1.2. The importance of Jesus and Mary for religious life in Vatican II and after

The Vatican Council II shows in LG 43 that the “teaching and example of Christ provide the foundation for the evangelical counsels of chaste self-dedication to God, of poverty and of obedience.” Both his words and his own life-style attract those who love him to the religious life, and the wish to be united with Christ (cf. LG 44, *Perfectae caritatis* 8)<sup>581</sup> by living like Christ and according to his will is its foundation. The Church associates the self-offering of those consecrated to God “with the sacrifice of the Eucharist” (LG 45), so that their union with Christ is sealed sacramentally. On their own side, it is the duty of the religious to “show forth” their union with Christ, by making him present “to believers and unbelievers” (LG 46). Christ (in his union with the Father and the Spirit) is the aim and receiver of the human consecration, inspiring presence and model of religious life (cf. PC 1). He is this both for individuals, calling and forming each person to be completely his, and for religious families as a whole: he is the giver of the charism of religious life in its different forms, giving each group its proper place and work within his body, the Church. For Christ’s sake, they are to be “solicitous for all that is his (cf. Cor 7:32).” (PC 5). LG 46 states that also Mary is an example for the religious life, repeated by PC 25: her “life is a model for all” (St. Ambrose, *De Virginitate*, 2, 2, n. 15)”. It is to be noted that the Vatican II documents speak of the model role of Mary for religious only in the form of an appendix.<sup>582</sup>

In order to avoid repetitions, this sub-chapter will not quote from every document the importance of Christ in religious life, but concentrate now on the Virgin. Paul VI in the Apostolic exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio* (29/6/1971)<sup>583</sup> on the renewal of the religious life must have sensed the beginning “Marian crisis”, and used the opportunity to affirm in n. 15 that the life-style of Mary – after Christ and his teaching, but before the apostolic tradition – is among the foundation stones of the value and fruitfulness of religious chastity. In n. 56 he mentioned Mary as an example of consecration of one’s life to God, as example of the maternal love that should animate all those

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<sup>581</sup> *Perfectae caritatis* is a decree of the ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, dated the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1965, treating the need of renewal in the institutes of consecrated life. Building on chapter 6 of LG (n. 43-47), which defines the status and importance of religious in the whole Church, the decree demands both efforts to come back to the essential roots of the spirituality of each institute (cf. n. 2), and to adapt the manner of life, prayer, work and mode of government to the present-day condition of the members, and to the apostolate, through the revision of constitutions, directories, books of customs and prayers etc. (n. 3). Cf. <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_perfectae-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html)>; for Italian: [\\_it.html](#)>; the original Latin in [\\_lt.html](#)>, seen on 1/3/2014. The decree was followed up by various Pontifical documents, specifying and accompanying the reform of the religious institutes.

<sup>582</sup> As it is the custom in Pontifical documents to seek or advise at the end the recourse to the intercession of Our Lady for the problem or group of people addressed in the document, PC does it also, presenting her life as a “model for all”. This happens after the exhortation to continue with trust and vigour, in the last sentence of the last article: “Ita deprecante suavissima Deipara Virgine Maria ‘cuius vita omniū est disciplina’, ampliora quotidie incrementa capient ac uberiores salutare afferent fructus.” The Italian official translation does not even make the intercession and model-role of Mary the conclusion of the document, but it appears a mere routine-interpolation to the wish that the religious may have ever more success: “Così, per l’intercessione della dolcissima Vergine Maria madre [sic!] di Dio, [...] essi progrediranno ogni giorno più ed apporteranno frutti di salvezza sempre più abbondanti.” The English translation, however, lays the stress on the intercession of Mary, quasi as a necessary means to attain new vocations and progress in the work: “Therefore, let them beseech the Virgin Mary, the gentle Mother of God, [...] that their number may daily increase and their salutary work be more effective.” As was shown in the last sub-chapter, Marian devotion belongs to religious life, and obviously the Council fathers did not see the need to make it a theme, after having treated all Mariology already in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of LG.

<sup>583</sup> Cf. AAS, 63 (1971) 497-526.

who collaborate in the apostolic mission of the Church, in the short concluding prayer of the document.

The CIC<sup>584</sup> which depends on the guidelines of Vatican II, speaks of “sequela Christi” (cf. Can. 573, § 1., Can. 662) and of the evangelical counsels as founded on the doctrine and example of Christ (Can. 575); the Mother of God is appended as “model and protector of all consecrated life”, to whom the religious should have special recourse (Can. 663, § 4.).<sup>585</sup>

The document “Redemptionis donum”<sup>586</sup> is a step backward, concerning the Mariological involvement: only in the conclusion is Mary presented as the person who is first and most completely consecrated to God, the best model. The lack has been “made good”, in “Litterae encyclicae”, a letter that begins recalling “Redemptoris Mater”, addressed to all religious in occasion of the Marian Year, on 22/5/1988, containing a meditation “with Mary” on vocation, consecration and apostolate of religious. Though the letter is centred on Christ, it gives Mary not only a passive role as a model, but an interactive role, and also speaks of the special grace of religious to be able to make her present. Thus it ends with the exhortation to consecrate oneself to Mary, in order to respond to her interactive role-model and love: in chapter 1, “your vocation and service are like a reflection of her presence.” In chapter 4, “This motherhood [for all Christians] is to remain in her, and at the same time it is to be transferred from her as a ‘model’ to the whole Church”. In chapter 5, “Christians have their own ‘interior’ shrines, in which Mary is their guide along the path of faith, hope and loving union with Christ (Cf. LG 63, 68) [...]. Through Mary seek spiritual vitality, be rejuvenated with her. [...] Mary, the Mystical Spouse of the Holy Spirit and our Mother, desires this [that religious will do what Christ tells them: to receive Mary as their mother] *from you and for you*. Indeed, I exhort you to respond to this desire of Mary’s with a community act of dedication, which is precisely ‘the response to the love of a Mother’ (RM, 45) [...] During this Marian Year, I too with all my heart entrust each one of you and your Communities to her.”<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Codex Juris Canonici*, Code of Canon Law (1983), replacing the Canon Law of 1917 as a renewal of the same in line with Vatican II.

<sup>585</sup> The call to follow Mary (who follows Christ) can be found often in the authentic Magisterium of St. Pope JOHN PAUL II, i.e. in a speech to Italian Benedictine Abbesses on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1989, and in a sermon to religious in Rome on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 1989, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XII,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1989. In GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienza generale *Il volto materno di Maria nei primi secoli* (13 settembre 1995), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII, 2, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, p. 364, he stressed that the virginity of Mary inaugurated in the Christian community the spreading of the virginal life. This catechism belongs to a long sequence of speeches for general audiences. They began on the 6/9/1995, after a sequence of catechisms on the ecumenical problem, and ended in the end of the year 1997, introducing a sequence headed “towards the great Jubilee”. In his Marian speeches, the pontiff generally followed the themes of the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of LG, adding and deepening some Mariological themes. The texts are scientifically well prepared, offering many details on how convictions and dogmas developed historically.

<sup>586</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic exhortation *Redemptionis donum* (25/3/1984), in AAS 76 (1984) 513-546, a document on the renewal of religious life, addressed to religious. Maybe it was so poor on Mary because of the document of the CICLSAL of January 1981, which already translated the Marialis Cultus into the area of religious life. Cf. next page.

<sup>587</sup> IOANNES PAULUS II, Epistula *Litterae encyclicae* (22/05/1988), in AAS 80 (1988) 1638-1652. In English in <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/letters/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_19880522\\_consecrated-persons\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19880522_consecrated-persons_en.html)>. Only classified as a “letter” and “meditation”, the document has prophetic rather than doctrinal importance. As it is directed only to religious, it belongs to the non-universal ordinary Magisterium. Its personal, exhortative style, and the fact that the Pontiff made himself the voice of the ‘desire of Mary’, increase the non-doctrinal character. Yet, for the purpose of this research, which seeks the dogmatic value of the relationships of Mary, especially with Christ and the faithful, this letter is not to be neglected.

A previous document of the CICLSAL (1981) sees the union with *Christ* as so fundamental, that it is hardly mentioned.<sup>588</sup> Its whole nr. 13 speaks of Mary as a model, who listens to the Word of God, who prays in faith, charity and perfect union with Christ, who stands courageously by the cross, “teaching us contemplation of the Passion.” Devotion to her, according to the teaching and tradition of the Church, is called the sure way to illuminate and strengthen the contemplative dimension of religious life. The end of the article quotes the message of John Paul II to the CICLSAL on the occasion of their plenary meeting: “The contemplative life of religious would be incomplete if it were not directed in filial love towards her who is the Mother of the Church and of consecrated souls. This love for the Virgin will be manifested with the celebration of her feasts and, in particular, with daily prayer in her honour, especially the rosary. The daily recitation of the rosary is a centuries-old tradition for religious, and so it is not out of place to recall the suitability, beauty and efficacy of this prayer”.<sup>589</sup> Thus the document is the first to progress from the eternal repetition of “Mary as a model” for religious to the consequence of a necessary relationship of love and veneration for her.

A document on formation, issued under the same John Paul II by the Congregation for the Religious, has also a comment worth mentioning. As the work of the Spirit, the real formator of religious, is associated with the Virgin, her presence

«is encountered by religious from the beginning to the end of their formation. [...] Mary is present at the birth and at the formation of a religious vocation. She is intimately involved in the whole process of growth in the Holy Spirit. [...] This is why a Marian orientation, sustained by sound theology, will give the formation of religious the authenticity, the solidity and the joy without which their mission in the world cannot be fully accomplished.»<sup>590</sup>

These directives of the CICLSAL thus translate some aspects of the meditation and exhortation of “*Litterae Encyclicae*” into sober theological language.

After the Vatican Council, ET and CIC, the main recent ecclesiastical document for the religious life is the apostolic post-synodal exhortation *Vita Consecrata*<sup>591</sup>. In regard to the

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<sup>588</sup> Cf. Only in n. 5 of *La Plenaria* (January 1981), in English in A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican Council II. More postconciliar documents*, St. Pauls, Mumbai 2000 (Vatican collection, vol. II), p. 247. The document was issued in 1981 to battle the crisis in the contemplative aspect of the life of religious. A theologian wrote in 1988: “ordini e congregazioni religiose sono sorte all’inizio del XX secolo all’insegna dell’attività caritative [...], proprio in risposta alle preoccupazioni e alle esigenze spirituali presenti nella pastorale del loro tempo. Oggi, la cristianità non chiede più agli istituti religiosi attività caritative qualificate, ma un’esperienza di vita cristiana intensamente vissuta tra le vicende del mondo, con gli altri ed a favore degli altri. [...] gli istituti religiosi si preoccupino di intensificare la dimensione e missione contemplativa dei loro membri. Va emergendo dunque il primato dello spessore contemplativo-apostolico da vivere comunitariamente ed individualmente.” L. BORRIELLO, “Dagli ordini mendicanti alle esperienze del dopo-Concilio”, in CLARETIANUM (ed.), *Storia della vita religiosa*, Queriniana, Brescia 1988, p. 483.

<sup>589</sup> CICLSAL, *La Plenaria* (January 1981), p. 250-251.

<sup>590</sup> CICLSAL, *Directives on formation in religious institutes* (2/2/1990), St. Paul, Boston 1994, n. 20, 110.

<sup>591</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Consecrated life* (25/3/1996), in AAS 88 (1996) 377-486. The previous “Instrumentum laboris”, n. 65, speaks of Mary as a model of vocation and total donation to God; her life is called a “rule of behaviour for all”. It gives the witness that *all* religious congregations recognize in their own life a particular dimension of the life and mystery of Mary. This is expressed in VC 28 with a quotation of a speech at the General Audience (29/3/1995) of the same pontiff: “In tutti [gli Istituti di vita consacrata] vi è la convinzione che la presenza di Maria abbia un’importanza fondamentale sia per la vita spirituale di ogni singola anima consacrata, sia per la consistenza, l’unità, il progresso di tutta la comunità”. I. CALABUIG presented and commented the Marian aspect of VC in “Editoriale”, in *Marianum* 57 (1995) 503-512. The IX General Ordinary Assembly of Bishops, of which VC is the fruit, and its references to Mary, cf. S. GASPARI, “Maria madre e modello della vita consacrata. IX Assemblea Generale Ordinaria del Sinodo dei Vescovi”, in *Marianum* 56 (1994) 215-244, and S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 298-308.

relationship between the Blessed Virgin and religious, the document re-elaborates what had been acquired in the past years. Respecting the relationship Mary has with the three Divine Persons, paragraph 18 urges religious to imitate Mary, the first disciple of Christ, in her participating in his mission with her perfect gift of herself to God. VC, 28 presents Mary to religious as the model of a receiver of grace. The same paragraph mentions Mary as teacher of fellowship and service, as a model of docility to the Spirit and “new creature”. VC, 28 invites the consecrated to love and encounter Mary as a mother and to experience her maternal tenderness, calling the filial relationship with the Mother of God a privileged way to maintain faithfulness in one’s religious vocation.

Pope Francis, in the apostolic letter indicting the Year of the Consecrated Life on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LG and of the decree PC (30/11/2014-2/2/2016), concludes by entrusting the year to the “Virgin of listening and contemplation, the first disciple of her beloved Son” and “model for all those who follow Christ”.<sup>592</sup>

Books on the religious life generally present Christ as the supreme model and cause of the call. They normally also mention the help of Mary as the magisterial documents do, or speak of the model role of Mary in a more elaborate way,<sup>593</sup> presenting Mary e.g. also as a model of contemplation, based on Lk 2,19.51, or as a model and aid for that virginity which signifies complete belonging to God.<sup>594</sup> Some theologians enumerated that the Mother of God lived a life of chastity, poverty, obedience, contemplation, apostolic action, while being a prophetic sign of future graces.<sup>595</sup> G. Forlai presents Mary, together with Christ, as prototype of every consecration (i.e. in religious and secular institutes): model of discernment (obedience, deciding to follow the plan of another), model of positive relationships (chastity, a heart able to attract all in a freely donated love without trying to possess anyone), model of acceptance of being a mere creature (poverty, loving the fragile human condition, limitations and inconveniences as possibilities to live trust in God, living a simple life, near to the poor).<sup>596</sup> As a model of positive relationships, of patience and love, surely her life was also lived in close communion with fellow human beings who the providence of God chose to be with her: first Joseph, later the group of disciples following Christ.

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<sup>592</sup> N. 5 of chapter 3 in FRANCIS, Apostolic letter *To all consecrated people* (21/11/2014), seen in <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_lettera-ap20141121\\_lettera-consacrati.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap20141121_lettera-consacrati.html)>, seen on 13/3/2015.

<sup>593</sup> Cf. P.G. CABRA, *Breve corso sulla vita consacrata. Appunti di teologia e spiritualità*, Queriniana, Brescia 2006<sup>2</sup>, p. 132: a sub-chapter dedicated to the ‘form of life of the Virgin Mary’ with a quotation from the General Audience of John Paul II (24<sup>th</sup> March 1982), in which the Pope talked about “those who follow her” (=who follow Mary in her virginity). S. M. PERRELLA calls the role of being a model of the Virgin, rather than being a static ideal, a “source of inspiration”. Cf. *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 306. A. SERRA notes that the issue is not the “copying” of Mary, but to “revive” her in one’s life and in harmony with one’s personality and spiritual gifts. Cf. “Maria nell’educazione. Le coordinate biblico-teologiche”, in AA.VV., *“Io ti darò la Maestra...” Il coraggio di educare alla scuola di Maria*, LAS, Roma 2005, p. 131-160. The religious priest F. STÖCKL, in his work *Mary, Model*, presents the annunciation as “God’s vocational dialogue with Mary” (p. 48-67), as “prototype of the vocation to the consecrated life” (p. 48), being convinced that Mary is present in the history of every vocation (cf. p. 99).

<sup>594</sup> Cf. T. de RUITER, *Il segreto della vita religiosa. Teologia dei voti religiosi*, Paoline, Alba 1962, p. 152-153.

<sup>595</sup> Cf. L. M. DE CANDIDO, “Vita consacrata”, p. 1355-1360. This is the situation of Mary in religious life in all the cultural areas know to the author.

<sup>596</sup> Cf. G. FORLAI, “La consacrazione secolare. Riletture alla luce della spiritualità mariana”, in *Marianum* 72 (2010) 355-372.

### 2.1.2. Christ and Mary in the congregational sources of SHL as owners of the religious

The congregational sources in the Society of the Two Hearts of Love are the charismatic writings of the founder and his sermons, directions and meditations. Among the writings for the religious SHL the Constitutions have a special importance.<sup>597</sup> Recently founded Congregations, as the Sisters of the Hearts of Love, usually have Constitutions that combine laws with a spiritual instruction and the definition of a proper charism.<sup>598</sup> (The fathers of Vatican II issued in PC 2 the principles for religious Constitutions.<sup>599</sup>)

Constitutions have the nature of laws, but they also have the nature of an inspiring text, conserving the spirit and aims of the founder, as well as the union with the whole Church. (Cf. PC 2). Constitutions are today seen as the first column of authority in the religious life, usually given by the founder. They are unchangeable by the members, they can only be applied. The second column is the superior, who is directed and limited by the Constitutions, while being an interpreter of the “dead” words<sup>600</sup> – an interpreter “superior” to the other members, but below the authority of the founder, wherever he gave an interpretation of the “law”. The role of Constitutions is to assist the religious to attain perfection, by explaining the evangelical counsels according to the experience of the founder.<sup>601</sup> They define the spirituality of a foundation as a precious gift of the Holy Spirit for the establishment of the kingdom of God.

Father Montfort used some weeks of winter 1997/98 to write Constitutions for the Society of the Two Hearts of Love, based on his earlier “Come, news letters”<sup>602</sup> and profiting from Canon Law and other ecclesiastical documents. It is a spiritually rich text, but not ordered according to the expected structure of religious Constitutions. The intention of the founder was the foundation of a

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<sup>597</sup> The nomenclature of the basic texts in religious institutes is not homogenous. Especially Institutes of rather ancient foundation have two basic texts: 1) a basically spiritual “Rule of life”, which generally narrates an experience of the founder, communicating his life (-style). Cf. R. G. MILAGROS, *The Marian dimension in the Constitutions and regulations of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. A theological study*, Extract of doctoral dissertation, Marianum, Rome 2000, p. 31. 2) “Constitutions” that give mainly particular regulations as for chapters and elections. (These texts can bear different names.) Founders as St. Basil († 379) (cf. T. ŠPIDLIK – M. TENACE – R. ČEMUS, *Il Monachesimo*, p. 120.) and St. Francis considered their “Rule of life” as a “commentary” to the Gospels as basic text for all Christian living and praying. CIC can 662 calls all Constitutions an expression of the Gospel call to follow Christ. Some few Congregations were founded only with legislative Constitutions, and taking as rule the text of another, ancient Order or Congregation, thus becoming a member of their spiritual family. According to the 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Lateran (11/1214), Cap. XIII and the Council of Lyon (1274), it was decreed that future foundations have to adopt already approved rules (of St. Basil, St. Augustine, St. Benedict or St. Francis), and must be approved by the Holy See (Cf. J. MANSI, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Vol. 22, Akademische Druckanstalt, Graz 1961, p. 1002, for the 4<sup>th</sup> Council of Lateran). Thus, it happened till 1917 that founders who had their own experience of life in Christ to narrate, officially took a rule of another order (St. Norbert in 1121 and St. Dominic in 1221 adopted the rule of St. Augustine), adding their own Constitutions, that were not only juridical texts. Already Carthusians (founded in 1086) and Trinitarians (1198) had only “Constitutions” as a rule of life. Cf. G. Ganss, *Introduction and Commentary to I. of LOYOLA, The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Jesuit Sources, St. Louis 1970, p. 40-41.

<sup>598</sup> I.e. compared with the ancient Orders, they have Constitutions and “Rule of life” in one.

<sup>599</sup> These principles are: 1. the Gospel must be the supreme rule for all. 2. The spirit and aims of the founder should be faithfully preserved in the Constitutions. 3. All Institutes should share in the life of the Church through their apostolate and celebrations. 4. The Constitutions should encourage the Institutes to form their members to know the needs of the Church today. 5. The spiritual life must retain primary importance. Also PAUL VI in the *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae sanctae II*, (6/8/1966) (Norms for implementing PC), in AAS 58 (1966) 775-782, n. 12-13 prescribes that the text must be both spiritual and juridical. The Original Constitutions of SHL seem to meet all the requirements, but it seems necessary to elaborate an additional frame of more detailed (and changeable) rules, a “directory”, especially for the community life.

<sup>600</sup> Cf. T. de RUITER, *Il segreto*, p. 103.

<sup>601</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 185-186 (appendix 3). Cf. also T. de RUITER, *Il segreto*, p. 104.

<sup>602</sup> Cf. appendix 5.

pious Society comprising lay people, priests and religious of other congregations, in different degrees of commitment, and Sisters, Brothers and religious Priests of the Hearts of Love. His main idea is that all, even non-Christians, should unite themselves with the Love of God which became visible in Jesus and Mary, and in their union.<sup>603</sup> The religious of the Hearts of Love belong to the three innermost “circles” of the Society, being “nearer” to the “Centre” (Jesus and Mary) by their religious consecration. But the circle nearest to the “Centre” in the Society is the circle of “Victims of the Hearts of Love”.<sup>604</sup> Thus the Original Constitutions for the Society do not deal primarily with the role of Jesus and Mary for the religious, but for all children of God.

The idea of the religious “following Christ” is present in the Constitutions of the Hearts of Love, especially when the founder quoted the Canon Law<sup>605</sup> or LG.<sup>606</sup> His own expressions, however, show more of an intimate, living relationship of the religious with both Christ and his Mother: being “children of God’s Love, Sisters of Love, sisters of Jesus and Mary, daughters of the Hearts of Love and Victims of the Love of God.” It is from this being accepted by God as beloved children that the Sisters are enabled to respond with great love: “They therefore give themselves wholly and entirely to the love of God in a special consecrated life through the evangelical Counsels of Chastity, Poverty, and Obedience.”<sup>607</sup>

In Father Montfort, the Two Hearts ever united in Love are not only important as single persons and good examples of their personal virtues, but as an example of a pure and holy *relationship*, staying together in reciprocal service and respect (or worship), living the will of God together, being united in prayer: “Members should always see Mary in union with Jesus. They are the Two Hearts ever united in Love!”<sup>608</sup> The members, repeat the Constitutions, “will strive for perfection in love, both as individuals and in community, according to the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus Christ (and His Blessed Mother - the Blessed Virgin Mary) the Hearts of Love.”<sup>609</sup> The “perfection in love” summarizes the chastity, obedience, life of poverty, truthfulness, zeal in the apostolate and love of God and neighbour – “according to the teaching and example” of the two highest models of religious life.

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<sup>603</sup> The union of Jesus and Mary as a revelation of the love of God and his will and a call for all human beings to be united in Christ, i.e. in love of God and neighbour, will be amply treated in chapter III.

<sup>604</sup> “Victim” is here a title with a freely assumed commitment, similar to the mode of membership as “benefactor” or “propagator”. The commitment of a “Victim” can be temporary or for life, it can be undertaken by lay people, aspirants, novices, religious and priests, by men and women. It is the aspirancy to the Jesu-Marian perfect acceptance of anything God asked them to do and to suffer. They are to pray, fast, preach and work in great seriousness for charity among people and for all to come to the Love of God, in any Centre or noviciate of the Hearts of Love. For all the circles, cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 25-38. (Appendix 3). They could be compared to the function of models who are to keep together all the circles of the Society, similar to the “Daughters of God Alone”, part of the foundation of the Society of the Holy Family of Bordeaux of Father Pierre-Bienvenu Noailles († 1861), who founded in the years after the French Revolution a religious family of many branches: active sisters, lay associates, priests associates, the “Daughters of God Alone”, and contemplative sisters. (Only the active and the contemplative sisters are canonically recognized: the CIC does not yet permit the recognition of such a religious family with many branches.) B. PEYROUS sees these “Daughters of God Alone” in parallel to the Jesuits who pronounce the fourth vow of not seeking ecclesiastical career, with special permission of the superior and one year of preparative retreat. Cf. *Miracolo eucharistico. Racconto e testimonianze degli eventi di Bordeaux, 1822*, Emmanuel, Paris 2004, p. 91-93.

<sup>605</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 70, §1, referring to can. 573, §1.

<sup>606</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, Art. 82, §4, referring to LG 43, without mentioning it.

<sup>607</sup> *Ibidem*, Art. 69.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibidem*, Art. 105.

<sup>609</sup> *Ibidem*, Art. 34.



The spirituality of being united with Christ in the liturgical action (the spirituality of baptismal priesthood<sup>610</sup>) is proposed: in the daily participation at Mass,

«the members unite themselves completely with Christ and offer to God ever anew the perfect response to His infinite Love in union with the perfect response which Our Lord Jesus Christ made, and which His Blessed Mother Mary made, the Two Hearts ever united in love. [...] In the Holy Mass we participate in this union of the Hearts of Love».<sup>611</sup>

The Society of the Hearts of Love demands the consecration to the Two Hearts of Love of all enrolled members, as part of an itinerary of gradually drawing nearer to Jesus and Mary, before admitting someone as aspirant to the religious life.<sup>612</sup> Through this union established in the first devotional and then religious “consecration” and daily renewed in the Holy Mass, the sisters are expected to become an “embodiment of the spirit of the Two Hearts of Love”,<sup>613</sup> which means an embodiment of the person of Christ<sup>614</sup> in his union with the person of Mary. This unity with Jesus and Mary is achieved by handing oneself over to them (with the Prayer of the Hearts of Love), allowing them to think, speak and act in “me”, to “possess” and guide “me” in the will of God: relating with them as owners of one’s person, time and energy.<sup>615</sup>

## **2.2. The three vows and four obligations**

The SHL Constitutions prescribe for the religious who choose this Congregation the three evangelical vows and four additional “obligations” that shall help them to be united.

### **2.2.1 The three evangelical vows**

The counsels of Jesus for those who “want to be perfect” are to “make oneself a eunuch for the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19,12), to “sell all you have, give it to the poor [...], then come! Follow me!” (Mt 19,21 par.), and the counsel, which is rather a command, to do “the will of my Father” (Mt 7,21): chastity, poverty and obedience. The early monks called it “*solī deo vacare*”: to become empty (of sexual desires, desires for food and properties, and of own plans) for God, waiting for God only.<sup>616</sup> Religious profession is the constituent foundation of religious life, as baptism is the foundation of Christian life. It is a spousal covenant with Christ.<sup>617</sup> An enemy of love

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<sup>610</sup> Baptismal priesthood (consecration) in its relationship to religious consecration (and devotional “consecration”) will be treated in sub-chapter 3.4.2.3.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibidem*, Art. 123.

<sup>612</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, Art. 77, §1: “The members make a solemn consecration to the Hearts of Love and promise to say the prayer of the Hearts of Love, do the work of love and live a life of love.” On 29/11/2011 the founder said during Mass in Holy Hour at the Brother’s noviciate: “There shall be 30 days of preparation for the consecration to the Hearts of Love, 100 days of preparation for the solemn declaration [entrance into aspirancy], 2 years of postulancy, 2 years of noviciate.” (Appendix 4)

<sup>613</sup> *Original Constitutions*, Art. 40, § 2; appendix 3.

<sup>614</sup> Cf. T. de RUITER, *Il segreto*, p. 183.

<sup>615</sup> Cf. *Preachings of Father Montfort*, 22.8.2006; appendix 4.

<sup>616</sup> F. MEURES, “‘Ein anderer wird dich gürten und führen’ (Joh 21,18)”, in *Ordenskorrespondenz* 54 (2013) 186.

<sup>617</sup> A. BONI, “Professione religiosa. 1. Dimensione teologica” in *Dizionario teologico della vita consacrata*, p. 1327, 1335.

is the freedom to leave the beloved. That is why true love chooses to bind itself with the strongest possible promise and commitment, which is the vow, to the beloved.<sup>618</sup>

### 2.2.1.1. Chastity

Religious chastity is deeply connected with the virtue (and obligation) of charity and love.<sup>619</sup> Although every one of the three evangelical vows could be seen as including the other two, religious chastity and virginity, because of its tight correlation with the virtue of universal love, can be called the “first” vow, including poverty and obedience. Whoever keeps his heart pure, will easily obey the voice of God and will not fall victim to the spirit of possession (of things or persons). Religious psychologists underline today that virginity/chastity for the Kingdom of God has an aspect of totality, as the way a person uses his sexuality is connected with his human instincts, which play a central role in the biological-psychological equilibrium of the individual, and it expresses the orientation of life of the person. It also shows the true meaning of sexuality, as a call and challenge of the freedom and responsibility to take up a position (rationally), to take a moral decision (according to the position taken) and to accept a vocation (to married or celibate life).<sup>620</sup> Fear of sexual feelings in one’s body, the search for secret compensation, pride, egoism and the lack of genuine goodness are signs of a wrongly lived vow.<sup>621</sup> T. Goffi emphasizes that even those who were in love with Christ when they chose the religious life, have to control continuously their fantasy and sentiments.<sup>622</sup> According to A. Cencini, the great values and mysteries as sexuality in the sense of gift of oneself (in the context of marriage in Christ) and virginity as gift of oneself (in the context of religious community life or eremitical life in Christ) can be learned to desire and gained only by leaving aside the low values as bodily gratification, which are easily attainable. It can be lived happily only if it is accepted not merely (by the reason) as good and just to give God all, including all sexual energy of desire, but also as beautiful/wonderful (something touching the sentiments and giving joy), seeing the deep relation between bonum, verum et pulchrum. Chastity can be lived only by a person who is free and healthy in his affective life, who has identified his proper affective immaturities and egoisms, the wish of gratifying oneself while excluding others or the need of receiving the affection and benevolence from human beings. It is necessary to overcome

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<sup>618</sup> Cf. J. C. R. GARCÍA PAREDES, *Teologia della vita religiosa*, p. 96, quoting H.-U. von Balthasar, *Estados de vida del cristiano*.

<sup>619</sup> Cf. T. de RUITER, *Il segreto*, p. 66.

<sup>620</sup> Cf. A. CENCINI, “Quale itinerario educativo alla scelta verginale?”, in CENTRO NAZIONALE VOCAZIONI, *Verginità per il Regno: vocazione all’amore*, Rogate, Roma 1996, p. 95-97. The last quoted page suggests an educational path to chastity, which should involve heart, mind and will in union and direct them towards the true, the beautiful and the good. In the following pages (97-107) the religious formator reminds one of the importance of witnesses to the happiness of a chaste life, which receives gratification from God in humanly unthinkable ways, and in Christian brotherly friendships, courageously proclaiming the joy of a virginal life in the face of the society of today, while talking well of human sexuality, which is geared to communion, while the body is a witness of love: love is the source and aim of a body, which was (supposed to be) conceived in love, and tends towards union in love. Human sexuality reveals the fundamental significance of life: the logic of life received as a gift of love and tending to become a gift of love. Virginity shows that the truth of the human body is above the body, and thus, a certain dimension of it is part of every healthy affective relationship: the primacy of God must be recognized in a true relationship of love. Chastity is the choice of those who refuse to follow the masses in the modern eroticism which is as false as plastic flowers, not permitting an authentic affective-sexual dialogue.

<sup>621</sup> Cf. T. de RUITER, *Il segreto*, p. 143-153.

<sup>622</sup> Cf. T. GOFFI, *La spiritualità contemporanea (XX secolo)*, EDB, Bologna 1987, p. 253.

these immaturities with vigilant attention on purity, discovering that human beings (and God!) are a mystery, of which little can be possessed and understood. Chastity leads one to love and to respect oneself and what one is called to be, thus being free to love and forgive others. A life of chastity/virginity has as a condition deep gratitude towards those, who showed the person love and attention - relations and friends, educators and spiritual guides, (accepting their limits and overcoming eventual traumas and sufferings with faith in the love of God) and who is sure that he will be able to show love to others, even all others, to enjoy their beauty without the need of possessing it.<sup>623</sup>

Vatican II defines chastity as a means: it is “a special symbol of heavenly benefits, and for religious it is a most effective means of dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to the divine service and the works of the apostolate.” (PC 12) “Only the love of God – it must be repeated – calls in a decisive way to religious chastity. This love moreover makes so uncompromising a demand for fraternal charity that the religious will live more profoundly with his contemporaries in the heart of Christ.” (ET 13)

The Father Founder proposes prayer,<sup>624</sup> i.e. Love of God, as the main means to protect chastity, in order to reach the capacity of a universal love.

The passages where the Original Constitutions treat of purity and chastity are: a call to “follow Jesus Christ and the Gospel and to live a life of pure and holy love in imitation of Him and His Blessed Mother who is also a Heart of Love” (Art. 96 §1., cf. § 2, Appendix 3), under “Media of social communication” the warning, taken from CIC, can. 666, to avoid all that is ‘harmful to chastity’ (Art. 109, Appendix 3), and in an Article on the Holy Eucharist an admonishment to “avoid the impurity in thoughts, words and action for His sake who is Holiness and Purity Himself” (Art. 100 § 3, Appendix 3). Two points can be taken from these brief comments. First, the founder sees purity and love as intimately united. Love is such only if it is “pure and holy” and purity is being preserved “for His sake”, i.e. out of love. Secondly, the preoccupation to take extra care to avoid anything that could lead to impurity.

This preoccupation makes him to preach often about the importance and beauty of purity, on the importance of avoiding impure thoughts, passions, and any body contact that could lead to such, as a condition to come very close to God and to be efficacious in the apostolate, e.g. on 25.1.2008: “Never compromise your purity, your holiness, for this purity and holiness is the guarantee for authenticity. Purity and holiness guarantee upon authenticity. Never compromise [...] your virginity, purity, your oneness with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, oneness with God.”<sup>625</sup> Fr. Montfort understands the chastity of the sisters as “guarantee upon authenticity” of their being

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<sup>623</sup> Cf. A. CENCINI, “Quale itinerario”, p. 89-91, 93, 108-114, 117-118.

<sup>624</sup> According to St. AMBROSE, *De virginibus, ad Marcellinam sororem suam*, I, 11.13, in *PL* 16, 202-203 the consecrated virginity was evoked from heaven; when and since the Lord took flesh, his members began living the heavenly life in many places. As virginity for the sake of the heavenly kingdom has a supernatural origin, it needs to be obtained and sustained by prayer.

<sup>625</sup> Appendix 4.

religious, bearing the presence of God, being united with God.<sup>626</sup> Sometimes the founder mentions the aspect that chastity helps to save time for apostolate.<sup>627</sup>

Further on 20.10.2007, during the Vigil Mass, on bodily distance from people, in order to be an efficacious pointer to God: “People coming to you come for God, not for you. You are signs of the kingdom, not the kingdom itself. The religious does not have anything for himself; he is flowing, pointing at God. ‘The distance I enjoined on you towards all is to pour yourself on them most meaningfully and profitably.’”<sup>628</sup>

The sisters are to see themselves as so sacred to God, that they must not allow anyone to touch them in an unchaste way. On 8.11.2007, during the Vigil, he preached:

«God in his wisdom in order to become man chose Mary, uncontaminated, who could not defile the Word of God. You should endeavour with all your strength to keep yourself pure and holy, avoid all that can spoil the efficacy of the word of God. God was searching for a person in whom his presence will be shining out like the sun; it was in Mary that he found it. She carried no other thing than the Word of God, no mixture with her own words, own character.»<sup>629</sup>

Virginity/chastity, in line with the tradition of the Church, is focusing the attention on the beloved one, forgetting one’s will; here by the founder called one’s “words”, one’s “character”. It is thus seen as *conditio qua non* for a deep, unifying relationship with Christ; as the only way to permit Christ, the Word of God, to shine out in one’s life, thus as a very great value (as a means: the aim is union with God). The founder thus presents the question of how to preserve chastity with much stress on the connected value-aim (love of God and every soul). The joy of being united with Jesus and Mary in their own pure and holy, virginal Love, is to make any tempting thought very detestable and immediately rejected.

### 2.2.1.2. Poverty

Poverty – dependence and moderation in the use of goods – is related to the theological virtue of hope in God,<sup>630</sup> seeing all goods as precious gifts of divine providence. It is generally the vow which indicates the radicality (or not) of the religious life in the institute.<sup>631</sup> It is in some Institutes a vow in crisis.<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> Cf. St. Ambrose, in a Christmas hymn (“Vexilla virtutum micant: versatur in templo Deus”) understands the virginity of Mary as “guarantee” of the miracle of the Incarnation. As the imperial standards show exteriorly the presence of the monarch in his palace, so the intact virginity of the mother surely indicates the presence of God in the temple of her womb.

<sup>627</sup> On 18.7.2007, in the brothers’ noviciate in the Vigil: “Many don’t know that God loves them and waste their time with drugs, sex, etc. They waste their precious time; time is grace, opportunity to win heaven. Spend yourself in working, waste yourself, sacrifice yourself for the salvation of souls, at the end you will not regret it.” Appendix 4.

<sup>628</sup> Appendix 4.

<sup>629</sup> Ivi.

<sup>630</sup> Cf. T. de RUITER, *Il segreto*, p. 60.

<sup>631</sup> Cf. the Ignatian rule of July 1550, prescribing a mendicant poverty: “neither the professed [...] nor any house or church of theirs can acquire any civil right to any produce, fixed revenues, or possessions or to the retention of any stable goods (except those which are proper for their own use and habitation); but they should instead be content with whatever is given them out of charity for the necessities of life.” I. of LOYOLA, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, p. 69. He also decreed reasons for rejection of candidates, e.g. uncontrollable passions, having religious intentions mixed with human intentions, inconstancy, having notable lethargy or notable obstinacy in one’s personal opinion. *Ibidem*, p. 134.

<sup>632</sup> Cf. T. GOFFI, *La spiritualità contemporanea*, p. 254: “Nel secolo XX è diventato problema assai arduo il saper precisare che cosa implichi vivere da povero in una comunità religiosa.” He proposes the necessity of religious having

The Magisterium has given attention to the incapacity of some Institutes to live a pastorally fruitful poverty. PC 13 stresses that “it is by no means enough to be subject to superiors in the use of property. Religious should be poor in fact and in spirit [...]. They should, each in his own assigned task, consider themselves bound by the common law of labour [...]. They should willingly contribute [... to] the support of the poor”. A document of the Congregation for Religious Life underlines: “Religious must recognize the importance and dignity of work in earning their livelihood.”<sup>633</sup> ET 17-19 calls it liberation to the freedom to love, to avoid and oppose social injustice, to give the witness that possessions, knowledge and power are not a source of a real security, but that progress consists of sharing ever more the life of the living God. ET 19 reminds religious not to allow themselves to be drawn into inhuman labour, but to carry out their work in love “as a source of sustenance and of service” which cannot destroy their prayer life or reduce their dignity.

Presupposing the hard work of the members in the apostolate as requested by the magisterium, the founder preferred presenting the religious poverty as a sharing (as ET 21): all members bring all they have,<sup>634</sup> it will be shared to members (of the community and with other communities) according to needs, it will be shared with the poor and used for the projects of the congregation. Poverty in the SHL, as chastity, is thus also deeply connected with charity. This original idea of religious poverty of the founder can be found in the Articles 107 (Appendix 3: Sharing “thoughts, feelings, ideas, background, cultures, past, present and future aspirations, families, friends, well-wishers, benefactors, joys, sorrows, achievements and even faults and failures, graces and blessings.”), 108 (sharing in thankfulness to God, in mutual love), 139 §2-3 (sharing one’s family with all sisters and due detachment from one’s own family), 110 (supporting the Society with one’s whole life, talents, energy, initiatives, connections, ideas and all that they are) and 43 (the service of the bursar or “almsgiver”). The ability to share generously, with trust in God that He will provide all that is necessary for being able to fulfil the mission, while accepting to suffer the embarrassments of poverty, is a condition for being able to live the life of the Hearts of Love.

The poverty of sharing, of detaching<sup>635</sup> oneself from all properties and of bringing and submitting all a sister has and receives, thinking of the projects of the Society (projects for the poor, projects of evangelization, ...) more than of one’s needs, is a level higher than the poverty of not requesting all that the sister sees as her needs. The founder seems not to think of sisters requesting

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the experience of incertainty of housing and food, of having the need to work, and gives some examples of radical evangelical poverty for the sake of evangelizing the poor, on. p. 254-258.

<sup>633</sup> CICLSAL, *Par une lettre* (10/7/1972), in the chapter “vows”, in A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican Council II. More postconciliar documents*, St. Pauls, Mumbai 2000 (Vatican collection, vol. II), p. 196.

<sup>634</sup> This act of “sharing” is expected to be done voluntarily. There is no severe article saying that “they cannot keep or dispose of anything (money or goods) they may receive for their services or their work, or as present or alms. Everything must be given up entirely to the Superior for the general needs of the Community.” as the Art. 56 of the *Constitutions of the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus of Calabar*, approved by the VICARIATE APOSTOLIC OF CALABAR, Calabar 1950, p. 21.

<sup>635</sup> Cf. appendix 4, Compline, examination of conscience, 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2011: “Poverty – Do not be attached to anything material.” And at Midday Prayer on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011: “I still wonder why God asked me to detach myself even from my breviary, missal, computer [which he uses only to type the messages]. Not only from sin, but also from good things! And attach myself only to the *person*. Don’t attach yourself to shadows of Christ. He is there in person. Where do you find the person? In the Holy Eucharist – his Heart. This is what God taught me. This detachment from all is the meaning of the ‘pierce me with your arrows... Unite with the Sacred Heart’. Attach yourself only to the highest, the person, detach yourself even from the means to reach Him.”

anything at all, in fact, but he wants the bursars and superiors to know and to take care of “all things necessary for the life of the members”, and “all those things which are necessary for the achievement of their vocation” (Art. 110). The institute provides these with the good faith that “God supports and upholds His Society” (Art. 43) in its service of the poor.

### 2.2.1.3. Obedience

The Franciscan, Dominican<sup>636</sup> and Ignacian rule have formed the idea of obedience of the present time, in which the SHL Constitutions join in: it is geared towards the mission of the Society. Obedience is connected with the virtue of faith, the capacity of listening and adhering to God whenever he reveals his will. It leads to the inner autonomy which is freedom from uncontrolled passions.<sup>637</sup> Before Vatican II,<sup>638</sup> the ideal was: the superior discusses a situation with his counsellors<sup>639</sup> or with all the community or with those concerned, prays over it, takes a decision, announces to those concerned what he wants them to do, and these pray God to help them and they try to fulfil the order as best as they can.<sup>640</sup> Sometimes there may be needed the monastic “blind” obedience of the desert fathers, the obedience “a-logos”, doing things because it was ordered, and without own judgement, trying to overcome the objections of the human intelligence.<sup>641</sup> These objections often hinder the plans of superiors, i.e. they can oppose the will of God revealed to a person in his conscience. The work of a superior or spiritual director is to help the younger one’s to overcome the clinging to own ideas and to allow God to guide them.<sup>642</sup>

The Magisterium takes up the traditional teaching on obedience in PC 14: “By their profession of obedience, religious offer the full dedication of their own wills as a sacrifice of themselves to God, and by this means they are united more permanently and securely with God’s saving will”. The same number 14 balances the statement with the encouragement to superiors to listen, to foster a spirit of voluntary subjection, training the religious to exercise a responsible and

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<sup>636</sup> Written by St. Dominic († 1221), Spanish itinerant preacher against the Albigensian and Catharan heresy, in 1214-1216 he founded the Order of Preachers (Dominicans). Following the counsel of Pope Alexander III, he took the Cistercian rule as a basis for his order, but introduced his own method of an itinerant preacher. Cf. F. A. DAL PINO, “La presenza della Beata Vergine Maria nella vita degli ordini mendicanti (secolo XII-XV)”, in E. DAL COVOLO – A. SERRA (ed.), *Storia della Mariologia*, vol. 1, p. 736-738.

<sup>637</sup> Cf. T. de RUITER, *Il segreto*, p. 44.

<sup>638</sup> After the Vatican Council, the practice of obedience changed in many Institutes. The Magisterium did not change consistently.

<sup>639</sup> In some congregations, the counsellors have drawn to themselves a lot of authority, but according to Canon Law, they are only to be an advising help to the superior. The superior is to give them proper information and discuss with them regularly, allowing them to bring up topics they see as urgent and give suggestions. Voting should be done in secret. But the decision lies with the superior. Cf. F. VOLPI, “Il superiore maggiore e il suo consiglio”, in CISM (ed.), *L'Eucaristia, guarigione del nostro amore. La dimensione formativa del mistero eucaristico*, il Calamo, Roma 2006, p. 91-92.

<sup>640</sup> Cf. to this view of obedience the testimony of Fr. Bartolomeo SORGE S.J., former director of “La Civiltà Cattolica”, author of many socio-political works, founder of an Institute for formation, interested mainly in spirituality and an ardent devotee of Our Lady. He narrated how he received the written order to go and study Political Sciences, while all told him that this is not his charism, and he equally felt so. But he accepted it in obedience, suffered during the studies of things he was not interested in, but then these studies and his permanence in Rome during the Vatican Council II made him to understand much. The studies opened doors for him everywhere, and he was able to achieve a lot in social, cultural and ecclesial issues – always allowing God to do with him what He wants, always obeying what he understood as the will of God. “La profezia della cultura illuminata dal Vangelo”, in J. M. ALDAY (ed.), *I religiosi sono ancora profeti? Ancora*, Milano 2008, p. 225-233.

<sup>641</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLIK – M. TENACE – R. ČEMUS, *Il Monachesimo*, p. 106.

active obedience, i.e. being ready to do more than required, bringing suggestions on how more could be achieved. ET 25 reminds that all, superiors and simple members, have the duty to strive and search for the will of God, so that union with Christ in doing the will of God will be constantly fostered. It emphasizes that in the end, decision lies with the superior.

The Original Constitutions treat religious obedience in the Art. 112-118, as well as Art. 132, 144-145 §1 (Appendix 3), referring to Mt 20,28, CIC can. 590 §2, 601, 618, 675 §3, 677 §1; ET 25 and PC 14. In quoting CIC, can. 601, Art. 113 gives an ascetic foundation (to obey, in order to sacrifice the self to God), and puts the superiors “in the place of God when they direct according to the Constitutions”, i.e. when they command something which can be done out of charity, which is not a sin, which furthers the mission of the Society. The impression given by can. 601 is corrected in Art. 112, putting at the first place the statement that “Superiors are servants”: of God, the mission of the Society and the holiness of the single members, but also of the needs of the members, which superiors should value higher than their own needs, without expecting gratitude. Art. 116 takes up the same topic again, describing carefully how the service of leadership is to be executed: “superiors will respect the personality of each member in their care. They will strive to lead by inspiring and encouraging the members to assume initiative and responsibility in their life and duties.”

It is stressed in Art. 116 that obedience (of the superior to God) is achieved by prayer and by listening to the other members. Obedience is thus based on the capacity to listen to God, which, in turn, is based on the capacity to keep silence for meditation. In the SHL, obedience is also “the high mark of Love”<sup>643</sup>: “If you love me, keep my commandments.” (Jn 14,15) Striving for obedience is thus a condition for reaching the perfection of Love.

The authority has the duty to draw up a working-plan for the community, so that all sisters (including the superior herself) “share equally in the burdens and benefits of the community.” (Art. 132)

A word, which in the time of post-Vatican II is used a lot in connection with the vow of obedience, is missing in the SHL Constitutions (as it is missing in PC 14): “dialogue” is mentioned in the Original Constitutions only in Art. 147 (Appendix 3), treating formation.<sup>644</sup> A “dialogue” based on the wish of a religious to refuse an order (which is not sinful) is not contemplated as a possible situation by the founder, unless there are serious reasons of which the preparer was not aware of. An evangelically obedient person rejects the “autonomy” of determining one’s way of life and choosing alone the type of apostolate which fills one’s life. Art. 115 permits an objection against a directive, if it is presented in a respectful way, and also recourse to a higher superior, but adds: “However, if the superior after considering these views stands by the original directive, the member will accept it cheerfully and comply.” It seems that the founder wishes to restore the obedience of pre-Vatican II.

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<sup>642</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 108-109.

<sup>643</sup> Appendix 4: 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011, Father Montfort at Midday Prayer.

<sup>644</sup> Those to be formed have to cooperate in frank dialogue with superiors and the community. This means a dialogue, in which the sister openly discusses her thoughts, her problems in acquiring the necessary virtues, and what may be the root of such problems.

### **2.2.2. The four “obligations” of the Society**

Apart from chastity, poverty and obedience, the religious members of the Hearts of Love profess four “obligations”, which the founder originally called “additional vows”. Art. 81 (Appendix 3) names them as “the vow of Love – great love of God; the vow of prayer – prayer of the Hearts of Love, and the vow of work or apostolate – to work with us to bring people to the love of God”, and the “form of religious profession” counts them “truthfulness, love, prayer and work of the Hearts of Love” (end of Appendix 3).

These obligations of the SHL could be equally called “evangelical”, as also the commitment of truthfulness (cf. Jn 4,23), Love (cf. Jn 13,34 and 15,12), prayer (cf. Lk 21,34-36; 22,46) and apostolate (cf. Mt 28,19-20; Mk 16,15) base on a command or counsel of Christ in the Gospels. They are a great help to know and live the proper charism of the Society of the Hearts of Love. As they have general names, they could be pronounced by any religious, and they could be seen as included in the three traditional vows. Thus one may see them as superfluous. But the last three “obligations” are actually the most fundamental promises to God in the SHL, while the evangelical vows and “truthfulness” are rather means to achieve the faithfulness in Love, Prayer and Apostolate of the Hearts of Love. The keeping of both vows and commitments are conditions for the union with the Two Hearts of Love, and also the fruit of grace of this union.

#### **2.2.2.1. Truthfulness**

The commitment of “truthfulness” or “honesty” was added only in the year 2006. It does not refer in the first place to the Dominican motto of preaching the Catholic truth always, but to the simplest meaning of the concept:<sup>645</sup> being truthful to oneself, especially in the examination of conscience, being simple and honest in all dialogue with God, as the liturgy does, being truthful to others,<sup>646</sup> in honesty evaluating oneself,<sup>647</sup> other persons, situations and gifts or punishments received from God. It could also be called the vow of humility or of the courage to admit having done wrong. Humility is considered by spiritual writers as the foundation and condition for a proper living of all other vows and virtues. As everything in SHL is geared towards the deepening of union with God, in prayer and purity, so also this obligation has its main stress on truthfulness of the members in the periodic reports to superiors on one’s prayer life, participation and punctuality in community prayers,<sup>648</sup> on the periodic report on works of apostolate, for the bursar in the financial report, and on any sign of moral impurity observed in oneself or other members of the congregation.

#### **2.2.2.2. Love**

Since love is one of the key words in the Society and devotion of the Two Hearts of Love, this sub-chapter will be used as an opportunity to define it.

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<sup>645</sup> Cf. appendix 4, Father Montfort at Compline, examination of conscience, 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2011: “Honesty – Never try to deceive anybody, never mislead anybody. Say the truth, even if you lose. If you say the truth, God will gain, and he will pay you; on no occasion should you lie.”

<sup>646</sup> Cf. Art 145, § 2; appendix 3.

<sup>647</sup> Cf. Art. 103.

<sup>648</sup> Cf. Fr. Monfort in the introduction to Vigil Mass in the Brother’s noviciate, Ilorin, on 12/12/2011. Appendix 4.



Love is in every religious life both the starting point and the aim of all the vows,<sup>649</sup> because “God is Love” (1 Jn 4,8), or better: he is a Heart of Love<sup>650</sup>. Love is expressed in “deeds, and the gift of self”, in “closeness and tenderness”.<sup>651</sup> Divine Love “gives itself [...] in abandoning itself, ceaselessly transgressing the limits of its own gift, so as to be transplanted outside of itself. [...] It can even be defined as the movement of a giving that, to advance without condition, imposes on itself a self-criticism without end or reserve.”<sup>652</sup> According to the philosopher Marion, in love three elements work together: goodness, charity and desire (*agathon*, *agape*, *eros*).<sup>653</sup> J. Bergoglio combined in 2006 the concept of love with the value of life, calling love the ‘unconditional affirmation of life and of the value of every person’. It is to him a bond that is being realized in intimate, social, political, intellectual and other types of relationships.<sup>654</sup>

Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical letter *Deus caritas est* (25/12/2005),<sup>655</sup> n. 3-4 and 6, reminds one of the fact that the word “love” translates three different Greek words, showing its different dimensions: *agape*, *eros* and *philia*. *Philia*, the love of friendship, was used in the NT to describe the relationship of Jesus with his disciples. (It can be set into a straight parallel with *agathon*/goodness.) *Eros*, which meant to the Greeks “the overpowering of reason by a ‘divine madness’ which tears man away from his finite existence and enables him, in the very process of being overwhelmed by divine power, to experience supreme happiness” in a sexual act.<sup>656</sup> The encyclical notes that “*eros* needs to be disciplined and purified”. Finally there is *agape*, expressing “the experience of a love which involves a real discovery of the other [...]. Love now becomes concern and care for the other [...]: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice.” It is “an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God”. In n. 7 of the same Encyclical letter, the Holy Father continues: “Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly, [...] one must constantly drink anew from the original

<sup>649</sup> Cf. D. MONGILLO, “Carità”, in *Dizionario teologico della vita consacrata*, p. 185. Cf. appendix 4, Father Montfort in the sermon of the Vigil of 10/12/2011, preaching on “the principle of religious life: Love, receiving and sharing for all eternity.”

<sup>650</sup> “Love” is the most fitting name of God, but also here is valid the reflection of J.-L. MARION: “among the divine names, none exhausts God [written in the text with a cross on the “o”, to signify the God who reveals himself in the cross of Christ, not the “God” of the Philosophers] or offers the grasp or hold of a comprehension of him. The divine names have strictly no other function than to manifest this impossibility.” *God without being*, p. 106. Even “Love” is lacking meaning, because it is impersonal; it does not give the possibility to be in relationship with it. There is the need of a heart and a face containing this love, a heart and a person who can communicate the love.

<sup>651</sup> Pope FRANCIS, in the sermon of the morning mass at Domus S. Marthae of 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 (solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart), in *OR weekly edition in English* 46 (12/6/2013) 10.

<sup>652</sup> J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, p. 48.

<sup>653</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>654</sup> Cf. J. M. BERGOGLIO, “Per costruire la nazione: Utopia, pensiero, impegno”, in *Riflessioni* (p. 6-7), inserto allegato alla rivista semestrale *Vita Lateranense* 8 (Giugno 2013).

<sup>655</sup> Cf. <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est_en.html)> for the document in English, seen on 8/6/2014. It was the first encyclical of Benedict XVI and has, thus, a programmatic importance.

<sup>656</sup> Under the vow of chastity (sub-chapter 2.2.1.1.) it was already said that sexual desire is an energy at the disposal of man, which in a celibate life can and must be used to desire God and to work for the fulfillment of his will on earth. Thus, love has nothing to do with the repression of affectivity, but the human desire must be directed towards God, the highest good and best friend of the soul. Cf. F.-M. DERMINE, *La medianità e la fenomenologia mistica*, p. 67.

source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. *Jn* 19:34).” Pope Francis underlines love as a source of knowledge of the beloved.<sup>657</sup>

Father Montfort agrees with this traditional meaning of love when he depicts love as self-giving and sacrifice for the good of the other, sacrifice of one’s will, life, strength, energy and all, consecration of oneself to the other, and the wish to know (the other) and to be known.<sup>658</sup>

For Father Montfort, the Love of God involves the whole person, labours to do God’s will and to be in God; welcomes man, wishing and labouring to make others grow in the knowledge of God, to find and to accept their vocation to love God.<sup>659</sup> This love is flexible in treating people of different spiritual capacities,<sup>660</sup> but it calls for strictness with oneself.<sup>661</sup> Love is also testing the beloved: though a lover will always do good to a beloved one, even if that person is not responding, but Love cannot entrust itself completely to the other, until Love is fully convinced of the trustworthiness of the response of love from the beloved.<sup>662</sup> One has to allow oneself to be tested by God, remaining faithful in prayers.

The tested love becomes unifying,<sup>663</sup> is creating a community, thus becoming visible. Union must be seen as a fourth aspect of love.<sup>664</sup> It may be possible to present *goodness* as an act of general decision. True (divine) Love has decided for agathon/goodness, is driven by a disciplined eros/desire for it, acts in agape/charity/self-sacrifice and results in a holistic, intimate and eternal union.

In the Congregation of the Hearts of Love, Love of God (and his creatures) has been exalted to be an expressed obligation. The commitment of Love reminds the members more radically of the need to choose only what is of God in their life, ready to die for it.<sup>665</sup> It is the readiness to allow God to take possession and to transform the person’s life, so that Christ and Mary will live in the

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<sup>657</sup> FRANCIS, Encyclical letter *Lumen fidei* (29/6/2013), n. 28, in <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html)>. It is to be noted that the letter was drawn up mainly by Benedict XVI who, thus, completed his trilogy of encyclicals on Christian love, hope and faith. It was issued with a few additions by the new Pontiff. Cf. *ibidem*, n. 7.

<sup>658</sup> Cf. e.g. appendix 3: Art. 113 and Art. 149 of the Original Constitutions; in appendix 4 the message of 27/10/2000, the sermon of 1/12/2000, the sermon on 20/12/2000, the sermon at Vigil in Ars on 22/7/2003.

<sup>659</sup> Cf. Fr. Montfort in an interview in Dec. 2007: “I am happy to be an instrument of God. And I give myself to Him completely to use me as it pleases Him for this work of salvation of souls. The main purpose of this work of the Hearts of Love is: Love of God. [...] So the work of the Society [of the Hearts of Love] is primarily in the direction of God: to console Jesus, comfort God, adore God, worship Him, giving Him His due worship. Then in the direction of the human beings to bring them to God, to console them also by freeing them from the pains and the wounds of separation from God, the wounds made by sin, and teach them to love God”. TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 7-9.

<sup>660</sup> Cf. a message of Jesus about reception of the Holy Eucharist: “Whether they receive Me with the mouth or with the hand is for Me okay, but they have to come to Me and receive Me knowing fully well that it is Me who am that they receive. They should receive Me with Love and respect.” Message of 15/9/1997, 7.30am (appendix 4).

<sup>661</sup> Cf. the message of Jesus: “Be very, very, very strict with Love. Be very, very, very strict with yourself. [...] You have passed the stage of compromise with My Love, My purity, My holiness. There is and there can be no compromise. Do not compromise My Love, My holiness, My glory, My purity. I am not a God of compromise. [...] Love is not compromise. Love is self-sacrifice.” Message 1 of 27/10/2000 (appendix 4).

<sup>662</sup> Cf. the sermon of Father Montfort during Holy Hour in Ilorin, Nigeria, on 30/11/2011, appendix 4.

<sup>663</sup> Cf. the “promises of the Hearts of Love”, published in the Prayer leaflet and many other places, giving this promise of Jesus in the last part: “I want to promote unity among the various races and cultures in the world. I mean to unite families, unite the hearts of husbands with their wives, and the hearts of women with men, the hearts of children with their parents, the hearts of relations and friends with one another.” (Appendix 2.) Cf. the message of Jesus: “Love is worship with freedom. Love is service in freedom. Love is union in freedom. I am Love. Love is self-giving in freedom.” Message 1 of 27/10/2000 (appendix 5).

<sup>664</sup> Cf. F. ASTI, “Mistica”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 860.

<sup>665</sup> Cf. appendix 4, 6/12/2011, Vigil, Introduction: “The condition is great love, that is, preparedness to die.”

person. This seems to be a possible translation of the “new commandment” of Love (cf. Jn 13,34 and 15,12), for to love others as Christ has loved the disciples is possible only in union with Him. This obligation is thus the foundation of the spirituality of the Sisters of the Hearts of Love, and it is the main criterion for admittance. Love is fulfilled and becomes visible by the joyful and zealous practice of the commitments of prayer and apostolate, but also by the capacity to forgive offences for the sake of preserving the unity, by truthfulness, because love does not fear punishment, by attention to preserve one’s purity for God, by the readiness to accept tedious tasks in obedience and to suffer some lack of material needs. Father Montfort said at Compline, in the community examination of conscience, on 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2011: “Love – It is our principal vow. Loving everybody, hating nobody, not even the devil, if he appears in human form. ‘Kill the devil with love’<sup>666</sup> means: ‘love the devil, to convert or to chase him away.’ [...] If you have anything with anybody, go this night to reconcile!”<sup>667</sup>

The same thought of the need of unlimited forgiveness is expressed by the Holy Father in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace: „the *justice of love* [...] gives itself to the utmost, to taking upon itself the ‘curse’ [of punishment] laid upon [other] men [because of their evil deeds], that they may receive in exchange the ‘blessing’ which is God’s gift (cf. *Gal 3:13-14*)”<sup>668</sup> It belongs to the Christian vocation to break the spiral of hatred and revenge, sometimes born out of misunderstanding among men, by *bearing with love the sufferings which others have caused, so that those who are guilty may also be saved and receive the blessing of conversion and union with God*, like St. Paul received it. This Christian duty of embracing the guilty pertains especially toward those of whom Christians are a part: the fellow members of the same Body of Christ.<sup>669</sup>

The opposite of Love is not only hatred and annoyance, but also indifference towards a human being, sloth, boredom and melancholy<sup>670</sup>. To ignore someone means not seeing him with the gaze of the God who is Love, as a person with dignity, an image of God and a precious gift to the world, as a soul to be saved, but as a disturbance, or as a non-being.<sup>671</sup>

Love (goodness, charity and desire to see the will of God fulfilled) is the all-encompassing virtue, the attitude which gives the eternal value to prayer and the apostolate.

### 2.2.2.3. Prayer

In Luke, the call to pray is always combined with the reason: that one may have the strength to overcome difficulties and temptations (cf. Lk 21,34-36; 22,46). Prayer must produce spiritual strength, trust in God, love, inspirations for a good life, which must then show in the life of the

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<sup>666</sup> The quotation is of a “message”. This message is the reason for Father Montfort to send away sisters who are fighting. If such happens, it means that one of them is a “devil in human form”, and the other one was not able to “kill the devil with love”.

<sup>667</sup> Cf. appendix 4.

<sup>668</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Africae munus* (19/11/2011), n. 5.

<sup>669</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6/1/2001), n. 43, in AAS 93 (2001), p. 297. The document was given at the conclusion of the great jubilee 2000. S. M. Perrella calls it a synthesis of all the Pontifical documents of St. John Paul II. It is a renewed program for evangelization. Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 314-323.

<sup>670</sup> Depression *can* derive (apart from hormonal problems, lack of magnesium and vitamins...) from a suppressed anger, annoyance that has not been offered to God as a sacrifice for the expiation of the person’s own sins. A penitential spirit, on the contrary, is very healthy.

person. The obligation of Prayer is defined by many articles in the Original Constitutions (esp. Art. 49-66, 74-76, 98-105, 122-129).<sup>672</sup> It has its special note with the articles 49-50, 61, 65, 74, §4 on keeping the prayer times of the devotion (cf. sub-chapter 2.4.2.) in every situation and place. The founder lays a special stress on this commitment to prayer on the duty that the members should be before the time (i.e. before 12am/pm, 6am/pm and 3pm) at the place of prayer, the chapel, coming early enough to prepare spirit and breviary and songs for the community prayer, and that all should participate actively in the communication with God.<sup>673</sup>

All these external prescriptions are meant to aid the religious to reach the state of being always orientated towards God. (Cf. Art. 99). Prayer – a deepened spirituality<sup>674</sup> – is the necessary preparation for a good apostolate; a member who lovingly prays with people, who are not yet members, fulfils the vows of Love, prayer and apostolate at the same time (cf. Art. 133, § 1-2, Appendix 3). The Father Founder sees prayer and preaching as the essence of his life.<sup>675</sup>

The main point of his preaching is the fact that the Love of God has united Himself in Jesus Christ with Mary, a mere creature, thus establishing a renewed, perfect communion of God and man in the world. He acclaims this community as a union of hearts, united in the Love of God: the Two Hearts of Love. To him, this community of the Two Hearts of Love is not simply to be venerated, but it is to be *joined* by all through the prayer of Love (complete dedication);<sup>676</sup> in different ways,

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<sup>671</sup> Cf. J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, p. 115-135.

<sup>672</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>673</sup> Cf. appendix 4, Father Montfort at Compline, examination of conscience, 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2011: “Prayer – Have I been late for prayers, or have not all of the community participated? Have I kept all the prayer times, have I attended all of them well, or did I sleep wilfully? Was I lazy in kneeling and prostrating? – We shall prostrate in form of cross.”

<sup>674</sup> Cf. the famous formator P. G. CABRA, “Il rinnovamento della Vita Consacrata”, in C.I.S.M./U.S.M.I., *Il sinodo dei vescovi sulla Vita Consacrata*, Rogate, Roma 1994, p. 149: “*Il primo cardine del rinnovamento è dato dalla spiritualità: senza una solida spiritualità non è ipotizzabile una Vita Consacrata che possa reggere di fronte alla società contemporanea.*”

<sup>675</sup> *Original Constitutions*, Art. 35, §5, appendix 3. Cf. also preaching of Father Montfort, e.g. at Vigil in Ilorin, 1/12/2011, appendix 4.

<sup>676</sup> His original preoccupation was not to unite with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary; rather, he felt that he and all human beings are too sinful to do so. His preoccupation was to comfort Jesus for the ingratitude of mankind. It was Jesus in a very early vision, who showed Montfort His wounded Heart in a pitiable condition, asking Montfort to find a way to give life again to this Heart, and finally asking him and all to unite with His Heart and the heart of Mary. He tells it thus: “The Lord showed me His Heart which, because it has lost so much blood has lost its real colour and appears pale white. Then He said to me; “*If you can make this Heart turn red again the world will be saved.*” I asked Him how I can make the Heart regain its blood and its colour. He answered me: “*I want you to find that out yourself.*” I went about asking some older, experienced and learned and spiritual persons, but no body [sic] could provide the right answer. At the next time when He came to me I told Him that I have thought, and I asked many people and I could not find the answer myself and nobody could tell me the answer. He said: “*I will give you the solution Myself. I will reveal this mystery to you.*” Then He showed me His Heart again and the Immaculate Heart of His Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Immaculate Heart is covered with deep wounds, but the wounds were deep but not wide and the Immaculate Heart was also bleeding profusely. Then He said to me: “*The only solution is to unite to the wounded and bleeding Hearts of Love.*” I asked Him, how we can unite ourselves with the Two Wounded and Bleeding Hearts, since we are not pure and holy. The Lord then taught me *the Prayer of the Hearts of Love* and said that through this prayer we shall be purified and united with the Two Hearts of Love and the world would be saved.” TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 12. The quoted text he wrote like this in May 2001 and published as a letter. Before 2000, he had been talking and writing of the importance of the Prayer as solution from God, without narrating a vision. (Cf. his first “come letters”, which he shared in Nigeria, appendix 5.) In a German magazine (related to Medjugorje) of April 2000 he first narrated a vision in a longer article signed with his name, but attributing the vision to “a small child”. M. OKAA, „Afrika zwischen Elend und Hoffnung“, in *Leben* 11, 4 (2000) p. 12. There are some important passages in this vision. 1) The passage of young Montfort from the wish to console Jesus to the understanding that God wants more, wants a complete handover of oneself to His plans for the salvation of the world, wants the faithful to be united with His will, His life, His heart. 2) The passage from the one bleeding Heart to the two bleeding Hearts. In the vision as narrated, it seems the Heart of Mary has no function. She just appears as intimately united with

each according to his state of life and possibilities.<sup>677</sup> He propagates a readiness for a complete transformation of life by prayer which unites the person with Jesus and Mary,<sup>678</sup> and encourages visits to the sick, to pray with them, care for the poor and other works of corporal and especially spiritual charity.<sup>679</sup> His prayer is deeply rooted in the Holy Eucharist: the active celebration in the Holy Mass, for which he suggests the Prayer of the Hearts of Love as a response<sup>680</sup> and thanksgiving of priest and faithful for the gift of Holy Communion.<sup>681</sup> He proposes the same prayer also for Eucharistic adoration, to recall and prepare the gift of the Holy Mass.<sup>682</sup>

#### 2.2.2.4. Apostolate

The Society of the Hearts of Love has a short definition of its aims: to love God and to bring people to the Love of God (cf. Art. 5). “To bring people to the Love of God” is done by “incarnating” this Love in one’s life, making it possible for people to experience the Love of God through the goodness of the members and in the Prayer of the Hearts of Love taught by the members.<sup>683</sup>

The “mission” in the SHL, being a movement founded in Africa, is naturally not seen as directed from Europe to Africa. Neither has the Society the presumption of evangelizing Europe from Africa, but as for the Church as a whole, the “mission” comes from the Father through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and is going to the whole world. (Cf. “Ad Gentes”, 2-5)<sup>684</sup> Every place and culture is to be considered as a place of “mission”, in need of evangelization or re-evangelization, and also in need of hearing the message of the Hearts of Love.

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Jesus, so that to unite with Jesus is equal to uniting with the two Hearts. From the Prayer taught by Jesus in the days and weeks after the vision, she becomes an intermediary: “send my blood flowing into the wounds of the Immaculate Heart. O! Immaculate Heart! Unite with the Sacred Heart, to give life, to comfort, to glorify and to love.” The English text has a double meaning in the “Unite”, which is quite impossible to capture in most other languages. It is both “unite yourself” and “unite us”. Thus, Mary is not an intermediary who stands between the soul and Christ as an obstacle, but she is an intermediary who facilitates the direct contact: as the faithful unite with the Immaculate Heart by entrusting to her their blood, i.e. their life, they take part in the intimate and inseparable union of Jesus and Mary.

<sup>677</sup> For the various types of members of the Society, cf. the *Original Constitutions*, Art. 25-38. (Appendix 3).

<sup>678</sup> Cf. the third “promise” of the Two Hearts of Love, published in the Prayer leaflet: “Those who practise this devotion constantly will turn into flaming fire of Divine Love and will never be lost.” (Appendix 2)

<sup>679</sup> Cf. TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 9.

<sup>680</sup> On the necessity to inter-connect devotional prayers and liturgical prayers, while keeping them clearly distinct, cf. the sub-chapter 3.3.4.4.

<sup>681</sup> Especially the end/peak of the Prayer is clearly a response to the gift of Jesus, who allows himself to be consumed in the Holy Eucharist, as it contains the offer/request that Jesus (with Mary) may consume the person praying in return. (Cf. the Prayer in appendix 1.)

<sup>682</sup> Cf. the “promises of the Hearts of Love”, appendix 2, giving this promise of Jesus at the beginning: “This Prayer of the Two Hearts of Love comes from the Holy Mass, just as the flow of blood and water comes from My pierced side. For the Holy Mass and this Prayer are united. You cannot separate this Prayer and Devotion from the Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass.”

<sup>683</sup> Cf. e.g. the preaching of Father Montfort, at Vigil in Ilorin, 1/12/2011, appendix 4.

<sup>684</sup> ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Church’s missionary activity *Ad Gentes* (7/12/1965), in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_ad-gentes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html)>, seen on 1/3/2014. The document speaks in 42 paragraphs on doctrinal principles, the missionary work as witness, preaching, assembling and forming a community, the “implanting” of the Church in new places, the training of missionaries, the organization of their activity with a lot of emphasis on cooperation. Cf. also G. COLLET, who sees the necessity of a Christianity which is attentive to every culture (in a multicultural society), evangelizing everywhere. “...fino agli estremi confine della terra”. *Questioni fondamentali di teologia della missione*, Queriniana, Brescia 2004, p. 37, 131-173, 230.

The Risen Lord gave a clear command to his followers: “Go and make disciples...!” (cf. Mt 28, 19-20; Mk 16, 15) The obligation of apostolate, according to the simple “plan” of the founder, enjoins on the members the duty to think and look always for possibilities to bring people to the Love of God, no matter what they do and where they go. As the SHL has associated lay members, the apostolate is done in the spirit of communion with the laity, sharing with them in the mission and the spirit of the founder.<sup>685</sup> In Centres of the Hearts of Love the religious and the lay members pray together and organize projects together.

Teaching the people of today how to pray and how to love God is seen as the major and most urgent work of apostolate.<sup>686</sup> But since some people need some different help before they can be ready to receive such a teaching, the members engage also in other types of work, as the Church does. The Constitutions are completely indifferent on the type of work the members do (cf. Art. 136 §3, which ends in “etc.”), provided it can help to bring people to love God, be it a humble service of manual work, or comforting a person in sorrow, or teaching, or medicating. The important aspect is that the sister has it in mind to use her work not as a source of income, but as a means to teach people how to pray, especially the Prayer of the Hearts of Love.

The aim of the Society is the increase on earth of the praise of God, the acceptance of his will in communion with all souls, shown in an intense and grateful prayer life, and in the union of mind and heart among the members (cf. Art. 106). In other words, the members are to help establish on earth the Reign of the Hearts of Love,<sup>687</sup> an intimate communion of all with Jesus and Mary, with the Holy Trinity, resulting in “the eradication of hatred, wickedness, sin and all evils.” (Art. 62, § 1) The Society is hoping with the Church that this Reign will be established by God Himself, through the coming in glory of the Lord Jesus at the “end of time” (cf. Rev 21-22). But grace builds on nature: men have to make their efforts.<sup>688</sup>

The members can live a stable life in a Centre of the Hearts of Love, or live an “itinerant” life in order to spread the message of the Hearts of Love, cf. Art. 136, §2. The Society seeks especially to train its members to be capable of teaching (catechetics and general education, especially in the Catholic religion, in schools and traditional forms, or through books, articles, internet, radio and TV), for medical care, for parish assistance, for organisation of lay apostolate groups, for organising youth clubs, women’s organisations, co-operative societies, for family and marriage counselling, for catering, for visiting, counselling and re-socializing prisoners, for caring for needy helpless children, especially orphans, for giving vocational training, for care and training of handicapped people, for producing religious articles. (Cf. Art. 136, §3) The Sisters have to strive to accommodate the needs of time and place and the direction of the local ordinary. (Cf. Art. 144-145 §1).

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<sup>685</sup> According to P. G. CABRA, “Il rinnovamento della Vita Consacrata”, p. 153, this communion with lay people is the fifth and last of his points which are necessary for a renewal of the religious life.

<sup>686</sup> Cf. the message of 5/10/97: “Any day you did not teach at least one person the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, and any day you did not do some work of Love to somebody at least one person that is sinful, for this you should go to confession.” Appendix 4.

<sup>687</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 4, appendix 3.

<sup>688</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 25 § 2, Art 66 § 2 and Art. 67 § 2; and in appendix 4 the sermon at Holy Hour in Ilorin, on 4/12/2011 and the Vigil in Ilorin on 12/12/2011.

However, the basic means to fulfil the aim of SHL is not a “doing”, but mainly a “being”<sup>689</sup>, being present and united with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, similar to the “work” of cooperation of Mary in the salvation of man.<sup>690</sup> Thus the founder returns always to the importance of prayer, purity (virginity) and seeking together the will of God.

This new being must be eminently a being-in-community. The former archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, wrote in 2006 an article about how to construct a nation.<sup>691</sup> The article could be applied to an international religious community. In order to be able to love the community, each member must not permit what was his contribution to get lost. Union cannot come through cultural-intellectual-spiritual subordination, or by quick agreement of the majority, but through meeting, dialogue and constructing together an integral universalism that respects differences. It cannot come through concentration on formal problems as good manners, but the real problems must be confronted. (Is the will of God being done?) The community must be aware of their social-religious bonds, keep the memory of their common roots (created as children of God and called by Him), have a common courage for the future, and take care of the weakest members. Sharing experiences and decisions to form a common ethics, celebrating and defending life together. A leader is necessary, but he must live in austerity and concentrate on the mission of encouraging the members to bring out the power in them for the project of God. Accompanying, permitting creative participation and protecting in every part of the social life of the community. Maturity is the capacity to use freedom in an intelligent and prudent way. Each individual has to be given time to reach mature decisions, through thinking over, discuss possibilities with others, become aware of consequences. Every person has the right to realize its God-given aims, and the community has to sustain the individual. A society that abandons some of the members is not desirable, there must be efforts to include all. Utopias give nourishment to creativity, but creativity must then develop aims that are possible to reach, so that the utopia will not end up in madness. And creativity must not neglect the continuity with the past, respect the identity of the community.

The founder gave the religious of the Hearts of Love all the necessary components to construct a united community according to the proposal of J. M. Bergoglio, but for the construction itself, a lot of work remains to be done.

### **2.3. Contemplation as participation in the union of the “Two Hearts of Love”**

To participate in the union of the Two Hearts of Love, to join the Two Hearts, is explained by Fr. Montfort as the practice of a Christian life; practice of all virtues, especially charity, and by a life of constant prayer and contemplation as a basis of all virtues. Under the “obligation of prayer”, the rather external aspects of how to prepare and what to pray were treated. The aspect of

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<sup>689</sup> To underline this, the founder recommended to the first Sisters at final profession to add not only “Maria” to their chosen name, as it is a pious tradition in many religious institutes, but also “Love”.

<sup>690</sup>Cf. G. FORLAI, “Movimenti ecclesiali”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 875, referring to IOANNES PAULUS II, Epistula apostolica *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (16/10/2002), n. 24, in AAS 95 (2003) 5-36. The letter belongs to a long tradition of Pontifical documents encouraging the Holy Rosary, and stresses the contemplation of Jesus with the guiding help of Mary. For the epistle, cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 380-401.

<sup>691</sup> Cf. J. M. BERGOGLIO, “Per costruire la nazione”, in *Riflessioni* (p. 3-9), inserto allegato a *Vita Lateranense* 8 (Giugno 2013).

contemplation – what is contemplation and how to reach or to practise it – shall be studied in this sub-chapter, both with the help of Magisterial, theological and Congregational sources.

### 2.3.1. Contemplation: aspiration of the members of the “Two Hearts of Love”

Contemplation belongs to the religious life, whether “contemplative” or active.<sup>692</sup> In the mystical experience or contemplation or exercise of spirituality, man becomes conscious of the fact that his relationship with God is the basis of the meaning of his life.<sup>693</sup> Every spiritual operation, as every external activity is accompanied by the divine presence. According to a document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under the then Cardinal Ratzinger, Christian prayer is defined

«as a personal, intimate and profound dialogue between man and God. It expresses therefore the communion of redeemed creatures with the intimate life of the Persons of the Trinity. This communion, based on Baptism and Eucharist, source and summit of the life of the Church, implies an attitude of conversion, a flight from ‘self’ to the ‘You’ of God. Thus Christian prayer is at the same time always authentically personal and communitarian. [...] the essential element of authentic Christian prayer is the meeting of two freedoms, the infinite freedom of God with the finite freedom of man. [...] The Christian, even when he is alone and prays in secret, is conscious that he always prays for the good of the Church in union with Christ, in the Holy Spirit and together with all the Saints. [...] ‘To remain in oneself’: this is the real danger.»<sup>694</sup>

The dialogue with God (in union with the Church) involves the whole man, who enters into “communion” with God by basing his prayer on faith (cf. Mt 6,5-6), trust (cf. Mk 11,24), humility (cf. Lk 18,9-14) and a reconciled spirit (cf. Mt 6,14-15): i.e. he prays from the “heart”. The CCC<sup>695</sup> presents three “expressions” of prayer: vocal prayer (it “associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart”), meditation (which is “above all a quest”) and contemplation (which is “a communion of love”).<sup>696</sup> Some spiritual writers distinguish vocal prayer, mental prayer, prayer of the heart and spiritual prayer or contemplation. Representing a majority of spiritual masters, this research follows here T. Špidlík, who distinguishes only three levels<sup>697</sup> of prayer:

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<sup>692</sup> Cf. T. de RUITER, *Il segreto*, p. 84.

<sup>693</sup> Cf. R. ZAS FRIZ DE COL, “Spiritualità”, p. 1146-1147.

<sup>694</sup> CDF, Epistle *Orationis formas*, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of Christian meditation, (15/10/1989), n. 3, 7, 19, in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19891015\\_meditazione-cristiana\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19891015_meditazione-cristiana_en.html)>, p. 1, 3, 6, seen on 15/11/2013). The CDF sent this document to all bishops, as stated in n. 1, in order to aid pastors in the discernment concerning counsels they have to give to oppose the influence of non-Christian Asiatic forms of meditation that can lead the faithful away from God.

<sup>695</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1993. The work was published according to the request of the Fathers of the Bishops’ Synod, 7/12/1985; as a compendium of Catholic morals, doctrine and spirituality in line with the renewal of Canon Law and liturgy, meant as a point of reference for the catechisms that shall be prepared by the local churches for the teaching of children and adults. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic constitution *Fidei depositum* (11/10/1992), in CCC, p. 1-7, in the introduction.

<sup>696</sup> Cf. CCC 2700-2724, esp. 2705, 2719 and 2722.

<sup>697</sup> These levels are not to be compared with what could be called “types” of prayer, as liturgical, devotional-communal, devotional-personal or silent-personal prayer. Among the “types” of prayer, the Holy Mass is the highest – objectively the highest, source and peak of all Christian life, cf. LG 11; prayer in the most intimate union with Christ and involving the whole Church, celestial and terrestrial, cf. *Original Constitutions*, art. 100, § 1 and 123, appendix 3, which are based on the teachings of the Church, cf. SC, n. 10. Contemplation is the highest level of prayer; subjectively it is the highest point of prayer according to the Catholic tradition (cf. CCC, n. 2714), because it is in this form of prayer that the person, uniting intellect, will and affection in concentration on God, chooses love for his life and completely gives up his self-will, seeking and embracing the will of God. (Cf. CCC, n. 2658: “Love is *the* source of prayer; who draws from it



Vocal prayer is important in order to learn the ‘language of prayer’, which must be ‘studied’. Vocal prayer is the ‘work’ which must be done in order to cultivate the fruit of contemplation. Also for someone who has reached the capacity for spiritual prayer, vocal prayer remains important.<sup>698</sup>

Mental/spiritual prayer is a deep reflection on words, pictures or a remembrance. When the meditation begins to warm the heart with feelings of gratitude, happiness and adoration; when the intellect receives inspirations on the divine mysteries, the prayer of the heart has been reached.<sup>699</sup>

Contemplation (sometimes called “mystical” or “infused” contemplation, “inner prayer” or “prayer of union”)<sup>700</sup> is described as prayer without thinking: allowing the Holy Spirit to pray, and uniting with him, even if his prayer is incomprehensible. Man is taken by admiration and love and can be taken up in ecstasy, in this level of prayer. All his faculties are in union and in silence before God. This prayer cannot be reached, if there is merciless anger in the heart, an impure passion, or if the conscience is accusing the person of unrepented wrongdoing.<sup>701</sup> F. Asti describes contemplation not as a type of formal prayer, but as an ‘operation’, as a continuous labour to practice the virtues, especially charity.<sup>702</sup> In this ‘labour’, God is being involved, questioned, called for help to understand and for direction. When God answers, Christian contemplation is then a welcoming. Welcoming the “words and works of God [...], thanking him and adoring him.” Welcoming

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reaches the peak of prayer”, the prayer of love. And CCC, n. 2705, 2708: Christian prayer should strive for something higher than meditation, which is the search for God, the Why and How of the Christian life, and reach for the loving knowledge of Christ and the union with him.) Thus, it may also be called an inner disposition, not a form of prayer, but a state of being in a communion of love (cf. CCC, n. 2719). Contemplation is, thus, seen in the CCC in the view of the bridal mystic of union, not in a “logos mystic” of the early Fathers, that stressed more the knowledge of God than the embrace of this knowledge, though the holy Fathers surely embraced it. Contemplation leads to peace in the heart, as the person in his effort to be in union with the will of God knows that he did all he can do to find out what is the right thing to do. Every type of prayer, even Holy Mass, may be voluntarily distracted, remaining a pure lip-service; prayer may be full of doubt and inner struggle or filled with rational thinking on a spiritual problem or on the greatness of the marvels of God, which may be meditation or examination of conscience (“intellective prayer”), and any type of prayer can and should be on the highest level, i.e. combined with contemplation, which transforms the holy rite or pious exercise into prayer of love from the heart, making the faithful to gain the full spiritual fruit of the liturgical or devotional prayer. This is the most important aspect of the “active participation” of all in a communal prayer.

<sup>698</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito. La dottrina spirituale di Teofane il Recluso*, LEV, Città del Vaticano, 2004, p. 292-294.

<sup>699</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 296-299.

<sup>700</sup> The term “contemplation” has been used in various ways in history. The Thomist school saw “contemplation” and “mystical life” as belonging to the life of every true Christian, distinguishing from this form of ordinary seeking of God in prayer the “infused contemplation”, which is a special gift not given to all. The Carmelite school saw “mystical life” or “mystical contemplation” as helpful, but not necessary for the way to Christian holiness, thus talking with this term rather about experiences as visions or locutions. Cf. F. RUIZ, “Natura dell’esperienza mistica nella spiritualità carmelitana”, in L. BORIELLO (ed.) *Mistica e mistica carmelitana*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2002, p. 24. F. Asti calls already the search for what is good, noble and beautiful, if an intuitive act is connected, a ‘true initiation in the contemplation of the truth’. Cf. F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 230.

<sup>701</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 300-301, 303. St. TERESA OF ÁVILA († 1582, reformatress of the Carmelite Order and teacher of spirituality) expresses her experience as having an intellect all in silence before God because of being astounded by the many things God makes it to understand, e.g. that all these things are far above its natural capacity to understand. *Vita*, 10,1, quoted in CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 115. The following pages 116-117, four different levels of contemplative prayer (in St. Teresa) are being distinguished. It may be added that union with God means to conform the affections of the own soul with the “affections” in God. These are not mere emotions, but a spiritual energy: the motions of the soul connecting itself with God, drawing from him its transcendent energy. The author sees the following as the affections in God, to which man should unite himself: sacrificial *love* of a person is the all-encompassing affection, but there is also the *joy* of seeing someone advance spiritually, the *hope* of receiving answer to the own love, the holy *fear* of reducing the love of another with a wrong action, e.g. by limiting his freedom, the *sorrow* on seeing a person destroying himself with hatred, the *horror* in front of situations where hatred and violence prevail, the *hatred* of evil. Concerning admitting affections in God, cf. sub-chapter 3.1.1.2.

inspirations and new experiences. Also “experiences of affliction and desolation [...] may be an authentic participation in the state of abandonment experienced on the cross by Our Lord”. Welcoming other human beings as brothers.<sup>703</sup> St. John of the Cross († 1591)<sup>704</sup> points out that “the state of this Divine union consists of the soul’s total transformation, according to the will, in the will of God, so that there may be naught in the soul that is contrary to the will of God, but that, in all and through all, its movement may be that of the will of God alone.”<sup>705</sup>

Contemplation is reached<sup>706</sup> with acts of the free will, deciding to forgive, deciding to pray for the good of those who misbehave, deciding to reject sensual love and its gratifications, deciding to ask for forgiveness and to do penance for one’s wrongdoings, deciding to accept the will of God; thus uniting with God, “continually translated into deep prayer” for strength: “Contemplative Christian prayer always leads to love of neighbour, to action and to the acceptance of trials, and precisely because of this it draws one close to God.”<sup>707</sup> Contemplation is defined as “that sublime knowledge of Christ Jesus” which is based on the “illumination received in Baptism”.<sup>708</sup> this knowledge/union/love of Christ transforms the whole life. To understand the

«mystery of union with God, which the Greek Fathers called *divinisation* of man, [...] it is necessary [...] to bear in mind that man is essentially a creature, and remains such for eternity, so that an absorbing of the human self into the divine self is never possible [. ... Even] the Son is ‘other’ with respect to the Father [. ...] Consequently this otherness, far from being an ill, is rather the greatest of goods. There is otherness in God himself, who is one single nature in three Persons, and there is also otherness between God and creatures, who are by nature different. Finally, in the Holy Eucharist, as in the rest of the sacraments – and analogically in his works and in his words – Christ gives himself to us and makes us participate in his divine nature, without nevertheless suppressing our created nature [, ...] without the personal self or the nature of a creature being dissolved or disappearing into the sea of the Absolute. ‘God is love’ (1Jn 4:8). This profoundly Christian affirmation can reconcile perfect *union* with the *otherness* existing between lover and loved, with eternal exchange and eternal dialogue. [...] The seeking of God through prayer has to be preceded and accompanied by an ascetical struggle and a purification from one’s own sins and errors [...]. The Gospel aims above all at a moral purification from the lack of truth and love and, on a deeper level, from all the selfish instincts which impede man from recognizing and accepting the Will of God in its purity. The passions are not negative in themselves [...], but their tendency is to selfishness. It is from this [selfishness] that the Christian has to free himself [. ... The] habitual union with God, namely that attitude of interior vigilance and appeal to the divine assistance which in the New Testament is called ‘continuous prayer’, is not necessarily interrupted when one devotes oneself also, according to the will of God, to work and the care of one’s neighbour.»<sup>709</sup>

<sup>702</sup> Cf. F. ASTI, “Conoscenza di sé e conoscenza di Dio. Per una lettura antropologica del diario di Veronica Giuliani”, in *Rivista di ascetica e mistica* 38 (2013) 192-193.

<sup>703</sup> CDF, Epistle *Orationis formas*, n. 6, 9; p. 3-4.

<sup>704</sup> St. John, who entered Carmel because of his love for Mary, described the “mystical night” as the aim of all human striving to reach union with God, the readiness to abandon the search to see or feel anything of God, in which the soul stays in love, while it seems to the soul to do nothing. In order to reach this, man has to “strip” himself from all that is not from God, as the bodily desires, like the desire for sleep or consolation. The mystical union with God is described mostly in terms of espousal. Cf. A. M. SICARI, “Giovanni della Croce (santo)”, in L. BORRIELLO et al. (ed.), *Dizionario di mistica*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, p. 568-571.

<sup>705</sup> ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *Ascent*, p. 59, book I, chap. XI, n. 2.

<sup>706</sup> St. Teresa of Avila stresses that contemplation is completely a gift from God. One can only prepare the soul for it with prayer and the practice of virtues. Cf. F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 141-142, quoting her work “The message”.

<sup>707</sup> CDF, Epistle *Orationis formas*, n. 13; p. 5.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 21; p. 7.

<sup>709</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 14-15, 18, 28, p. 5-6, 8-9.

As contemplation involves the whole person, the document treats also of the issue of fasting and the importance of the “*position and demeanour of the body*”:

«the Christian fast signifies, above all, an exercise of penitence and sacrifice; but, already for the Fathers, it also had the aim of rendering man more open to the encounter with God and making a Christian more capable of self-dominion and at the same time more attentive to those in need. In prayer it is the whole man who must enter into relation with God, and so the body should also take up the position most suited to recollection [...], depending on cultures and personal sensibilities.»<sup>710</sup>

Fasting and positions, as kneeling for prayer, are thus important preparations for attaining the level of contemplation.<sup>711</sup>

Prayer must be concentrated on Christ,<sup>712</sup> both on his divinity (his power to unite the faithful to himself) and his humanity (the instrument to unite them to himself): on his whole person. Accordingly, the origin of the devotion of the Hearts of Love lies in the contemplation of the passion of Christ, which, sacramentally and mystically, is always something present, and in the call to comfort the Heart of Jesus, and to unite with his Heart, which represents his whole person (cf. sub-chapter 3.1.).<sup>713</sup> The spirituality of the Hearts of Love follows the traditional teaching of the Church in seeing the “almighty” power of prayer in the fact of communicating with God, bringing God in,<sup>714</sup> but not for one’s will to be done. According to the founder, the relationship with God which the members should aim at is not a quest for extraordinary happenings, but grows in daily abandoning oneself to the will of God.<sup>715</sup> Father Montfort follows rather the “bridal” mysticism of union, formed e.g. by Carmelite<sup>716</sup> spirituality, with great attention to the humanity of Christ, his

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<sup>710</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 26-27, p. 8.

<sup>711</sup> Concerning fasting, it may be noted that in the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> century, Christianity observed at least in several places a fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays. It is witnessed to in Didaché 8,1, Pastor of Hermas, Tertullian, CSEL 20, 287, Clement of Alexandria, and other places. These two days of weekly fasting declined and the Wednesday fasting reduced to nothing till the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. S. ROSSO, “Sabato”, p. 1094-1095. The Catholic Church and each single Catholic may do well to consider to renew the discipline of fasting, measuring oneself with the ancient Catholic traditions conserved to some good extent in the Orthodox Churches.

<sup>712</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 114.

<sup>713</sup> Cf. one of the first visions, quoted in sub-chapter 1.3.2.1., footnote 396, when Jesus showed himself on the cross “with uncountable wounds all over His Body and they were bleeding.” TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 12. Cf. also the introduction to Vigil on 7/12/2011 in Ilorin, appendix 4.

<sup>714</sup> Cf. appendix 4, 24/5/2011, Vigil: “How did Mary become Mother of God? Only through prayer... How did Jesus succeed to save us? By saying, there at the Mount of Olives: ‘Father, your Will be done!’ And on the cross, he said the same: ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!’ Then he said concerning us, concerning the world: ‘Father, forgive them!’...”

<sup>715</sup> Cf. appendix 4, sermon of Father Montfort of the 17.7.2007, 24 years priesthood of Father Montfort, small jubilee mass at Oyun, Ilorin: “‘You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours.’ That is the summary of all relationship between God and human beings and of what we are celebrating now: ‘You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours.’ [...] Send *all* your blood into Mary, into Jesus, the wounds of the Two Hearts, *all* my blood. [...] If you are really God’s and he is yours, there should be no condition. [...] ‘Your will is mine, what I will is what you will.’ [...] You alone are my God, there is no other whether I am swimming or sinking.”

<sup>716</sup> The “Ignea Sagitta” (1270) of Nicola Gallico presents the Carmelite ideal of putting aside one’s needs, desires and ideas, and to seek God alone, contemplating his presence both in physical solitude and immersed in the life of a city. The “Arrow of Fire” reminds the brothers that the apostolate must be prepared for by an intimate union with God, which is achieved in the “desert” of the convent, as chapter 6 underlines: “Nonne Dominus ac Salvator noster nos in solitudinem gratiose duxerat, ubi quadam speciali familiaritate ad cor nostrum loqueretur? Qui in conclavi, non in publico, non in foro, non in strepidu tumultuoso, amicis suis consolationis gratia se ostendit et revelat mysteria secretorum.” In reading the Sacred Scriptures and in prayer, the Carmelite exchanges love with God and receives his revelations. (Interesting for the development of a “spousal” mystic is the indirect quotation of Hos 2,16: God leading into the desert and speaking to the heart, which in Hosea is embedded in spousal language, comparing the alliance of the people Israel with God to a marriage bond. Verse 16 is the introduction to the promise of a new “engagement”. Cf. J. JEREMIAS (translator and commentor), *Osea*, Paideia, Brescia 2000, p. 42, 57.) After passing over some examples of

passion and his Heart, rather than following a mysticism of the “Logos”, drawn to more rational knowledge of Christ.

### 2.3.2. The experience of prayer

After defining contemplation and describing how one can reach it, it is necessary to comment on the experience of the presence of supernatural forces connected with prayer and ascetic efforts or exercises. The already above quoted letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith warns about seeking special experiences in prayer through special techniques:

«Some physical exercises automatically produce feelings of quiet and relaxation, pleasing sensations [...]. To take such feelings for the authentic consolations of the Holy Spirit would be a totally erroneous way of conceiving the spiritual life [... and] could also lead to psychic disturbances and, at times, to moral errors. [...] For the person who makes a serious effort there will [...] be moments in which [...], in spite of all his efforts, he ‘feels’ nothing of God. He should know that these trials are not spared anyone who takes prayer seriously. [...] His prayer, which he will resolutely strive to keep to, [...] is then] an expression of his fidelity to God, in whose presence he wishes to remain even when he receives no subjective consolation in return. [...] The love of God, the sole object of Christian contemplation, is a reality which cannot be ‘mastered’[...]. We therefore should allow God to decide the way he wishes to have us participate in his love.»<sup>717</sup>

The warning has very serious reasons. It is indeed the aim of prayer to “hear”, to “see” God, to receive his direction, to understand his will, to abandon oneself to it and to feel the consolation of receiving him who understands and abandons himself to his creature. Usually the “answer” of God in contemplation is given by making the person to remember, to read or hear a word of Holy Scriptures, or of any (good) person, which he perceives together with an inner joy and certainty (in faith) that *this* is the answer for him personally, and which he is then called to accept. There are also experiences in prayer that are above the natural powers of the senses, in which a personal contact with a mere spirit is experienced.<sup>718</sup> Not every spirit is from heaven. It is necessary here to look at

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the OT, he presents Mary as a person who went into the solitude, and as utmost model he speaks of Jesus: “Ecce in solitudine cuiusdam cellae, Maria et Gabriel sibi colloquentibus, Verbum Patris Altissimi veraciter incarnatur.” “In solitudinem igitur montis seu deserti ut precationem faceret Salvator ascendit; sed cum plebi praedicare vel opera sua manifestare vellet, de monte legitur descendisse.” Quoted in H. BLOMMESTIJN, “Il primo periodo della mistica”, p. 47, 50, 52. The mystic of “union”, seeing in God one who only desires to have someone to whom he can *give* himself, seeing in humanity the “spouse” of Christ who receives all the love of Christ, and who, because she loves Christ in return, is loved infinitely by the Father; taking Christ as the way to union with God, and seeking to share his ‘bitterness’ in self-annihilation, sharing his cross by complete acceptance of the Will of God throughout life, was promoted by St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross (Cf. M. H. GARCÍA, “Il carattere specifico della mistica di Teresa di Gesù e di Giovanni della Croce”, in L. BORIello (ed.) *Mistica e mistica carmelitana*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2002, p. 118, 120-121, 142-144.) and the “Carmelite school”, and came to Father Montfort probably through writings of and on St. Therese of the Child Jesus, who was profoundly rooted in the mystical experience of St. Teresa and St. John. Cf. C. GARCÍA, “La mistica nella scuola carmelitana. Studio storico-teologico”, in L. BORIello (ed.) *Mistica e mistica carmelitana*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2002, p. 73-95, 99-100.

<sup>717</sup> CDF, Epistle *Orationis formas*, n. 30-31, p. 9.

<sup>718</sup> Cf. F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 228-229: “Il carattere straordinario e misterioso non è da valutare come abnorme o fantasioso rispetto alla quotidianità della religione. L’esperienza mistica [...] è profondamente storica, pur superando le condizioni e le mediazioni temporali per entrare nel Tutto di Dio. La realtà psico-fisico-spirituale dell’uomo è coinvolta nel rapporto con Dio non in forma frammentaria e a tenuta stagna, ma olisticamente, determinando uno stato fisico ed uno sociale di totale trasformazione.” On p. 241 Asti sustains that there is no substantial difference between authentical “mystical”, “spiritual” and “holy” life: all terms refer to the relationship God establishes with his creature. A detailed description of characteristics of authentic mystical experiences, as being immediate, without excluding ecclesial mediation, giving security of being loved by God, giving an obscure and inexpressible knowledge of God, which makes the mystic to express himself with symbols, can be found on p. 246-253.

the differences between the Holy Spirit taking “possession” of a human being and an evil spirit doing the same.

### 2.3.2.1. Human contact with mere spirits and external signs correlated

The existence and action of good and evil spirits is witnessed to in the whole Bible and in Church history. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, liberal Protestantism<sup>719</sup>, under the influence of illuminism and positivism, began to deny the existence of the devil (as the Sadducees in the time of Christ). In the sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the discussion on the existence of angels and devils began in Catholic theology, so that Paul VI expressed himself on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1972 in a speech,<sup>720</sup> and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith commissioned an expert to write a study on the Biblical, patristic, Magisterial and liturgical foundation of demonology, which was published in the name of the Congregation in the OR on 26/6/1975.<sup>721</sup>

According to anthropological studies,<sup>722</sup> in every religion and culture, there are people who are created with the gift of a special sensitivity to supernatural forces. They are easily contacted by both evil and good “spirits” (angels, demons, deceased human beings, or God). Certain drugs and serious ascetical exercises catalyse such experiences, both visions of delightful beauty, feelings of untold joy and love, locutions of comforting and calling sweet voices, and the experience of a terrible horror, feeling the presence of the mystery of evil and the consequences of sin.<sup>723</sup> There is

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<sup>719</sup> Continued later by Robert Bultmann († 1976), Professor of NT in Marburg, known for interpreting miracles as the virginal birth of Jesus as “myths”, i.e. not historical.

<sup>720</sup> PAOLO VI, Udiienza generale *Liberaci dal male* (15/11/1972), in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, X, Roma 1973, p. 1169: “Il male non è più soltanto una deficienza, ma un’efficienza, un essere vivo, spirituale, perverso e perversore. Terribile realtà.” Cf. also the Exorcism of the Catholic Church, promulgated in the RITUALE ROMANUM on 22/11/1998, *De exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2003. It has been proved as very probable that the belief in spiritual powers apart from God entered the Bible from the religions of the pagan peoples around Israel. F. Manzi, in a study published by the CDWS, sustains that this does not permit the theologians to reject this belief, since it is also a belief of the Church that God revealed ideas of the transcendent realities in every time *and people*, not only in Israel. Manzi concludes that, under the theological profile, it is not a problem to accept the historical fact that Israel should have accepted into its system of faith a belief which existed also and previously in the pagan surroundings, thus “canonizing” that belief. Cf. F. MANZI, “Rilievi esegetici sul demoniaco nell’Apocalisse. Rilegendo il rito degli esorcismi”, in *Notitiae* 49 (2013) 417. “Se però il diavolo e i demoni non esistessero, soprattutto la convinzione di Gesù e della Chiesa primitiva rispetto all’attività diabolica si ridurrebbe a pura illusione, se non addirittura a vera e propria menzogna.” *Ibidem*, p. 420.

<sup>721</sup> Cf. <[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documants/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19750626\\_fede-cristiana-demonologia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documants/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19750626_fede-cristiana-demonologia_en.html)>, seen on 14/1/2014. Cf. also O. BATTAGLIA, *Gesù e il demonio. Saggio sulla demonologia nei Vangeli*, Cittadella, Assisi 2003, p. 9-11, and his bibliography on demonology in Italian, p. 195-196.

<sup>722</sup> Also psychologists are interested in the theme, since what seems a mystical phenomenon can also have natural causes, i.e. it would be a psychological pathology or an illusion. The imagination can make someone take up images conserved in the memory, to connect them and to motivate them to the extent of producing new images able to evoke mystical phenomena. Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 103, 105. This research will limit its attention to the supernatural (caused by God) and preternatural (caused by demons) phenomena.

<sup>723</sup> As every gift, such a sensitivity (and its catalyzation with ascetical efforts as keeping awake and fasting) can be used for the good of souls and for the glory of God, or for selfish aims, with consequences of personal growth or the fall under the dominion of evil spirits. The use of drugs, however, can in no way be accepted as good or an offering in honour of God as self-denial, as it deteriorates the God-given health. In the “trance” of both authentic glossolalie or demonic possession, and this is equal in all the very different languages, religions and cultures, in which the American anthropologist Felicitas Goodman investigated, and even when only unarticulated cries were uttered, the vocalisation is always very rhythmic. The units have always the same length, compared with each other. Secondly, the intonation always begins with a middle tone, rises in the first third of the “unit” to a peak, and then goes down (and up and down, but without rising again as high), until it ends in a whisper. A trance can last just few minutes, or many days. In the last case, there will be a change between enormous emotions and a lying like dead; to eat and drink is very difficult in this

hardly a mystic or a yogi<sup>724</sup>, who has not experienced both sides of highest emotion. The action of spiritual forces on man cannot be empirically proved, but it is the common believe of all those who have such experiences, that a transcendental force comes over them.

How does a bad spirit manipulate man with preternatural experiences? According to the demonologist E. v. Petersdorff,<sup>725</sup> devils cannot touch or see the souls of human beings directly, they can only manipulate the physical and spiritual senses. They cannot create something out of nothing, they do not know the future, but they know enough to make predictions that sound

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time, due to a pressure on throat and stomach. The pupils of the eyes open completely, light becomes painful to the person. Many muscles of the body can become stiff: face, fingers, legs. There can be shivering. Sleeping is almost impossible. The person can be always in movement, trying to cause himself pains. Lack of sleep and oxygen, pains and hunger increase the activities of the brain leading to trance. The brain produces endorphines, which block certain connections between the left and the right side of the brain, (the person will not react to many impulses from outside) and which open the chemical way in the limbic system to the highest experiences of joy or horror. A long lasting trance is very exhausting to those who experience it. Cf. F. D. GOODMAN, *Anneliese Michel und ihre Dämonen*, Christiana, Stein am Rhein, 1993, p. 255-267.

<sup>724</sup> Cf. R. R. MAHARAJ, *Der Tod eines Guru*, Schwengeler, Berneck, 2004: the author, son of a Brahman who was 8 years in trance, and who was venerated in life and death as a god, though he did neither move nor talk, (p. 11, 33) at only 11 years became a guru, a teacher of Hinduism for others. He practised many hours of transcendental meditation every day, repeating holy “mantras” (sounds and syllables functioning as prayer), adoring various gods including cows and himself. He felt in union with all things, and saw himself as the lord of the universe. He experienced psychedelic colours, heavenly music and trips to other worlds; his gods spoke to him in his experiences and encouraged him to continue the yoga. (p. 65, p. 70) He had also experiences of what he felt as persecution from the spirit of his choleric grandfather, and of the god Shiva, invisible hands holding him in various circumstances, causing him pains and dangerous accidents; often he had a horrible vision of the god with its snake. (p. 83-84, 86-87, 93) He became aware that none of his Hindu gods loved him, that he could not trust any of them. The peace he reached in meditation did not prolong into his relationships with others. Then, his meditation did no longer help him to find God, but only his own misery and wickedness. (p. 117, 132-133) He became a (“born-again”) Christian, which gave him great joy and peace, he learned to forgive. He then interpreted all the experiences of spirits and gods as experiences of devils, (p. 166). He travelled to London, met drug-addicts and saw that many of them experienced through drugs (hashish and LSD) the same things which he had experienced through yoga and meditation, both strong positive and negative emotions, visions and the feeling of oneness with the universe. He saw that many became convinced of the Hindu world view and religion, including vegetarianism and belief in reincarnation. He concluded: the demons can influence the brain through meditation as well as through drugs, producing “experiences”, which are only illusions. (p. 192-195)

<sup>725</sup> The following two paragraphs cf. E. v. PETERSDORFF, *Daemonologie. Dämonen im Weltenplan*, Christiana, Stein am Rhein 1982, p. 178-192. Among the demonologies that exist as monographs, it is one of the few books that not only treat the theme dogmatically or exegetically, and not only bring examples of occult practises and experiences, or experiences of an exorcist, but are based on Biblical, patristic, Magisterial and Thomistic testimonies on the devil, and on experiences of saints, discussing in a scientific way various opinions of rationalistic scholars trying to explain the devil as a human invention. It had its first edition in 1952. The main information in his work is confirmed in CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 105-106: the devil cannot work miracles, but stimulate phantasy and imagination; he can simulate prophecy regarding the future, but does it in equivocal and lying words. His actions are never above the natural order, and never for the good of the whole Church. He can cause terrible doubt, annoyance and the desire for pleasure, also by moving the senses to see/hear/smell/taste certain pictures, noise, odours or tastes causing fear or desires. Demonic possession is defined by the Congregation with A. ROYO MARÍN, *Theologia della perfezione cristiana*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1987, p. 397 as the invading of the body of the living person by the demon, moving his organs as if they were his own. Demonic possession is known mainly in hardened sinners, who voluntarily give themselves over to the devil or defile the Holy Eucharist, despise God and his servants, but in a few cases also in people who are on the way to sanctity. According to Petersdorff, signs of satanic possession are, among others: in trance understanding and speaking languages which the human being does not know, knowledge of things that happened far away or that are hidden, showing strength above the human normal level, usually in acts of violence. Also speaking in trance in a different voice than normal and not remembering anything after the trance; being tormented, the torments being physically visible on the body, but not the tormentor; wounding oneself with sharp objects or biting, the wounds healing quickly; sharp reaction against anything holy as the cross and the oil of catechumens and prayers; a stench as of sulphur. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 347, 418-419. Cf. Also P. CALLIARI, *Trattato di demonologia secondo la teologia cattolica. Dottrina, fatti, interpretazioni*, Messaggero, Padova 1992; G. B. PROJA, *Uomini, diavoli, esercizi. La verità sul mondo dell'occulto*, Lateranense, Roma 2002; M. SODI (ed.), *Tra maleficio,*

credible. They can move every material, change the perception of the senses, and stimulate the power of imagination (fantasy) and the power of remembrance (memoria). They cannot interfere directly with the will of a human being, unless the person willingly refuses to make use of his free will (following others without own decision), or willingly binds the powers of his senses.<sup>726</sup> This can be done by sleeping more than necessary, using drugs, perfumes, colours, endless dance and/or music that give excitement of the senses and leave the human being tired and without the will power in the end. One can bind the senses also by meditation. If the meditation is not fixing the attention on God, his salvation and loving will, it automatically opens man to the influence of evil spirits.<sup>727</sup>

A person who gives up his free will to God in faith<sup>728</sup> (also through the mediation of angels/saints) experiences something different. These help the person to accept the holy will of God as one's will, uniting the two wills, but never with force. It needs much effort to liberate oneself from a domination by the devil; in the case of God it needs constant effort to remain under his domination.<sup>729</sup> God requests ever higher self-donation, and at each point one has to decide anew to accept the will of God, usually in a quite painful process of overcoming temptations as pride or laxity. God can bind in trance (usually called ecstasy) the lower powers of the soul, in order to exalt man into the freedom of being able to understand<sup>730</sup> the divine mysteries and love the divine will, leading to peace and joy. The devil binds the lower powers of the soul without liberating the higher ones, so that the soul "drowns" in the experiences of the senses provided by the devil, becoming more and more passive and addicted to these "happy" experiences, which lead to all kind of fears, vices and crimes. God can enter the soul and communicate his own divine life to it, showing in virtues and miracles of grace, demons cannot enter the soul. They can only bind the activities of the soul and then use the body of the person for their own evil purposes.

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*patologie e possessione demoniaca*, Messaggero, Padova 2003; G. CANOBBIO – F. DALLA VECCHIA – R. MAIOLINI, *Il diavolo*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2013.

<sup>726</sup> F.-M. Dermine published in 2002 a book which also dedicates some lines to demonic possibilities of interference. According to him, there are the rare cases of possession, in which the devil uses the body of a human being as if he were the owner, there are the cases of evil spirits disturbing with external or imaginatory manifestations, or giving interior obsession, i.e. persuing the will of man in a vehement and perduring way. The devil can also stimulate the human brain in a way that creates the impression of a divine manifestation or apparition. Although Dermine does not write it explicitly, it can be deduced that he agrees with Petersdorff: the devil cannot enter the human soul, i.e. it cannot manipulate someone in his spiritual powers, e.g. inducing man against his will to hate God. Cf. F.-M. DERMINE, *Mistici, veggenti e medium. Esperienze dell'aldilà a confronto*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2002, p. 63-64.

<sup>727</sup> For this, R. Javelet coined the word "intentionality" concerning the directing of meditation towards the transcendent God. Cf. F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 62.

<sup>728</sup> Relying on the teaching of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, F.-M. Dermine underlines faith as the only way to union with God, the supernatural adhesion to the supernatural truth and to God in person, to Jesus in his holy humanity, meditating his abasement and passion. He presents faith and looking at the person of Christ in opposition to seeking a "mental emptiness" as a way to know the infinite God. In the quoted experience of St. Teresa, God elevates man sometimes to taste and love the Godhead directly, but only if man does not seek God directly, always being fixed on the Mediator. Cf. F.-M. DERMINE, *La medianità e la fenomenologia mistica*, p. 65-66.

<sup>729</sup> Part of the "effort" is the humility to accept the experience of one's limits, poverty or 'nakedness' in being confronted with a will (of salvation of all souls) which man can never satisfy by his own works (of apostolate). Cf. F. ASTI, "Maria nell'esperienza mistica", p. 240. The only way is to begin to go into the indicated direction with trust that the way will lead somewhere.

<sup>730</sup> Cf. also F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 128: God binds the lower powers of the soul by giving "physical" experience of his presence through light, word, perfume, honey-like sweetness and tender embrace. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 78-82: the mystical experiences where the devil cannot intrude are those happening only in intellect and spirit, without physical visions or visions in the human phantasy.

The theologian F.-M. Dermine emphasizes that both spiritist and mystical experiences exist, and that they can be distinguished mainly in the moral and spiritual disposition of the recipient, in his intentions expressed by acts of wilful manipulation or loving submission.<sup>731</sup>

Mystical experiences can be classified in a phenomenological approach as concerning knowledge, affection or being in the physical order. To the first class belong apparitions, visions, locutions, the capacity to discern whether an object has been blessed (ierognosis), the capacity to know the state of grace of another person (cardiognosis), infused knowledge, discernment of the spirits, divine “touches” causing one to remember or learn suddenly the presence or will of God in a specific situation. To the second class belong the feeling of a fire of love, feeling wounded by love or transported into the Heart of Love, feeling anguish, pain, hatred for oneself and ardent desire for only God, even to the point of fainting. To the physical order belong visible stigmata, sweat of blood, a physical, not pathological change in the heart as a sign of an “exchange of hearts”<sup>732</sup> with Christ or Mary, the survival without food or sleep for a prolonged time, bilocation (being seen in two places at the same time), levitation (the body in ecstasy being lifted up into the air), radiating light or perceiving supernatural perfume.<sup>733</sup>

Another “classical” way of distinction, already used by St. John of the Cross, is by the way of perception: through the external senses, through the imagination or infused in the intellect.<sup>734</sup> This classification, which calls the intellectual perception the purest and highest knowledge, influenced by neo-platonic ideas, is used till the mid of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>735</sup> Nowadays, theologians

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<sup>731</sup> Cf. F.-M. DERMINE, *La medianità e la fenomenologia mistica*, p. 7. Cf. also IDEM, *Mistici, veggenti e medium*. The CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 103 emphasizes with A. ROYO MARÍN, *Theologia della perfezione cristiana*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1987, p. 1036-1037 that extraordinary phenomena can be given by God as graces “gratis datae” also to a person who is in a state of sin: “l’aiuto offerto con questa grazia è riservato non a chi la riceve, ma a tutta quanta la Chiesa.” Rather, the grace constitutes also a temptation (e.g. to pride) to the receiver, who retains his freedom to decide on how to respond to the call to holiness (love) in the grace received. Thus, these experiences *alone* do not constitute a reason to canonize a person, and the (subsequent) fall into sin of a person is not a *sure* proof of the non-existence of an authentic vision or apparition. More details on how to discern true mystical experiences from fake ones, cf. e.g. S. M. PERRELLA, *Le apparizioni mariane*, or F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, esp. p. 20-29, 72-87.

<sup>732</sup> The first known visionary who received a revelation on the Heart of Jesus, St. Luitgard of Tongern/Aywières († 1246), had that experience of the exchange of hearts, which she called also “union of hearts”. Cf. F. HOLBÖCK, *Aufblick zum Durchbohrten*, Christiana, Stein an Rhein 1990, p. 87. This exchange: to give all one’s will, life time, body and soul, feelings and wishes to Jesus, and to live with his own divine life, will, physical and spiritual strength, with his sentiments and his wish to see all souls saved, can be called the fundamental aim of the devotion to the Two Hearts. The term “union with the Hearts of Love”, however, stresses more than an “exchange” that one’s identity does not get lost, but enters into a saving, transforming relationship.

<sup>733</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 106-114.

<sup>734</sup> The three ways of perception are explained e.g. in AUGUSTINUS, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 12, 11,22, quoted in A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und “Wunderglaube”*, p. 84: to see with the eyes is seen as the lowest way of perception, to contemplate spiritual realities as love in the intellect is called the highest way of perception.

<sup>735</sup> In experiences perceived through the intellect, no Satanic influence can enter, as seen above, but it is difficult for the receiver to distinguish whether it was really received in the intellect, or just in the imagination. Not being perceived by the senses, it is also almost impossible to describe the experience in human language. A third way of classification, by way of content and of ample use in the praxis of the Church, is the distinction between “prophetical” mystical experiences (generally received through the senses) and mystical experiences that only reveal in theology well-known attributes of God, as his love, his glory, his demand of holiness, etc. (generally received in the intellect). Referring to Marian apparitions, there is consequently the distinction between “prophetic apparitions”, that give a message to be proclaimed to the Church, and “mystical apparitions”, which are first of all a help for the spiritual life of the receiver. But an authentic apparition can never be classified into only one of these terms. As said above in sub-chapter 1.2.3.4., every type of vision/locution/sensation of the presence of God or saints are mystical experiences and can be said to be prophetic, though the effect of a prophetic activity is more evidently and immediately related to the experience, when a mystic or seer begins to give public witness to a “message”, e.g. a reprimand of heaven directed to the people of God, or



recall the fact that the public revelation was given through the senses. Even the apparitions of the resurrected Christ are understood as bodily apparitions. Thus bodily apparitions, or locutions heard with the ear are to be evaluated higher than “infused” knowledge of spiritual things, which are mainly important for the sanctification of the receiver or people around him, but difficult to communicate to one who has no direct contact with the mystic. Bodily perceived apparitions and locutions have a special importance for the Church because of their being more easily (more faithfully to the experience) communicated, by repeating the words heard and/or describing the pictures seen.

A vision (as mystical experience) can be defined as the supernatural perception of an object or person which naturally is invisible to man,<sup>736</sup> describing the phenomena from the standpoint of the person perceiving and stressing the ocular perception, although the vision may be perceived only in the imagination. Not always the receiver will be in ecstasy during a vision or while receiving a locution, so that people who are present nearby may not perceive anything of a supernatural happening.<sup>737</sup> It can happen during sleep, when the vision is usually called “dream”, in trance or while the person remains fully aware of all happening around him. The term “locution” speaks of a purely auditive perception. An “apparition” is roughly the same as a “vision”, though it has a larger meaning.<sup>738</sup> Both from visions, apparitions and locutions, a person can receive or deduce a heavenly “message”. A person can receive impressed in the intelligence so clear an

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demanding in the name of God a new liturgical feast or requesting from the Pope an official act of consecration of a certain people to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, as in Fatima. A. Fuchs, from his experience with the Church in Germany and quoting other German authors as K. Rahner, speaks of an antagonistic relationship between hierarchy and “prophetic” mystics. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 60-62, 83-85.

<sup>736</sup> Cf. G. MUCCI, *Rivelazioni private e apparizioni*, Elledici, Leumann 2000, p. 38; cf. also S. M. PERRELLA – G. M. ROGGIO, *Apparizioni e mariofanie*, and S. M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio nella storia*.

<sup>737</sup> F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 22-23 stressed that transcending the world is not a very extraordinary thing, but happens in a minor way in every loving being together: the rest of the world is hardly perceived. On p. 25 and p. 61 he underlined the noetical quality of mystical experiences: they leave the person not only with new feelings, but also with a deeper knowledge of one or several mysteries of faith, as it was most stressed in patristic mysticism. On p. 66 he quotes H. de Lubac: the mystery is contained in Holy Scripture; mystic experience is the touching and understanding of these contents. On p. 68 is explained that this knowledge and experience prepare for the beatific vision, but are still in the realm of faith only.

<sup>738</sup> S. BARNAY tried to define apparitions as a vision in which the visionary retains the normal perception of space, and full consciousness. Then she adds that an apparition can also happen during a dream or trance. Cf. “Apparizioni”, in A. VAUCHEZ (ed.), *Dizionario Enciclopedico del Medioevo*, Città Nuova, Roma 1998, vol. 1, p. 119. The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints also insists on their difference, but dividing the nomenclature in “apparitions” as to be used only for visions of a supernatural person that gives a precise message for the whole Church to the external senses of a seer, and “vision” as only subjective perceptions of pictures of persons or things that manifest the will of God or illustrate a truth of faith. Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 107. E. BOAGA, “L’intensificazione delle mariofanie: dalla Rivoluzione Francese (1789) agli inizi del XX secolo”, in E. BOAGA – L. GAMBERO (ed.), *Storia della Mariologia*, vol. 2, p. 769-777 defined visions (including locutions) as the mystical experiences of pious persons or saints as S. Gemma Galgani, experiences that transform the personal life of the “visionary”. Apparitions are defined as a mariophany with attached messages, but the author included also the wordless apparition of Knock Muire and the apparition to St. Bernadette Soubirous, which, according to the previous definition, could be classified as vision. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und “Wunderglaube”*, p. 86-87 presents a great variety of possible definitions of “vision”, annoting that such can be found in every religion. The present work does not pretend to indicate a clear distinction of the terms. It uses the term “vision” for prevalent ocular mystical experiences, which give only a very imprecise message, in the form of interpretable images, the term “locution” for only audible experiences and the term “apparition” for experiences that could be only visual, but can also unite the perception of visions and locutions and even the senses of touch, smell and taste in a holistic experience of a person who appears and communicates with the receiver. Thus, in this research “vision” and “apparition” can appear as synonyms. The term “apparition” is given preference, since it emphasizes the fact that there is a supernatural person who willed that something appeared of himself to man; it evokes an encounter. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 87.

inspiration of the love of God in his life, and of what God wants him to do, that he may call it a message from God, though he did not hear any voice. The “tangibility” of perception of a supernatural reality distinguishes all the phenomena that can be summarized under the term “private revelations” from these inspirations, which also belong to the “mystic”.

R. Laurentin reminds the reader of the fact that in a true heavenly communication, by God himself or through a saint or angel, the freedom of the receiver is such that every exteriorly sensible expression is both completely from God and completely expression of the human being; the action of God cannot be observed, thus the supernatural input can never be proved as certain. (He uses the word “supernatural” in the sense of the elevation or divinization of man by grace and love, not in the sense of miraculous or a happening “above the natural”).<sup>739</sup>

According to R. Laurentin, apparitions are first of all an interior sign, granted to the seer, but they are not a demonstrable miracle, neither are they necessarily connected with miraculous happenings.<sup>740</sup> Sometimes the apparition can be touched and is perceived as an ordinary body with warmth and consistent substance by the seer, sometimes the “vision” is perceived only interiorly, in the “heart”. It always gives to the receiver the impression of an interpersonal perception, which remains more impressive and “real” to them as encounters with a person living on earth.<sup>741</sup>

The Church acknowledges the possibility of experiences of the presence of God (directly or through saints and angels), though the Church warns its members to seek only his direction for their own life in the situations where personal decisions are needed, and not visions and general knowledge of God, as the public revelation was concluded with the death of the last apostle and as perfect faith does not need signs and visions apart from what is testified to in Holy Scriptures. Any apparition and heavenly “message” cannot contain something new, until the return of Christ in glory. (Cf. *DV*, 4.)<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>739</sup> Cf. “Introduction: Pourquoi ce dictionnaire?” in R. LAURENTIN, – P. SBALCHIERO, (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, esp. p. 19, 30-38. Because of this freedom of the receiver, and if the receiver does not protect himself enough from the influence of evil spirits by prayer and serious effort in the life of virtue, it can happen within the course of an obviously true apparition, that the seer presents to the people messages as heavenly, which are inspired by the devil, in order to make all ridiculous or to mislead the faithful to sentiments of hatred or rejection of the authority of the Church. For example: the author saw in 2005 in Nigeria a small girl that had visions, and apart from good messages calling to prayer she presented papers with “Hebrew writing” dictated by the “Blessed Virgin Mary”. Any person who did a small Hebraicum could see that the signs on the papers were no Hebrew writing. In such a case it seems to be the duty of the Church to tell the girl to stop writing the Hebrew “dictation” of “Our Lady”, and to pray more for protection from influence that is not from God. Also the other messages should be examined carefully before permitting them to be printed and propagated. Thus, the Church has to guide and purify the proliferating visions and messages in the world, and not leave visionaries, who often have no theological foundation, in their ignorance an easy prey to the other side.

<sup>740</sup> Cf. IDEM, “Commission d’enquête” in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 198.

<sup>741</sup> Cf. S. BARNAY, “Typologie des récits médiévaux d’apparition”, P. SBALCHIERO, “Typologie générale des récits d’apparitions modernes et contemporaines”, R. LAURENTIN, “Vision” in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 982-983, 997-998.

<sup>742</sup> ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on divine revelation *Dei Verbum* (18/11/1965), in <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_dogmatic-constitution\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_dogmatic-constitution_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html)>, seen on 1/3/2014. The short constitution speaks in 26 paragraphs on the divine revelation as a communication of God of himself and his will (n. 2), especially in Christ (n. 4), on the progress of tradition, which is bound to Scriptures (n. 8-9), and on its interpretation (n. 12). The OT is presented as containing the mystery of salvation in a hidden way (n. 15), the NT displays the incarnate Word of God establishing on earth the kingdom of God (n. 17); the historicity of the Gospels is affirmed (n. 19). The concluding chapter speaks of the importance of the Scriptures in the life of the Church (n. 21-16).

### 2.3.2.2. The necessity of responding with responsibility to authentic visions and locutions

Above (sub-chapter 1.2.3.4.) it was said that an authentic vision of God/saints is a charism, and thus the apparition gives the mission to testify to the experienced love of God. A charism, like every natural and supernatural gift from God, can be used and abused; in order to profit from it for eternity, it must be used to build up the Church, for the glory of God and the good of the brothers. It must be used in adherence to the mystery of the passion of Christ and in participating in the life of the Church, in obedience to the pastors. The real communion with Christ is realized in the brotherhood of the Church.<sup>743</sup>

R. Laurentin teaches that the visual or auditive knowledge of a heavenly person infuses love of this person,<sup>744</sup> and love draws a person nearer to the beloved, urges to overcome bad habits which separate a person from God, makes one ready to suffer anything for his sake. F.-M. Dermine underlines that only faith which is *informed by love* can reach the third, fourth and fifth degree of perception of the Divine presence. It is the knowledge that comes from connaturality, from affective experience of union with the one who is the Life of the life of man. This love leads to union not of nature, but of the spirit/heart/will, through dialogue (prayer), forgetting oneself and fixing the attention on the goodness of God.<sup>745</sup> This faith, in “Lumen Fidei”, 30, is called with St. Thomas “oculata fides” (concerning St. John who testifies to what he has seen and heard and touched: the Word of Life, the risen Christ, cf. 1 Jn 1,1), and the “duet” encyclical emphasizes that faith does not only come from hearing, but also from seeing and touching. Faith-knowledge informed by love; faith, reason and vision together give to man a holistic glimpse of God.<sup>746</sup>

Such an experience is a help given by God for growth in holiness. Authentic manifestations of God (directly or in his saints) are always salvific acts, as God does not act otherwise. Every apparition gives a certain “mystical experience” to the seer. Such experiences draw man to encounter the divine “you” in an intimate, holy, adoring, salvific and transfiguring way.<sup>747</sup> Sometimes, inspirations via visions help a person who has an office in the Church, or they trigger off the foundation of a new family in the Church. If the documentation of the fact is credible, the Church is peacefully convinced in these cases of visions or locutions, without seeing the need of

<sup>743</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 114.

<sup>744</sup> Cf. “Amour”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 79. Cf. also F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 72-77, treating of the mystical union with God, separated in moments of union, “spiritual engagement”, and the “mystical marriage” as an irreversible stage (St. John of the Cross, e.g. also St. Catherine of Siena, † 1380), when the Son of God and the soul have given themselves to each other completely, and the soul is perfectly transformed into Jesus: two persons in one spirit and one love. Instead of the image of “marriage”, mystics speak also of exchange of hearts with Christ (e.g. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque), receiving his stigmata (e.g. St. Francis of Assisi, of “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal 2,20), of feeling one’s flesh permeated by the Spirit of God and His presence, while one’s spirit contemplates this wondrous presence by recalling the (brief) moments of its sensible experience, drawing from him all joy and peace of the heart necessary to overcome the most difficult situations by faith. At the melting of the soul into God, the soul does not lose its own being, but is being perfected in its capacities. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 109.

<sup>745</sup> Cf. F.-M. DERMINE, *La medianità e la fenomenologia mistica*, p. 48-51, 63-64.

<sup>746</sup> Cf. FRANCIS, *Lumen fidei*, n. 30-31, quoting St. THOMAS AQUINAS, *S. Th.* III, q.55, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>747</sup> Cf. L. BORRIELLO, “Esperienza mistica”, in *Dizionario di Mistica*, p. 463-476, quoted in S. M. PERRELLA, *Le apparizioni mariane*, p. 125. It places a great responsibility on the seer to make efforts not to alterate what he receives, as the transmission of the messages to others implies always to give them a communicable form, which is partly provided by the visionary, e.g. the sound and intonation of the voice. Only the spiritual power connected with the words of authentic messages is completely of God.

recognizing the apparition as such. St. Paul can be mentioned here, especially according to his narration of the Damascus experience in Acts 26,16-18. Then the first historically credible apparition, attested by St. Gregory of Nyssa († 394)<sup>748</sup> concerning the young bishop Gregory Taumaturgos († ca. 270).<sup>749</sup> St. Paul of the Cross<sup>750</sup>, St. John Bosco († 1888)<sup>751</sup>, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta († 1997)<sup>752</sup> and many others can be mentioned.<sup>753</sup> The place of apparition has not

<sup>748</sup> Younger brother of the nun St. Macrina Junior and St. Basil the Great († 379). Basil was bishop of Cesarea and one of the Fathers of Eastern monarchism. Gregory married, became a Christian speaker (rhetor), and Basil gave him the charge to compose a first ascetical work, *De Virginitate*, in which he presents Mary, the sister of Aaron, as the one who inaugurated the virginal life, prefiguring Mary, the Mother of God, speaking also of the spiritual pregnancy of those who remain virgins for the Kingdom of God as St. Paul and the holy Virgin, and their great fecundity. (Chap. XIX). Then he was elected as bishop of Nyssa, Cappadocia, and became one of the “three Cappadocian fathers”, with Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen († 389 or 390). He suffered persecution from Arians and defended the faith especially against Apollinarism, and against those who denied the godhead of the Holy Spirit, in the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381). He defined the meaning of the words “nature” and “person”, and wrote an important catechism on the union and trinitarian character of God. Almost 50 years old, his wife died and he entered the monastery founded by Basil. He left a great number of exegetical, dogmatic and ascetic writings and homilies. Cf. S. LILLA, “Introduzione”, in GREGORIO DI NISSA – GIOVANNI CRISOSTOMO, *La verginità*, Città Nuova, Roma 1976, p. 9-16, 20; for the Chapter XIX: p. 100-102 of the work. Cf. also J. COLLANTES (ed.), *La fede della Chiesa Cattolica. Le idee e gli uomini nei documenti dottrinali del Magistero*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1993, p. 340, 342.

<sup>749</sup> Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Gregorio il Taumaturgo”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dizionario delle “apparizioni”*, p. 358-359, and *TMPM*, vol. 1, p. 329-330. It is St. John the Evangelist appearing and teaching the timid neo-bishop, the “Mother of the Lord” accompanied the apostle silently; John stressed that by following his teaching of love, Gregory would be pleasing Mary.

<sup>750</sup> Paolo Francesco Danei, born 1694, founder of the Congregation of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ (Passionists, male and female). P. SBALCHIERO, “Paolo della Croce”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dizionario delle “apparizioni”*, p. 562, quoting E. ZOFFOLI, *S. Paolo della Croce. Storia critica*, s. ed., Roma, 1963, vol. 1, reports three “apparitions” from his youth, which make him to choose the religious life and explain to him the reason of his vocation. In the third experience, he saw himself in what will be his habit, noting in a letter that he saw it “in God”, not in corporal form. Cf. also F. GIORGINI, *Storia della Congregazione della Passione*, vol. 1, p. 59-60 (concerning year 1713), which speaks of an “interior light” concerning the love and greatness of God, which he calls his “conversion”, p. 61 speaks of an “interior word”, which makes Paul to change his plans, p. 63 records another vocational “inspiration” with the precise word of “radunare compagni”, p. 65, concerning year 1718, speaks again of him seeing an extraordinary light and being presented his future black habit, an experience which Paul received several times, with some variations. The same p. 65 presents the experience of summer 1720, when Paul walked on the road after Mass: “si senti, scrive lui stesso, ‘elevato in Dio con altissimo raccoglimento, con scordamento di tutto e grandissima soavità interiore; ed in questo tempo mi vidi in spirito vestito di nero’”. P. 66 underlines the fact that there was no vision perceived through the senses, but an infusion directly into the spiritual “part” of man.

<sup>751</sup> Italian priest, known for charity and the effort to help poor and criminal boys through education. Aged nine years, he had a dream on his particular vocation of turning “wolves” into lambs who will be praising Jesus and Mary. Founder of the “Salesian Society”. Cf. P. SBALCHIERO, “Giovanni Bosco”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dizionario delle “apparizioni”*, p. 340. With other founders as St. G. J. Chaminade and St. Antonio Maria Claret he is mentioned as a pious person who had visions and locutions in E. BOAGA, “L’intensificazione delle mariofanie”, p. 769. The homily of Pope PIUS XII in *sollemni canonizzazione beati Antonii Mariae Claret* (7/5/1950) mentions an apparition of Christ during his seminary time, in AAS 62 (1950) 371. I. von GAÁL, “Die Herz-Mariae-Verehrung”, p. 133, 136 speaks for St. Antonio Maria repeatedly of encouraging visions and apparitions of Mary, without entering into details. Wilhelm Joseph Chaminade spoke only of an “illumination” and “inspiration” in the Marian sanctuary of Saragozza, after which he founded the Society of Mary. Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Decree for the *introduction of the process of beatification and canonization of the Servant of God Guillaume Joseph Chaminade* (7/5/1918) in AAS 10 (1918) 247.

<sup>752</sup> Albanian religious working in India. According to her own testimony, in 1946 Jesus manifested to her the thirst of his Heart for “victims of Love”, who will irradiate his love to others, in what should be interpreted as a locution. She founded four lay religious congregations, female and male, active and contemplative; in 1984 the Priests of Charity, also lay helpers and a “movement” of priests. When she died, she had 4000 sisters in 123 nations. Cf. MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA, *Come be my light. The private writings of the “Saint of Calcutta”*, ed. B. Kolodiejchuk, Three Rivers, New York 2007.

<sup>753</sup> Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 585. However, legends of (dubious) Marian apparitions exist around the founders of most ancient orders, e.g. for the seven holy founders of the Servants of Mary (e.g. Alexis Falconieri, † 1310). According to a “Legenda de origine Ordinis”, finished shortly after 1317, but using important elements from the year ca. 1260, the seven Florentine merchants came to found the congregation between 1245 and 1249, taking the rule

much importance, but the person carrying the message or inspiration, and how he is living it. Sometimes the writings are valued only much later, as in the case of St. Grignon de Montfort or Barbara Waigand, † 1943.<sup>754</sup>) The Bible shows the danger of making the “seer” in a first moment estranged from earthly life and responsibilities (cf. Mk 9,2-8).

The Church teaches that the easiest way to reach an experience of God is to live a sacramental life:

«The Sacraments [...] are the objective beginning of the union of the Christian with God. Upon this foundation, the person who prays can be called [...] to that specific type of union with God which in Christian terms is called *mystical*. [...] The method of getting closer to God is not based on any *technique* in the strict sense of the word. That would contradict the spirit of childhood called for by the Gospel. [...] There are certain *mystical graces*, [...] which cannot, as such, be the object of imitation and aspiration for other members of the faithful [ ... For Religious, there] can be different levels and different ways of sharing in a founder's experience of prayer, [...] the prayer experience [...] is always [...] something personal.»<sup>755</sup>

The experience of prayer, or of the presence of God during prayer, is usually given to each person who prays from the heart. At least once in life he will have a strong experience<sup>756</sup> which helps the individual most, according to his character and background, to perceive the Love of God and to be able to respond to it according to the plan of God for the salvation of all souls. Thus the experience of prayer is as manifold as human beings on earth and can be described only in very general words.

According to some spiritual masters, prayer leads first to the experience of unworthiness to stand before God, even unworthiness to do his will, and thus encourage the Christian to pray first of all to be made worthy to fulfil the divine commandments.<sup>757</sup> Also the document “*Orationis formas*” concludes with the statement, that the “more a creature is permitted to draw near to God, the greater his reverence before the thrice-holy God”, followed by two examples: St. Augustine († 430), and Mary, “who was rewarded with the highest degree of intimacy with God”, but recognized herself as “‘his servant in her lowliness’ (Lk 1:48).”<sup>758</sup> This is the most important statement on the experience in prayer, since every person has a personal experience and can be guided only personally, not by theoretical statements:<sup>759</sup> the main sign for the person himself and for others, whether the experience is authentically from God and received well, is the growth of reverence of God.<sup>760</sup>

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of St. Augustine and following a Berndardine Marian piety. In the part of the legend which dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Virgin appeared to St. Pietro of Verona O.P. († 1252, killed by Cathari in hatred of the faith; 1244-1245 he probably founded the “Company of Our Lady” in Florence, which the seven founders joined), indicating the rule, the habit and the title of service. Cf. F. A. DAL PINO, “La presenza della Beata Vergine Maria”, p. 750-751.

<sup>754</sup> Unmarried lay woman who worked mainly peeling potatoes in the restaurant of her brother, apart from walking many kilometres every day in order to receive Holy Communion. Of this foundress of the Eucharistic Alliance of Love of the Divine Heart of Jesus, a pious society, after the year 2000 seven big volumes of visions and locutions were edited. Cf. BARBARA WEIGAND GESELLSCHAFT (ed.), *Offenbarungen an Barbara Weigand*, Barbara Weigand Gesellschaft, Elsenfeld-Schippach 2001, p. 14 (Introduction, printed in all 7 volumes).

<sup>755</sup> CDF, Epistle *Orationis formas*, n. 22-24, p. 7.

<sup>756</sup> “Experience” here does not mean only an empirical, sensual experience. It may be “experienced” merely in the sentiments or as inspirations in the soul.

<sup>757</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, p. 288.

<sup>758</sup> CDF, Epistle *Orationis formas*, n. 31, p. 9.

<sup>759</sup> Of course, a detailed description of possible dangers and experiences in the spiritual life can help, as e.g. the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* of ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, but in the context of this study, it would lead too far to discuss all of them.

<sup>760</sup> Cf. also F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 79: Heavenly visions always bring about a true and deep humility.

The second most important statement is the above quoted “The Sacraments [...] are the objective beginning of the union of the Christian with God.” Christ is the ontological mediation between God and man, as in him the union of godhead and humanity *is*. As the Holy Eucharist is Christ himself, it is the basic sacrament for the encounter with God.<sup>761</sup>

### 2.3.3. Mary and the mystical life

How does Mary enter into the way of perfection which is contemplation or mystical life? A first aspect is her being a model: “summa contemplatrix”.<sup>762</sup> Mary is the person who fully received the communication of God in Christ on her mission in the plan of salvation of the world. She is the model of silence, listening and meditating.<sup>763</sup> Her union with the Trinity was so perfect that God involved even on earth her body in this union.<sup>764</sup> Her existence was transformed by the fact that God took possession of her life in view of the redemption of the whole universe.<sup>765</sup> She is the great contemplative, who followed Jesus to the cross, in the wish typical for the contemplative to *see* the beloved, no matter how. She saw Love crucified and accepted the will of God in it (cf. LG 58). Pope Paul VI called the Heart of Mary in a letter “sanctuary of the mystical heights”.<sup>766</sup> The constant teaching of the Church<sup>767</sup> says in different words that she is the person who in the whole of the history of the people of God has accepted the will of God in her life in the most radical, heroic and constant way, and thus she has reached the highest degree of contemplation a creature ever reached, the most intimate union with God in Christ Jesus. According to the nature of contemplation, which is a sharing in the desire of God, including the desire to save all the souls he created, it always leads to concern for the salvation of the brothers and sisters.

Apart from Mary being a model and guide in the mystical life, she also played a role in the experience of many Christians, including those who received special mystical graces as locutions

<sup>761</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 125.

<sup>762</sup> F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 262.

<sup>763</sup> Cf. M. MASINI, “Silenzio”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 1089-1090. Masini quotes also the work *Vita Jesu Christi* of the Carthusian Ludolf von Sachsen († 1379), on the seven times Mary spoke in the Gospels: two times to the angel, after which happened the miracle of the Incarnation. Two times to Elizabeth, with which she brought great joy to mother and child. Two times to the son: in the temple (after which Jesus lived under their authority) and at Cana, and once to the servants at Cana, where the water turned to wine. On pages 1091-1095 Masini analyses the silence of Mary in different situations: (1) in the mystery of the birth of Jesus, adoring silence, (2) on hearing the shepherds proclaim the singing of the angels, the silence of someone who knows already the greatness of the event and love of God, (3) at the visit of the Magi and their presentation of gifts, (4) on the flight to Egypt which evokes for an Israelite the Exodus and the Babylonian exile, and where Mary might have heard of the killing of the children of Bethlehem, (5) at the rhetorical question of Jesus “Who is my mother?”, receiving his teaching on the higher importance of doing the will of God, (6) at the foot of the cross, when Jesus addressed her and within two verses of the Gospel she is mentioned six times, as she and the beloved disciple become the fulfilment of the prophesy, that Jesus would die “to gather together into one the scattered children of God.” (Jn 11, 52), in silence and faithfulness accepting the words of Jesus, in silence waiting, suffering, hoping and praying. A modern exhaustive presentation of the experiences of Mary (familiarity with God, especially in the passion of Christ) leading her to the highest mystical life in union with Jesus, cf. F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 281-294.

<sup>764</sup> Cf. F. ASTI, “Mistica”, p. 858.

<sup>765</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 855-856, 858, 863. Cf. also sub-chapter 3.3.4.3.

<sup>766</sup> PAOLO VI, *Epistula Gloriosa dicta sunt* (15/4/1967), in AAS 59 (1967) 484-487, to Portuguese bishops: “penetrare mysticarum altitudinum”.

<sup>767</sup> Cf. sub-chapter 3.3.

and visions.<sup>768</sup> She is “Illuminatrix contemplantium”.<sup>769</sup> With Severino M. Ragazzini, F. Asti defines Mary “secondary object of mystical contemplation”. “Secondary”, because she always points to God/Christ. “Object of mystical contemplation”, because she is experienced as an active presence, working herself on the transformation of the contemplator. Her being “full of grace” gives her efficacy in illuminating, uniting, divinizing (in the sense of the Eastern divinisation of man, which in the West is usually called glorification), transforming by grace, by infused virtues, by charisms.<sup>770</sup> Mystics such as St. Veronica Giuliani (nun of the Capuchin branch of the Poor Clares, † 1727) experienced themselves in a special union with Mary.<sup>771</sup> The active presence of Mary in the life of the faithful is possible only because the Risen Lord has assumed and transformed, together with his dead body, the space, time and the whole world related to that body.<sup>772</sup>

### 2.3.4. Contemplation in the Constitutions of the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love”

Contemplation and transforming union with God is of the greatest importance in the congregational sources. From the above quoted passages of the letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith it can be deduced that all the articles in the Constitutions about prayer, examination of conscience<sup>773</sup> and ascetical exercises (esp. Art. 49-66, 74-76, 98-105, 122-130)<sup>774</sup>

<sup>768</sup> Where these are authentic according to the judgement of the Church, they confirm Mary in her role as guide to union with God in Jesus, according to the circumstances: in words and pictures understandable and touching to the people concerned. An exhaustive overview on historical and recent Marian apparitions and the “messages” directing man to God, cf. R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*. Cf. also S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella vita secondo lo Spirito*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1998: Mary is an instrument of God with a function in the Church, through her relationship with the faithful and with God. She inspires with her own life the Christians to interiorize and identify with the Christian way of life.

<sup>769</sup> F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 262.

<sup>770</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 267, quoting S. M. RAGAZZINI, *Maria, vita dell’anima*, Editori Pontifici, Roma 1960, p. 102, 108. On p. 271-272 F. Asti repeats: “Maria entra di diritto nella vita mistica di ogni credente” because, as the Fathers of the Church taught, the revealed mystery (in which Mary is actively present and her contribution of faith and love is necessary, at least in the Incarnation, cf. *Ibidem*, e.g. p. 298, 301) must be kept in union with the social life and the prayer life. It seems not very logical that in between the two quotations (p. 272), Asti emphasizes only the model function of Mary.

<sup>771</sup> The saint felt that Mary had become “anima della mia anima, cuore del mio cuore”. O. FIORUCCI (a cura di), *Un tesoro nascosto, Diario di S. Veronica Giuliani*, Città di Castello 1974, vol. 3, p. 387. Aged 18 years she pronounced the vows. She lived a serious combat with her own humanity, for the sake of receiving the grace of God. She received the crown of thorns at 21 and the stigmata at the age of 37. In her diaries, she reports frequent dialogues with Christ and Mary, in which Mary is always seen as the teacher and helper to be faithful to Jesus. She was condemned by the Holy See, separated from her community and deprived of Holy Communion for several years; after this she was elected abbess. 111 years after her death, she was canonized. Cf. L. DI GIROLAMO, “Mistiche Italiane: Santa Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi († 1607), Santa Veronica Giuliani († 1727)”, in E. BOAGA – L. GAMBERO (ed.), *Storia della Mariologia*, vol. 2, p. 444-446. Cf. also F. ASTI, “Conoscenza di sé e conoscenza di Dio”, p. 184-193, who on p. 185 speaks of a ‘process of Marialisation’ of the soul of the faithful, entering into uniformity with the will of God as Mary did, and thus becoming ‘Christified’. P. 186 reports a vision of the two hearts of Jesus and Mary, who together emanate rays which bind the heart of Veronica Giuliani and participate something inexpressable to her. Asti comments that since it is the flesh of Christ which is the means by which mankind has access to union with God, and since Mary has a special bond to this flesh, she retains an important role in uniting men with God. On p. 191 he mentions that the desire of Veronica to unite with the Virgin in her act of oblation to God during the passion of Christ equates her to Juliana of Norwich († 1416) and St. Angela da Foligno. In “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 260-261, IDEM laments (with V. MACCA, “Maria Santissima”, in E. ANCILLI (ed.) *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Spiritualità*, Città Nuova, Roma 1990, vol. 2, p. 1503) a lack of critical study of mystical experiences of the presence and action of Mary, which does not yet permit a sure definition of the nature and modality of the important role of Mary in the spiritual life of the faithful.

<sup>772</sup> Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni*, p. 204-205.

<sup>773</sup> As contemplation cannot be reached with an erroneous or accusing conscience, the examination and acknowledgement of faults and the prayer for being able to overcome faults have major importance.

also talk about contemplation, having contemplation as their aim. Art. 98 presents as the aim “the union with God in His infinite Love made clear in the Hearts of Love through prayer.”

In article 76, the founder treats of “contemplation” in the sense of meditation, as a type of prayer. It needs silence and it can be learned with the help of spiritual writings or as *Lectio Divina*. What in this research is called “contemplation”, is called in the Constitutions “meditation or act of contemplation”, which aims at “a deeply personal union with God”, union of heart and will, which may be “felt” and which will direct “at all times all our words, thoughts and actions”. The inner disposition of attention to God and what He is trying to communicate to the soul is particularly stressed in the Art. 101 (reading the Holy Scripture) and Art. 102 (praying the breviary). Art. 102 § 3 speaks of the meaning and the effect of prayer (with contemplation) in general: trying to “become more and more deeply in love with Him”, living always in a “spirit of prayer and the consciousness of God’s loving presence”. Art. 126 returns to this issue, mentioning contemplation as “wordless, loving communion with God in His Infinite Love [..., striving] daily for deeper spiritual insight into the mysteries of God’s Love, especially manifested in the Hearts of Love, and so gain[ing] insight into their own personal position before God.” The members of the Hearts of Love are obliged to make every effort to keep silence and to put aside all occupations for the times and places set apart for prayer. (Cf. art. 102, §1, 143).

Art. 122 speaks also of a union of “contemplation of God’s Love with the apostolate of Love”. At the times for work, informal and formal prayer can always enter. Even in a noisy environment and during work it is possible to reach the grace of contemplation.<sup>775</sup>

The founder stresses both the need for personal effort to devote time to silent prayer and examination of conscience in order to reach the state of contemplation, and the need for recognizing such prayer as a gift from God: “Each member must continually and perseveringly ask God for this great gift.” (Art.126)

Art. 124 recommends openness to inculturation, according to the instructions of the Church, and also openness to songs, pictures, architecture based on the Catholic traditional devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and on the inspiration of members of SHL, “in so far as these are in accordance with the spirit and purposes of the liturgy of the Church and have been approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority (SC, 48, 26-32, 36-38, 40).” Inculturation is seen as important for reaching to contemplation, since any worship which is experienced as something (partly) foreign to one’s culture and sensibility can hardly make the person to focus in a holistic way on God. At the same time, the Constitutions fully respect the authority of the Church to accept or reject “inspirations” of members concerning liturgy. Art. 124 seems to be directed to the chaplain of a community of Hearts of Love Sisters, who should celebrate “as to deepen the members’ appreciation, involvement and love of the liturgical action and of the faith which underlies it.”

Art. 125 encourages the communities to take serious their duty of the liturgy of the hours. Article 75 recommends the daily rosary<sup>776</sup> and the Prayer of the Hearts of Love in the form of a

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<sup>774</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>775</sup> Cf. “Il ricordo di Dio non è turato dal lavoro, ma dalle opere vane e cattive.” TEOFANE IL RECLUSO, *Pis’ma k raznym licam o raznykh predmetach very i žizni* (Lettere a varie persone sui vari temi della fede e della vita), Moskva 1892, lettera 66, p. 382, quoted in T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, p. 335.

<sup>776</sup> Cf. CDWDS, *Directory on popular piety and the liturgy* (13/5/2002), n. 197-202, recommending the rosary, and also the use of a short clause recalling the mystery, to be added in every Hail Mary after the name of Jesus, as it is done in many places in Germany, but not in Nigeria.



rosary. These communitarian, vocal and simple prayers help to build an atmosphere of union among the members, where contemplation of God becomes easier. Art. 126 has an admonishment on the importance of personal prayer and examination of conscience for attaining contemplation. Art. 101 prescribes the daily *Lectio Divina*.

Art. 130 recalls the teaching of St. Therese of the Child Jesus († 1897)<sup>777</sup> on “little sacrifices”, i.e. sacrificing little “innocent” wishes which nobody knows as eating something special, or forcing oneself to love what one naturally hates, while there is no sin, e.g. the own incapacity in certain things, or disturbances caused by others. With the exercise of these “little sacrifices”, the sister will become modest in eating and composed in behaviour, even in the painful events of life. Especially this last point binds contemplation back into life: being able to bring these “little sacrifices” is the fruit of genuine prayer and contemplation.

As contemplation is the inner disposition of self-abandonment to the loving will of God, it is equal to uniting oneself to the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. Contemplation is thus the “only solution”<sup>778</sup> for all personal and world-wide problems. A personal relationship with God and personal experience with Him in prayer is indispensable for each member for being an authentic witness of God’s Love in the world, in order to help the Church to change the world into the Reign of God.<sup>779</sup>

Art. 123 treats of liturgical prayer as a prayer that must be animated by the active participation of the members, especially the inner participation of “praise and gratitude”, “cultivated and cherished with great joy”, in which “the members unite themselves completely with Christ and offer to God ever anew the perfect response to His Infinite Love in union with the perfect response which our Lord Jesus Christ made, and which His Blessed Mother Mary made, the Two Hearts ever united in Love.” In order to help the members to understand the greatness of the Mass, the founder added in the article some words from his own understanding of the Divine Mysteries, gained from theological studies and personal meditation:

«In this the union of all in heaven with all of God’s faithful on earth, with the whole Church is celebrated. From this fountain of Christ’s Sacrifice which is the same on the altar as on the Cross, from the crucified and broken body of Christ and the pierced side and heart of Christ which is ever united with the pierced Heart of Mary even as she stood at the foot of His Cross, flow all life and grace, all the sacraments and power of the Church. In the Holy Mass we perceive and participate in this union of the Hearts of Love, in the union of all God’s faithful in the union of heaven and earth in the Infinite Love of God and we become one heart, one body, one in the infinite love of God. In this we become living flaming fires of Divine Love and carry this flame and light of Love to everybody and everything and everywhere.»

The mystical union with Mary mentioned in the previous sub-chapter is also an experience of the father founder. As it is seen here, this experience comes from the Holy Mass and the

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<sup>777</sup> French Carmelite nun. Aged 15 she followed two elder sisters into Carmel. A year later she had a mystical experience of union with Mother Mary. Three years after her profession she was asked to assist the novice mistress. Two years later she offered herself as victim to the merciful Love of God, and taught this self-offering to the Love of God to a fellow sister. A few days later, she received the mystical grace of being wounded by Love. The following year she got tuberculosis which led her to death through 18 months of sickness and temptations against faith and hope. For the little sacrifices cf. THERESE VOM KINDE JESUS, *Selbstbiographische Schriften*, Johannes, Einsiedeln 1958<sup>4</sup>, p. 259-264. For her life, *Ibidem*, p. 283-287: “Chronologische Tafel”, prepared by the editor François de Sainte-Marie O.C.D.

<sup>778</sup> Cf. Sub-chapter 2.4.6.

<sup>779</sup> Cf. appendix 4, Father Montfort on 29/11/2011, after rosary procession, opening the retreat for those to be professed; cf. also J. C. R. GARCÍA PAREDES, “Profezia e contestazione nella Chiesa”, in J. M. ALDAY (ed.), *I religiosi sono ancora profeti?*, p. 74.

sacramental union with Christ. The Founder first contemplates the union with Jesus which Mary achieved in her life. Now the aim for Christians is no longer union with Christ alone, but union with Jesus and Mary. It is their union which has to be demonstrated to the world. The founder sustains that this grace is given also to all the members of the Society of the Hearts of Love and all Catholic religious, at the same time underlining that the gift of grace to be in union with Jesus and Mary, similarly to the gift of grace in baptism, is coupled with the responsibility to live accordingly. The gift of mystical union is (on earth) not an aim achieved, but a foundation to build on.<sup>780</sup> It was said in the sub-chapter 2.3.2.1. that the devil cannot touch, see or manipulate a soul directly, only God can do this and unite with the soul, thus transforming the soul. It must be added here that Mary seemingly has the privilege to do the same, to unite together with Christ with every soul that is well disposed, out of her situation as perfectly redeemed and assumed creature. The experience of the power of God to transform a soul (that allows God to enter her) gradually towards love and holiness, should be so common that it does not need a proof in literature.<sup>781</sup> The action of Mary in a soul united to her, however, is very difficult to specify, since, if she acts, she must be thought to act in unison with God. Two ways of Marian action are conceivable: either Mary influences the soul in the name of God in the sense of a messenger, communicating a divine call, e.g. to conversion. (Her action is provable e.g. in apparitions as at Lourdes, where Mary visibly was an acting subject, on the seer Bernadette and on everyone who heard the message, and not only a passive presence accompanying God.) Or she may be perceived as standing on the side of the soul, helping to accept an intervention or initiative of God.<sup>782</sup> This research advances the thesis (in sub-chapter 3.3.4.3.) that the Mother of God has received from God the privilege to help by communicating her own docility to the will of God and other virtues to the Church and to any person who invokes her in honest search for God. Apart from this moral aspect of her help, this research advances the thesis that she communicates not only her faith in the sense of her receptivity towards God, but as a bearer of Jesus she gives a living contact with the contents of faith: the person of Jesus and the mystery of

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<sup>780</sup> The founder expressed it in commenting on a “message” of Jesus in the sermon of e.g. the Vigil Mass on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, 2/2/2008, in Nigeria (appendix 4): “The Lord said to me, ‘My son, I have been looking for the person in whom My Love will reign, My Love will live, My Love will shine more than the sunshine. I found this person in my blessed mother Mary. She gave Me all she is and has and I gave her all I have and I am. We are one I am one with her. The clearest representation of this our oneness is the oneness in Love, oneness in the Heart, union in the Heart.’ [...] ‘I have been looking for the person in whom this union this oneness of Love oneness of the Hearts in Love will live and through whom it will shine like the sun and more than the sun in the whole world in the whole of My creation in heaven and on earth.’ [...] ‘And I have found this in you. This is the only reason why I sent you into the world, to represent, to carry, to embody, to present, to personify this union of the Two Hearts.’ [...] All of you sisters are one Maria, each one of you here is also Maria. You are representing Mary. The Church confirms this when she says that the religious are signs of the kingdom. Religious brothers and sisters who take the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience, they are in themselves [...] living sacraments of the kingdom of God. So, anybody who encounters you encounters the kingdom of God. Anybody who sees you sees the kingdom of God personified.”

<sup>781</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 32-33, in which he speaks of the importance of making known where faith can lead to: to the untold joy of ‘bridal union’, passion of feelings and falling in love with Christ, experienced by mystics.

<sup>782</sup> Canonized saints generally showed grateful love for her. It can, thus, be believed that the loving relationship with Mary (the request to her for intercession and help, the imitation of her and consecration/devotion to her) is fundamental for living the life of perfection, and receives an answer. Cf. F. ASTI, “Mistica”, p. 858, 860. Maybe the Spanish (promising) literature quoted in F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 261 could give an abundance of historical examples for the glorified Virgin encouraging people to do the will of God. (IDELFONSO DE LA IMMACULADA, “Mujeres místicas marianas”, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 33 (1983) 97-162; IDEM, “Maria vive entre nostro”, in *Vida sobrenatural* 65 (1985) 160-208; G. GIRONES GUILLEM, “La esponsalidad mística de Maria”, in *Estudios Marianos* 64

her own person. Finally it advances the thesis that the union of Jesus and Mary is so intimate that it can be called a “union of hearts”, and that it must have an impact in the prayer life of the faithful.

Mary, as a witness and in her special contact with God in Jesus connects the faithful with great mysteries: the mystery of the “beginning”, the origin of life and of creation, as in her a new beginning was set, and through her the new life was given. The mystery of the relationship/union of grace and creation:<sup>783</sup> in her womb, the Grace (the Son of God) was united with the created body of flesh. The mystery of the promise of God for the future: through and in her, every promise was fulfilled. The mystery of the end of earthly life and its meaning as a fulfilment and crowning of the earthly life, as she stood in dignity under the cross.

## **2.4. The elements of inspired nature in the foundation: union in the Hearts of Love**

In the first chapter this research presented an African concept of unity. The SHL also proposes a program of life that should lead to unity: not unity of a tribe united by blood relationships, but unity of the children of God in the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. In this chapter will be discussed the major elements which are to build the union among the members, which distinguish this foundation from many others, and which may be called “of inspired nature”<sup>784</sup>. They have been ordered here into six sub-chapters: the “washing of feet” to form a common ethics of service, a common timetable of prayer in order to celebrate God together, the Prayer and Image of the Hearts of Love as symbols of the common roots of all members in the vocation to the life of the Hearts of Love, Centres of the Hearts of Love as places to live together and to care for the fragile ones, the proclamation of the union of Jesus and Mary as the guarantee for the prophetic courage concerning the future of mankind, and the “only solution” as the common project given by God to unite oneself and all hearts with Jesus and Mary. Some have no clear foundation in the Constitutions of the Sisters, so that other sources of the Society and the devotion have to be consulted, e.g. the sermons of the founder.

### **2.4.1. Washing of feet – spirit of service**

Union in a group needs a common ethic. It is best achieved if every member has the mind of serving the others. Jesus expressed the spirit of service and condescending love in the Gospel of St. John (as an interpretation of the passion) in the washing of the feet.<sup>785</sup> It is a symbolic act of Jesus,

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(1998) 591-599; E. LLAMAS, “La Virgen Maria en la experiencia de los misticos”, in *Scripta de Maria* 18 (2004) 87-115.)

<sup>783</sup> Cf. M. FARINA, “Maria, donna in relazione. Le vie di un nuovo umanesimo”, in *Theotokos* 15 (2007) 481: Mary is ‘witness’ of the ‘relationship between creation and grace’.

<sup>784</sup> “Inspired” is here in inverted commas, as some theologians sustain that only the Holy Scriptures can be called inspired, while others use the word more freely. The author herself sustains that the Holy Spirit continues to be active in his people, inspiring at every time people (through the Bible and under the guidance of the hierarchy) to pure and holy Love in different expressions.

<sup>785</sup> Cf. E. HAENCHEN, *John 2. A commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21*, Fortress, Philadelphia 1984, p. 105-109, who expresses the opinion on p. 107 (concerning vers 13,4), that a simplified washing of feet “had perhaps already assumed that form as a sacred ritual in the community of the Evangelist”, as the text presents a specific term for the basin, calling it ποδοντήρ: “footbasin”, repeated on p. 108 concerning vers 10 (vers 8-11 in the opinion of Haenchen are redactional additions): “Apparently the footwashing is understood as a sacramental act that alone makes fellowship with Jesus possible”, but only “as expression of his sacrifice” on the cross. On p. 109, commenting on vers 15, which, in

representing the whole of his saving ministry.<sup>786</sup> H. U. v. Balthasar († 1988) underlined that the act shows a union of intransigence and tenderness which is typical in John, an irrevocable self-annihilation and an elevating purification.<sup>787</sup> For Father Montfort as for St. Francis of Assisi, John 13 presents the ideal of service.<sup>788</sup> The SHL practises the commandment of Christ to wash each other's feet (cf. Jn 13, 14-15)<sup>789</sup>, especially on Thursdays before Holy Mass or, if it is not possible for the members to come together before Mass, it will be done before Midday Prayer and lunch or before Holy Hour and supper. This washing of feet shall express and foster a spirit of service and respect, of purity, simplicity and humility. It shall express and sustain the will to help each other to live pure and holy lives. It could be called a "Hearts of Love ritual" substituting the sharing of Colanut of the Igbo effort for unity, a looking at each others face and mood before praying and eating together. The vice-superior of each community has the first duty of washing the feet of all members of her community. *Constitutions*, Art. 140, § 1): "She washes the feet of the members [...] of the respective circle in the spirit of the new commandment of Love and living this new commandment."

Ratzinger, in his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. II, which he wrote after his election as pope, sees the washing of feet as a cleansing by the "love to the end", love until death by Christ, which replaces all Jewish rites of purification, thus stressing that the purity of heart needed to see God and to come near to him is not achieved merely by good morality, decided by man, but by "the gift of encounter with God in Jesus Christ." The washing of feet encloses the "entire mystery of Christ –

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the opinion of Haenchen, returns to the original text, the footwashing is interpreted by Jesus not as a meaning of the cross, but as a key of understanding that "the relation of one Christian to another really takes the place of the relation of God to man, Jesus to man." Haenchen, thus, follows the exemplar-moral interpretation. S. GRASSO, *Il vangelo di Giovanni. Commento esegetico e teologico*, Città Nuova, Roma 2008, p. 547 (who treats the Gospel as an unitarian text, without distinguishing between the original and redactional), commenting on verses 4-5, follows Schnackenburg and Raymond E. Brown (quoting R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel according to St. John*, p. 18.) in noting on the other hand that the verb *τιθέμι*, "laying down", here used for laying aside the garment, in Jn 10,11.15.17-18 is used to indicate the offering of life. On p. 550, "to have part (in me)" of vers 8 is explained as 'to inherit a good', or to share someone's destiny. Grasso underlines the acceptance of the washing of feet as *conditio sine qua non* for his disciples having a share in the life of Jesus, who accepts them with this sign as his co-heirs. Against a sacramental interpretation, Grasso (who also follows the moral interpretation, cf. p. 553) notes on p. 552 that John emphasized in 15,3 and 17,17 the purifying and sanctifying power of the Word of God announced by Jesus.

<sup>786</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 57: "He divests himself of his divine splendour; he, as it were, kneels down before us; he washes and dries our soiled feet, in order to make us fit to sit at table for God's wedding feast [...] it is the servant-love of Jesus that draws us out of our pride and makes us fit for God, makes us 'clean'." Cf. also R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel according to St. John*, p. 19, commenting on vers 8: "his giving of himself in death and the saving activity of that death are represented in this 'washing'."

<sup>787</sup> Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni. Misterium Paschale*, Queriniana, Brescia 1971, p. 31. H. U. von Balthasar was a Swiss theologian who associated with the mystic Adrienne von Speyr, founding a secular institute with her. He wrote uncountable books, among others a theology in three parts: 1) On the perception of divine revelation (Theological aesthetics); 2) Becoming conscious that God acts in the world and on the world (theo-drammatic); 3) Considerations concerning the revelation and the action of God (Theologic). He gave preference to the Marian theme in his work. Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, p. 353-372.

<sup>788</sup> Cf. ROTZETTER, "Lebensgeschichte – Lebensprogramm – Grunderfahrung", in A. ROTZETTER – W.C. VAN DIJK – T. MATURA, *Franz von Assisi. Ein Anfang und was davon bleibt*, Benzinger, Zürich 1999, p. 59.

<sup>789</sup> Don Mario RUSSOTTO writes in an article on religious life a longer comment about the washing of the feet. First, he quotes a "midrash su Es 21,2 riguardante lo schiavo: 'Voi non dovete mai chiedere al vostro schiavo di lavarvi i piedi, perché questo è un gesto di umiliazione estrema e non lo si dovrà mai chiedere a nessuno'." After having defined the washing of feet, if commanded, as a deep humiliation, he continues to explain that it can be an act of loving dedication or consecration to a person, if it is done out of free will: "Nel romanzo *Giuseppe e Asenat*, composto alla fine del I secolo, la donna, affascinata dal suo uomo, vuole dargli una prova d'amore e gli lava i piedi come segno massimo della consacrazione al marito, dicendo: 'I tuoi piedi sono i miei piedi. Nessun altro, perciò, potrà lavare i tuoi piedi, li potrò lavare soltanto io, perciò mi consacro a te lavandoteli'. È il gesto della dedizione totale." He also calls the act a representation of the meaning of the Last Supper, the Holy Eucharist, and the whole life and death of Jesus. "Teologia della vita consacrata", in *Presenza Pastorale* 64 (1994) 474.

his life and death” and Jesus’ call to follow his example is seen by the Holy Father not as a call to mere imitation and moral effort, but as a promise of unity with Christ, in which “Jesus’ action becomes ours, because he is acting in us.” Ratzinger connects the washing of feet with the sacrament of confession, which is again a preparation for receiving the Holy Eucharist.<sup>790</sup>

Father Montfort stresses that the service of charity and self-abasement, the washing of feet, is deeply connected with the Eucharistic mystery.<sup>791</sup> Love, humility and emptying oneself belong together and find their expression both in the washing of the feet and in the gift of Love, the Holy Eucharist. In other words:

«What is the difference between serving and loving? There is no difference. Look at the Eucharist. John wrote about the washing of feet where the other Gospel writers wrote about the institution of the Holy Eucharist. [...] The real washing happened at the cross with his own blood. [...] He shed his body and blood, what he did sacramentally before at the last supper. Jesus uses the same words to stress the importance of washing of feet and of the Eucharist. “If I do not wash you, you have nothing to do with me.” “If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you.” While washing think of the distribution of the Holy Eucharist.»<sup>792</sup>

Apart from the material reality of the duty, the commandment of washing of the feet is the assignment of serving with “interest in the personal welfare of each and every member of the circle.”<sup>793</sup> All members are called to use their personal charisms and talents in the service of the community, the church and humanity. The vice-superior has to ensure that each member will be assigned work according to her talents, so that each can make a useful contribution.<sup>794</sup>

The duty of washing of feet and service of the Sisters is clearly not only towards their fellow Sisters, but involves the lay members of the Society and of the Church, and all humanity. As many other congregations<sup>795</sup>, the Sisters of the Hearts of Love are to have a special attention towards the laity, sharing the spirituality of the Hearts of Love with them. The foot washing is not done in the way that one person will wash all others, but each washes and is washed. Thus the sharing of love and service is never only a giving, but each must be ready to give and to receive also, both from Sisters and from lay people. Since life is a gift, serving means to be faithful to what one is.<sup>796</sup>

#### **2.4.2. A common timetable of prayer and adoration**

Union in a group is created by common activities, especially by celebrating/praying together. To observe special times for prayer is a tangible sign of love for God.<sup>797</sup> For the religious members of the SHL, there is a common timetable of prayers and adoration.<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>790</sup> J. RATZINGER, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. (58-) 60, 62-63, cf. 73.

<sup>791</sup> Cf. Sermon, Neunkirchen, 16/7/2003, cf. appendix 4.

<sup>792</sup> 8/11/07 Thursday - meditation of Father Montfort before the washing of the feet in Nigeria, in appendix 4.

<sup>793</sup> *Original Constitutions*, Art. 41, § 3; appendix 3.

<sup>794</sup> Cf. Ivi, § 6.

<sup>795</sup> Apart from some new Institutes, where religious Brothers, Sisters and lay people observe some separation but pray, work and eat together, sharing one spirit, it is a missionary concept of old congregations as Franciscans and Dominicans, to have a “third order”, thus calling and integrating lay people in the mission of the congregation. Lay people have given good advice, good example in prayers and virtues, and much help in the mission of the SHL, bringing their time, talents, resources and energy.

<sup>796</sup> Cf. J. M. BERGOGLIO, “Per costruire la nazione”, p. 10.

<sup>797</sup> In the past, tangible signs of thanksgiving to God or to saints were processions, pilgrimages and also the “ex voto”: pictures, marble plaques with inscription or other objects left in a sanctuary to express gratitude for a healing or another grace received. Apart from adorning the sanctuary, they created an atmosphere of communion among those who come

Although “every hour is holy”, seeing that human beings cannot be always on their knees in adoration, the founder is convinced that the “Lord has appointed some hours as special and sacred”, in order to help man to find a possible way of being constant in love.<sup>799</sup> Thus the Prayer is said after the Angelus Domini, with which the faithful “commemorate”<sup>800</sup> the Incarnation, when the union of the Hearts of Love began to exist on earth, at midnight, six in the morning, noon and at six in the evening.<sup>801</sup> At four o’clock (pm) it signals the end of the hour of death of Jesus, the moment when the corpse was laid in the bosom of Mary according to Christian tradition, and thus reminding of the perfection of the union of the Two Hearts. The Society keeps daily Holy Hour 3-4pm, possibly with Eucharistic adoration. To say the Prayer at communion (privately) and after the communion prayer at the end of Mass (possibly communally) as thanksgiving for the gift of Holy Communion makes the faithful to take part consciously in the union of the Hearts of Love present in the Holy Mass and Eucharist: although only Jesus, with his incarnation, life, death and resurrection is sacramentally present, Mary cannot be separated from him and his life: she is mystically present.<sup>802</sup> Fixed times of prayer educate man to constancy in the daily life. Spiritual writers hold that for private prayer aiming at contemplation it is better to fix determined times for prayer, than to fix a number of prayers.<sup>803</sup>

In Centres of the Hearts of Love, a Rosary procession is held every evening, in a special way on Saturday<sup>804</sup> evenings. In the “Sanctuary” of the Hearts of Love, the Saturday procession is held

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in pilgrimage to the place. Cf. G. MATTAI, “Ex voto”, in *NDM*, p. 501. Tangible signs in prayer are a need and good aspiration of the African/Igbo people, and a wholesome and sane proposal for the post-modern man/woman in search of religious experiences, and with a certain lack of constancy. Human beings need visible signs – as sanctuaries, sacraments, miracles and rituals - to realize the presence of the invisible God; men also use signs and rituals to reach the Invisible. Since love is invisible, men express love of God through signs of love for God. These tangible signs in the SHL include special times of prayer.

<sup>798</sup> Cf. Art. 61 and 122 of the *Original Constitutions*, appendix 3. Cf. already M. OKAA, *Come*, p. 14 and 55, appendix 5.

<sup>799</sup> M. OKAA, *Come*, p. 10-11, appendix 5. The founder showed himself convinced that “by 3 o’clock he [Jesus] died, by 3 o’clock he rose”. Easter Sunday 4/4/2010, Orlu, Holy Mountain, Vigil, appendix 4.

<sup>800</sup> CDWDS, *Directory on popular piety and the liturgy* (13/5/2002), n. 195. The directory suggests the possibility in solemn moments the proclamation of the Gospel of the Annunciation at Angelus and the singing of the “Hail Mary”.

<sup>801</sup> The Angelus Domini at midnight is not known in Europe, but some people in Nigeria are practising it, including SHL. In Europe in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Religious of various orders concluded the day with the Hail Mary and began to exhort the people to greet Our Lady with several Hail Marys, when the bell of Compline or Vespers rang in the evening. In some places it was used also to begin the day with it in the morning. Thus, the remembrance of the greeting of the Angel to Mary in the evening and morning developed and was general in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century; after that, also the three Hail Marys of midday began to develop and became general in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but latest with Benedict XIII (1724-1730). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the three Hail Marys were divided with the three verses of the Angelus Domini. Cf. S. MAGGIANI, “Angelus Domini”, in *NDM*, p. 26-28, who knows nothing of an Angelus Domini prayer at midnight. (Likewise the Directory on popular piety.) In some places as Bavaria, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (to sustain the fight against the Turks with prayer), the political leaders decreed the obligation to pray the Angelus Domini on one’s knees, wherever one may be when the bell sounds. Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 161. The Orthodox, instead of the prayer of the Angelus Domini, have the venerated icon of Our Lady of the Annunciation, which must be present in every church, next to the icon of Jesus. M. M. PEDICO, *La Vergine Maria nella pietà popolare*, Monfortane, Roma 1993, p. 86-87 calls the evening Angelus the commemoration of the Incarnation, and the Angelus of noon a special prayer intention for peace, according to the exhortations to this pious practice by Louis XI, King of France and Pope Sixtus IV (indulgence granted 1475), while in the Angelus of early morning, which is connected with the bell of Prime, the hour that commemorated the Resurrection, she sees a simple greeting to the “Morning Star”. She also mentions that in 1742, Pope Benedict XIV prescribed the substitution of the Angelus by the Regina Coeli in the Paschal time.

<sup>802</sup> Cf. Art. 123 and 124 of the *Original Constitutions*, appendix 3.

<sup>803</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, p. 295.

<sup>804</sup> In stressing the Saturday with special Marian devotion, the founder follows a long Catholic tradition. In the Byzantine Church, Wednesday is dedicated in a special way to the Theotókos, while in the West, since the Carolingian

with seven rosaries: the mysteries of joy, light, sorrow, glory, and five decades contemplating the infinite Love of God in a rosary of the “Love of God”, and two rosaries with the Prayer of the Hearts of Love. The prayers are generally chanted. If a priest is present, the procession ends with a solemn blessing.

A procession to a sanctuary or circling around it can be called a “ritual pilgrimage”, a pilgrimage towards God. Processions and pilgrimages are the sign that the people of God has no stable place of living in this world (cf. Heb 13, 14) and reminds them of the duty to give testimony of their Christian faith wherever they go. Going for a pilgrimage is answering a call, departing, leaving home. Thus it can be a detachment, a conversion, liberating the spirit, like Abraham, the “wandering Aramean” (Dt 26,5). Arriving in pilgrimage at the sanctuary is as “presenting oneself” before God, acknowledging him as the king who receives in audience, to request help and/or to pay “tribute”. The length of a pilgrimage way, with prayer and meditation, is important, as human beings need time to receive inspirations and to understand their life. The way is often spiritually more important than the prayer at the sanctuary to which the pilgrimage/procession is directed. A pilgrimage is both solitary and communal. Even in a group pilgrimage each person makes his own experiences and personal decisions, and even in going alone a pilgrim is/should be in communion with all other pilgrims to the same place. Thus processions are the corporal expression of seeking God.

The Night Vigil, beginning by 12 midnight and ending by 4am with the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, must be mentioned in a special way. The vigil is a sign of love of God, encouraged by the Church.<sup>805</sup> Jesus, in the passages of Gethsemane<sup>806</sup> (Mt 26,38/Mk 14,38/Lk 22,46) commands this keeping awake for his sake. R. Taft observed the various types of vigils in the early Church:

«1) the private night prayer of Christians during the first three centuries; 2) semi-private vigils at the tombs of martyrs during the same period; 3) wakes [domestic watches]; 4) the private watches of virgins and ascets such as Jerome’s Roman devotees; 5) a Sunday resurrection vigil of three psalms or

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reform (8<sup>th</sup> century), and later propagated by Dominicans and many other congregations and single clerics, Saturday became the day of Mary. Cf. S. ROSSO, “Sabato”, p. 1096.

<sup>805</sup> The OFFICIUM DIVINUM, *Liturgia Horarum iuxta Ritum Romanum*, ed. typ. 1970: *Institutio generalis de Liturgia Horarum*, (1/11/1970) n. 72 (“The general introduction on the Liturgy of the Hours”, n. 72, Divine Office, vol. I, p. xlvii) expresses the wish of the Church that some individuals and communities may keep up the ancient tradition of nocturnal prayer (vigil, patronized e.g. by St ATHANASIUS, *De virginitate*, 20, in PG 28, 273 A, or St. Albert the Great). Cf. also BENEDICT XVI, Address at the Lenten meeting with the clergy of Rome (22/2/2007), first answer: “I am very grateful because Eucharistic Adoration is being increasingly renewed. During the Synod on the Eucharist, the Bishops talked a great deal about their experiences, of how new life is being restored to communities with this Adoration, and also with nocturnal Adoration”. CDWDS, *Directory*, n. 114 encourages the Night Vigil with Holy Mass also on days as the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, which is not a traditional day of Christian vigil, as an offering to the Lord of the first moments of the new year. Father Montfort made it the first duty for himself and his (future) congregations, to dedicate the beginning of every day to God. To a vigil of one hour every night between midnight and 4 am, with two rosaries of the Hearts of Love (10 times “Jesus, Mary, I love you, be appeased, save all souls. Amen.”, then the rest of the Prayer of the Hearts of Love on the “Our Father” beads of the rosary), he urgently invites all Christians, so that every midnight Christ may be expected in love in some places. Cf. TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 13-15.

<sup>806</sup> Father Montfort often reads out this passage during Holy Hours, and he quotes Mt 26, 38-41 in his “Call to Prayer and sacrifice for all Christians” in May 2001, *Ibidem*, p. 13. Cf. appendix 4, Vigil on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2011: “Jesus felt that the soldiers where on their way coming, and he fought – not with Judas or with the devil, but with himself: overcoming himself. At the Mount of Olives he took the decision, he allowed himself to be flogged, he carried the cross, he allowed himself to have his clothing removed and be crucified, here he died for us. What came after was only the realisation. For us the Vigil is the time to overcome ourselves, for the salvation of souls.”

canticles, an incensation, and the proclamation of the paschal gospel, as in Egeria<sup>807</sup> and the *Apostolic Constitutions*<sup>808</sup>; 6) monastic nocturnes, a daily office of continuous psalmody and readings in two distinct forms: (a) the pre-matins office at cockcrow, as in Cassian<sup>809</sup> and much of the later Western tradition, and (b) the *mesonyktion* or midnight office as in the Cappadocian sources; 7) the eventual adoption of some form of the latter monastic nocturnes as a daily service in cathedral usage; 8) the baptismal vigil [...]. This vigil, usually an extension of vespers, comprised an especially solemn paschal lucernarium or light-ritual, followed by numerous Scriptures lessons read in the basilica [...] while the bishop was baptizing in the baptistery; 9) vesperal vigils consisting of vespers extended by antiphons and responsories, interspersed with lections, prostrations, and prayers, often terminating in Eucharist on the morrow. This is the sort of vigil we see in Basil, Cassian, Egeria, and numerous other early and late sources. It was an occasional – i.e. not daily – “all-night” vigil in both monastic and cathedral usage. Its use on Saturday nights was widespread; some also celebrated it Friday nights, before great feasts, for stations – i.e. at the shrine of saints, especially martyrs, on their feast day – and in times of special need.»<sup>810</sup>

If a person gets up to give to God the first hours of the day, it can be the expression of a readiness to allow God to lead, to unite one to himself. The Vigil has a character of a retreat.<sup>811</sup> As the Church celebrates both the birth of Jesus and his resurrection with a Vigil towards midnight, this time can thus be considered a special time of grace and joy, hidden in the silence of the night.<sup>812</sup> A vigil is a time of detachment from earthly worries, the time of least distractions, in which the soul becomes empty and enters a state of waiting for God: waiting for God to come, to act, to transform the world. Thus the Vigil is a special prayer for the coming of the Reign of the Love of God.<sup>813</sup> Midnight in the OT is in the first place the time of exodus into the freedom to worship Yahweh, the time when God smote the first-born of the Egyptians (cf. Ex 12,29), the time when the “all-powerful Word” of God “leapt” “down from the heavens, from the royal throne” (Wis 18,14-15); (all) the night became a privileged time for prayer for liberation and praise and to show faithfulness to God (cf. Ps 77 (76),2.6; Ps 92 (91),2; Ps 119 (118),55). According to the parable of the ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom (Mt 25,1-13), midnight is the time of the coming of the bridegroom<sup>814</sup>. Thus the Vigil is a “participation” in the eschatological “wedding-feast of the

<sup>807</sup> Spanish pilgrim nun “who trekked through the Holy Land stational services between 381-384, during the episcopate of St. Cyril (d. 386)”. She left a very detailed diary of places and prayers. R. TAFT, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West. The origins of the Divine Office and its meaning for today*, Liturgical, Collegeville (Mi) 1993<sup>2</sup>, p. 48.

<sup>808</sup> A “lengthy church order written in Greek around 380 by a Syrian from the environs of Antioch”. *Ibidem*, p. 44.

<sup>809</sup> “John Cassian, thought to have been born around 360 in Scythia Minor (present-day Rumania) [...] lived in Scetis [important semi-anchoretic monastic “desert”, the present Wadi an-Natrun, 65 km northwest of Cairo] from about 380 until 399 [...]. In his *Institutes*, written around 417-425, [...] Cassian is attempting [...] a reform of Gallic monasticism along Egyptian lines.” *Ibidem*, p. 58.

<sup>810</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 188-189.

<sup>811</sup> The founder states in his sermon of the Vigil mass on 24.7.2003: “Jesus Himself spent the night in prayer, in Adoration of the Father. The same way the Father of Ars spent the nights in Adoration, in prayer. And the strength he draws from this Adoration would carry him to spend up to 13 hours sitting at the confessional.” (Appendix 4).

<sup>812</sup> Cf. also M. MASINI, “Silenzio”, p. 1088: the OT connects the great events of salvation of God with the night and the silence, and the Palestinian *Targum* of Exodus and Leviticus speaks of four great events, which all happen at night: the creation, the call of Abraham, the Exodus and the future coming of the Messiah King, seen realized by the NT in the birth and resurrection of Christ.

<sup>813</sup> Cf. the “Call to Prayer”, in which he quotes the message from Jesus: “Get at least 100 people who will say the prayer (the Prayer of the Hearts of Love) 100 times (i.e. the rosary of the Hearts of Love two times) every night, with you, no matter where they are (between the hours of midnight and 3 am) and the world will be changed. I will change the face of the earth. I will renew my Church and I will save all (uncountable) souls. I will overthrow the influence of evil. I will overthrow evil. I will establish the reign of My Love firmly. My Will will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Two HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 13.

<sup>814</sup> The Bridegroom, in the Bible, is God (cf. Hos 2,18; 21-22; Is 54,4-7), or Christ (cf. Mk 2,19-20 || Mt 9,15 || Lk 5,34-35; Mt 25,1-13; 2 Cor 11,2; Eph 5,22-32; the Gospel of St. John is permeated by this idea: Jesus emerges as the true bridegroom at the wedding of Cana, Jn 2,3-11, and in Jn 3,29; Jesus is presented as the lover, who wishes to be in his



Lamb”<sup>815</sup>, the union of the communion of saints with the communion of the Holy Trinity in heaven. The communion of saints, as the Catholic Church teaches, is headed by the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, who, in her person, represents the Church of God as her type<sup>816</sup>. Her own union with Christ is

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disciples and his disciples should be in him, in a permanent union: Jn 6,56; 13,5-8; 14,2-3 and 23; 15,4-5 and 9-11; 17,23-24) or the “Lamb” (i.e. Christ) (Rev 19,7-9; 21,2,9-10). Cf. LG 7, PC 12, GS 48. In the common of Virgins in the Divine Liturgy, he is acclaimed the spouse of the holy virgins. An Ambrosian preface reads: “In Maria, creatura di intatto splendore, trova inizio la Chiesa, sposa di Cristo”. The “spouse-ship” of God towards Mary was contemplated a lot in the MA, since Christian tradition has ever “seen a sponsal element in God’s love for every soul, but especially for those with the virginal engagement”. M. O’CARROLL, “Socia: the word and the idea in regard to Mary”, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 25 (1975) 354. (Cf. the “6<sup>th</sup> parable” of ST. BERNARD (?), in Migne among the “letters of Gilbert Foliot”, in PL 190.961-96, in English transl. in *Cistercian Studies*, 21,2 (1986), 101-106: “The Son of the king of the heavenly Jerusalem” wishes to marry an “Ethiopian woman”, held captive by the “king of Babylon”. In order to liberate the bride, he sends the archangel Gabriel to the “virgin Mary, of the lineage of David. With her, in her chamber, the celebration of my marriage feast is to begin. [...] So the archangel came down to Mary [...] There began the celebration of the most sacred marriage feast.” Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienza Generale *La nuova Figlia di Sion* (1<sup>o</sup> maggio 1996), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIX,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, 1123: la “figlia di Sion” [...] risponde alla proposta dell’amore divino con il proprio amore sponsale”. Of course the human word “spouse”, as all other human words describing a union, can only give a slight idea of the mystery of the union of the human soul with God, and is subject to misunderstandings, according to the personal experience of each reader. It is evident that a normal spousal and sexual relationship is excluded as it is not possible and not conceivable with God. Human spouses ideally unite by uniting their persons, their bodies, their incomes, their efforts, for building up a family. God unites with man by a union of “heart”: calling man to give God the will, intelligence, sentiments, physical capacities, energy, time, talents, efforts; for the sake of building up a civilization of Love. As the Creator of the human body, God can grant to those who give him all a “bodily” experience (the experience of a physically felt divine presence in the faithful), an experience which can exceed in intensity and joy the experience of the marital union. (ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS even postulates the necessity of such an experience of “sense-love” and “yearnings” concerning God, for the soul to begin its “journey in the night of sense” and then to be united “with the Beloved in a union of simplicity and purity and love and similitude.” *Ascent*, p. 79, book II, chap. I, n. 2, cf. also p. 73-74, book I, chap. XIV, n. 2. But from the side of the soul, the preparation for the union is not the desire to “understand or perceive or feel or imagine anything, concerning either God or aught else, but that it should have purity and love - that is, perfect resignation and detachment from everything for God’s sake alone.” *Ibidem*, p. 96, book II, chap. V, n. 8. Elsewhere the saint said it in other words: the soul enters the dark night towards union by not counting on reason and understanding, but on faith, entrusting itself to what God has said; by not clinging to what it possesses in the memory, but by fixing the attention in hope on what God has promised; by not following its own will and affections, but by burying the will with love of God and charity. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 98-100, book II, chap. VI. The peak of the union is “a living death of the Cross, both as to sense as to spirit”. *Ibidem*, p. 107, book II, chap. VII, n. 11. In this union, Christ “takes flesh” in the life of the person united to him, the soul “is transformed in God through love”. *Ibidem*, p. 93, book II, chap. V, n. 3.) The virgin-bride opens herself to Jesus not to receive the “knowledge of man”, but the knowledge of God, who communicates His divine fecundity to her, a spiritual motherhood. As the words “bridegroom”, “bride” and “wedding-feast” are used in Holy Scriptures regarding God, Christ and (new) Israel, the words can not be dismissed as unfitting, equally to the expression “union of hearts”. A theology of the “Two Hearts of Love” cannot be separated from its spousal aspect. Cf. G. DE VIRGILIO, “La dimensione sponsale del cuore di Cristo e di Maria: prospettive di teologia biblica”, paper presented at the Congress on the theology of the union of the Two Hearts of Love, Jesus and Mary, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2006, Rome, in appendix 11. It may be noted that Father Montfort very rarely uses the word “spouse” for Mary; he called her the “spouse of the Holy Spirit”, in M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 79, appendix 6. Generally he prefers calling her “Heart of Love”, or with the traditional titles “Blessed Virgin” or “Mother”.

<sup>815</sup> Cf. the experience of Father Montfort: “I see and experience flaming fire of Love. Infinite ocean of fire of love. Indescribable brightness. Indescribable peace. Indescribable joy. Indescribable quietness, indescribable LOVE. Indescribable union. Indescribable oneness. Perfect union of hearts, of beings, of persons, perfect fulfilment of all our true heart desires.” TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 25.

<sup>816</sup> “Deipara est Ecclesiae typus, ut iam docebat S. Ambrosius, in ordine scilicet fidei, caritatis et perfectae com Christo unionis.” LG 63, AAS, 57(1965) p. 63. Cf. also summary of numbers 60-65 of the Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*, given by M. G. MASCIARELLI: “1. Maria e la Chiesa, un solo mistero di salvezza (cf. n. 60); 2. Maria e la Chiesa, una sola serva del Redentore (cf. n. 61); 3. Maria e la Chiesa, un solo patto di fedeltà (cf. n. 62); 4. Maria e la Chiesa, una sola madre, una sola vergine (cf. nn. 63-64); 5. Maria e la Chiesa, una sola discepola del Maestro (cf. n. 65)” “L’indissolubile rapporto di Maria con la Chiesa: figura, modello, presenza”, in Ermanno M. TONIOLO (a cura di), *Maria nel Concilio. Approfondimenti e percorsi a 40 anni dalla “Lumen Gentium”*, “Madre della Chiesa”, Roma 2005, p. 88.

sustained by an “arcto et indissolubili vinculo”<sup>817</sup>. The Vigil is therefore a participation in the union of the Two Hearts of Love, Jesus and Mary.<sup>818</sup>

For the common prayer, also the common prayer position is helpful for union. The Eucharistic adoration is supposed to be done on the knees, especially when climbing the “holy steps” in the “sanctuary” in Nigeria.<sup>819</sup> The Prayer of the Hearts of Love used to be said kneeling, if possible. For the first line (“act of love”), at the name of “Jesus”, Father Montfort taught the members to bow the head to the ground<sup>820</sup> and to lift it up at the name of “Mary”, thus the prayer is said very calmly and solemnly. After the short “act of love”, beginning with “O! Hearts of Love!” the Prayer is said in complete prostration<sup>821</sup> on the ground, if possible, in order to express the complete self-giving to God in the Hearts of Love not only with the voice. Father Montfort writes why the members should accept to prostrate before God.<sup>822</sup> The prostration is done before both Jesus and Mary.<sup>823</sup>

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<sup>817</sup> LG 53, AAS, 57 (1965) p. 58. The terms “vinculus”, (e.g. CIC, Can. 1134), “unitas et indissolubilitas” (CIC, Can. 1056) characterize the bond of matrimony.

<sup>818</sup> The Vigil begins with the midnight Angelus. The prayer of Angelus Domini in the Society is always concluded with a solemn recitation of the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, the blessing and the Anthem of the Hearts of Love. Then 1 - 5 rosaries of Our Lady will be recited. The number of rosaries depends on whether there is Mass following or not. Then the Office of Readings. If a priest is available to celebrate the Holy Mass for the participants of the Vigil, the Office will be combined with the Mass. The conclusion of the Vigil after the liturgical prayer is Eucharistic adoration with two rosaries of the Hearts of Love prayer, and some time of silent meditation. If there was Mass, the adoration has the character of a thanksgiving for the Holy Communion; if not, it is a spiritual communion.

<sup>819</sup> After Father Montfort came to know the “Scala Santa” in Rome, he began building 100 steps, wide, but low in height, which allow a person to easily climb them on the knees and prostrate on them, leading from the middle of the hill, where the “Sanctuary” of the Hearts of Love in Orlu is situated, to under its top, crowned with a platform for the altar with the Blessed Eucharist exposed and the Image of the Hearts of Love. Since these steps have been built, the members present at the sanctuary climb them on their knees, while praying 10 decades of the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, during Holy Hour (3-4pm), and any time they wish. Since February 2010, it is done also at the end of the Night Vigil (ca. 3-4am). Father Montfort used to impart the Eucharistic Blessing at the end of the 10 decades.

<sup>820</sup> Also St. Francis taught his brothers to bow to the ground when hearing the name of Jesus. Cf. A. ROTZETTER, “Lebensgeschichte“, p. 45.

<sup>821</sup> Prayer in prostration is frequent in both the OT and NT, cf. Gen 17,3; Dtn 9,18; Neh 8,6; Tob 12,16; Jdt 9,1; 10,1-2; 2Mac 10,4; Mk 17,6; Mt 26,39; Rev 4,10; 5,14 etc. It is a posture of solemn petition or of adoration. It was frequent also in early liturgy, for all ministers or even for the whole assembly, e.g. in veneration of the altar at the beginning of the Mass. Cf. A. G. MARTIMORT (ed.), *The Church at Prayer. An introduction to the liturgy. Vol. I, Principles of the liturgy*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota 1987, p. 183.

<sup>822</sup> “Any posture that clearly shows absolute humility and self-emptying and self-giving and self abandonment before God is acceptable.” M. OKAA, *Come*, p. 63-64, appendix 5. In the same booklet, on pages 4-6, the founder meditates on the sweetness of prayer: “Prayer is looking up to God; lifting up your heart to God, raising your hands to God, bowing down face to the ground to God, kneeling down [...], prostrating your whole person before God, [...] It is a loving gift, and submission and abandonment of ourselves” Spiritual writers recommend bowing down and prostrating to the ground, as well as standing and kneeling as helping prayer postures. The spiritual life is acquired with sweat and by forcing oneself. E. g. Theophane the Recluse, a Russian orthodox bishop, experienced it in the monastery of San Saba in Jerusalem that all monks were praying the short “Jesus prayer” in the morning 1650 times, 10 times at each invocation of Jesus bowing low, the 11<sup>th</sup> time bowing even to the ground. A type of rosary was used. Theophane recommended that prayer much, without overestimating the importance of the particular words of the prayer: the important thing is to concentrate the whole being on God. Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, p. 313, 337, 339-340, 344. Saint Dominic was reported to pray always with body, soul and spirit in unison, the body being always involved in the prayer, with bowing, prostrating, kneeling, standing; changing the positions in accelerated and slowing down rhythms. Cf. P. DYCKHOFF, “Pregare con il corpo/1, Alla scuola di San Domenico”, in *Vita Consacrata* 47, 1 (2011) p. 77-79. Saint Francis also taught his brothers to change the position of the body during prayers, including prostration with the face on the ground. Cf. ROTZETTER, “Lebensgeschichte“, p. 69. In the 11<sup>th</sup>/ 12<sup>th</sup> century in the West, many pious persons were reported to add to their prayer solemnity, devotion or penitence by praying it in a variety of postures: on the knees, bowing to the ground, in prostration. Cf. R. SCHERSCHEL, *Der Rosenkranz*, p. 57-58, 63.

<sup>823</sup> With the difference that the cult to Jesus is “proskýnesis latreutiké”, prostration in adoration before God, while the cult to Mary is “proskýnesis timetiké”, prostration in veneration, according to the differentiation made by the Second

The common timetable of prayer is completed with fasting.<sup>824</sup> Apart from the faithfulness to the ecclesial commandments of fasting and abstinence on Ash Wednesday and on Fridays, there is the small daily self-restriction of not eating in the night (from 6pm till 6am, to prepare for the vigil), and the fasting with bread and water<sup>825</sup> or with only water on Wednesdays, unless the day falls on a feast-day.<sup>826</sup> The Wednesday fast is both penitential and preparative: to gain the full spiritual hunger for the Holy Eucharist, which is being celebrated in a more joyful way on Thursdays, the day of its institution. In special circumstances, as in the days before an election, taking of religious vows or an important decision, Father Montfort also used to practise and call for fasting<sup>827</sup>.

Though the life according to the messages of the Hearts of Love as transmitted by the founder request a lot of seriousness and self-discipline in prayer, the messages are not threatening or severe. According to the needs of souls in the post-modern world in Europe, and in the African situation of “newly” Christianized peoples, the messages repeat the same encouragement in infinite patience and expressing great affection. They are medicine against depression and scepticism, stimulating self-esteem, motivating, calling distracted children to contemplation, socializing by calling together at the same place for communitarian prayer. Physical healing is not promised, but psychological healing: the experience of extraordinary peace, spiritual serenity, a new understanding of the meaning of life, being transformed into a flaming fire of divine Love.<sup>828</sup>

### 2.4.3. The Prayer and Image of the Hearts of Love

The union of the members of the Hearts of Love is sustained by a common language, which is the language of love, especially the Prayer of the Hearts of Love. This prayer invokes Jesus and Mary together, following the Catholic belief of their intimate union of Love. The members should identify with its language:

*Jesus Mary, I love You! Be appeased. Save all souls!*<sup>829</sup> *Amen.*

*O Hearts of Love! O Hearts ever united in Love! Make me to love You always and help me to make*

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Council of Nicaea (787), which declared the “veneration” of sacred images and other sacred objects as the lectionary as licit. Cf. DS 601.

<sup>824</sup> Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Jeûne” in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 475: fasting helps to master bodily instincts.

<sup>825</sup> In the early times of the SHL, those who were not able to eat nothing at all, were fasting with only fruits. The fasting with bread and water was permitted by Father since 1997 for those who practised this fasting according to the “messages” of Medjugorje. 2010, bread became the only permitted food during days of fasting for the Sisters and all members who volunteered to join an inner circle of SHL.

<sup>826</sup> Apart from the general feasts and solemnities, every memorial of Our Lady is celebrated as a feast in the Congregation. Every birthday or memorial of a patron saint of a sister in the community excepts that community from fasting, as well as the whole of Eastertide and Christmas time.

<sup>827</sup> Cf. the instruction to fast and pray for ten days before selecting a new Spiritual Director for the Society: *Original Constitutions*, Art. 39, § 5, and equally the instruction to pray, fast and invoke the Holy Spirit before the election of the mother general and her counsellors, Art. 47, § 1; appendix 3.

<sup>828</sup> Cf. appendix 2.

<sup>829</sup> The Orthodox Church - with the exception of the Bulgarians - have conserved the ancient liturgical tradition to pray to the Mother of God for salvation: “Save us!” Cf. G. GHARIB, “Liturgie orientali”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 748. Also in the Latin tradition, this invocation to Mary appears in some modern time prayers, while in the MA she was habitually called “salus”, “salus hominum”, “salus mundi”, “salus peccatorum”, “salus tota post Dominum”, “salvatrix”, “salvatrix animarum vera”. Cf. G. BAROFFIO, “Tabella dei Titoli Mariani”, appendice al suo articolo “Mater Virgo Regina. Maria nei testi liturgici e devozionali del XII secolo”, in *Theotokos* 18 (2010) 486. Both in the Orthodox Church, the Latin Church and in SHL it is understood that Mary “saves” through and in her special union with Christ, the only Saviour of the world, and by bringing the faithful to him.

*others to love You. Take my poor sinful heart to Thyself and do not give it back to me, until it becomes a flaming fire of Your Love. I know that I am unworthy to come to You, but take me to Thyself and cleanse me by the flames of Your Love. Take me to Thyself and use me as it pleases You, for I am entirely Yours. Amen.*

*O Pure Love! O Holy Love! Pierce me with Your arrows and let my blood flow into the wounds of the Immaculate Heart! O Immaculate Heart! Unite with the Sacred Heart to give life, to comfort, to glorify and to love. Amen.*

*O Jesus! O Mary! You are the Hearts of Love. I love You! Consume me. I am Your victim of Love! Amen.*

*O Hearts of Love! Consume me. I am Your victim of Love! Amen.*

The language of the prayer belongs to the level of mystical/spousal language, as can be found in some Psalms and in the Song of Songs, in most of the Fathers of the Church, and many saints and theologians of all times.<sup>830</sup> It is the language of passionate love and must be analysed as such. The Prayer summarizes and reveals the spirituality of the congregation, which is deeply connected with the Holy Eucharist and with the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, in the sense of a necessary response.

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist, “culmen et fons” of all liturgy, is also the beginning and the centre of the spirituality of the Hearts of Love, as “vinculum caritatis” and “sacramentum unitatis” with Christ and with each other. It is the primary way for seeking union with God and the members of the Church. The Prayer of the Hearts of Love has a devotional language and spirit, which has the function to make the celebration of the Holy Eucharist more fruitful in the hearts of the faithful. It can be hoped for that the Church will one day count the devotion of the Hearts of Love among the sacramentals, among the pious exercises which are in harmony with the liturgy, respecting its spirit, norms and rhythms. It is meant to direct the people towards the liturgy and the Paschal mystery by arousing the spirit of genuine love and self-offering to God and his purifying and piercing action. Jesus, who out of love for God and men handed himself over to men and accepted to die - in physical reality on the cross and sacramentally in the faithful, as a sacrifice<sup>831</sup>

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<sup>830</sup> It cannot be asserted that the Prayer of the Hearts of Love takes inspiration from the Holy Scriptures in the way Paul VI saw as necessary in MC 30, in order to give new vigour to the cult towards the Virgin. The text demands for the purpose of renewal that Marian prayers and songs should not only take up Biblical symbols (e.g. the heart), but take its wordings and inspiration from there. He also wished in MC 30 that Marian prayers shall be permeated by the great themes of the Christian message. The offering of oneself to God in love through Christ (and Mary), and the desire for the salvation of all is at the very heart of that message. Thus, the relationship between the Holy Scriptures and this Prayer can be qualified as a personal response to the Love of God revealed in the Bible, and inspired by it. The Prayer has spread noteworthy in the whole world, through leaflets and the internet; thus, it could be worthwhile that the CDWDS, according to the norms of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, n. 70, would one day issue a note with its own judgement on the prayer and devotion of the Hearts of Love.

<sup>831</sup> On the sacrifice of thanksgiving, “zebah todah”, for which the Jews use bread and a cup of wine, which will be raised with the proclamation of the Name of God, cf. G. ODASSO, “L’Eucaristia, ‘santo e immacolato sacrificio’”, in *Culmine e Fonte* 17,4 (2010)12-13, quoting la *Pesikta*, de-Rab Kahana 9,12 (ed. B. Mandelbaum 159): “‘Nel mondo che deve venire finiranno tutti i sacrifici, ma il sacrificio *todah* non finirà in eterno; finiranno anche tutti i canti, ma i canti *todah* non finiranno in eterno’. Questo detto ci permette di conoscere l’importanza che aveva il sacrificio *todah* al tempo di Gesù e coestensivamente ci offre la chiave per comprendere il significato della stessa istituzione dell’Eucaristia. Gesù, prima di morire e accettando di dare la propria vita come ‘servo del Signore’, anticipa sulla terra il sacrificio di ringraziamento proprio del mondo della risurrezione. Egli [...] spezza il pane come segno della sua vita risorta partecipata a tutti i credenti; egli, inoltre, alza il calice e proclama la salvezza dell’alleanza che Dio realizzerà attraverso la sua morte.”

eaten under the appearance of bread, is raised again by the Father into the “new life” in the heart of the faithful, thus renewing sacramentally his death and resurrection, in which Mary participated spiritually, making the faithful to participate in it also. In the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, the faithful, at the end of a *crescendo* of expressions of love, in which they hand themselves over to Jesus and Mary, ask them to eat, to “consume” the person praying, body and soul, as the faithful consume Jesus in the Sacrament.<sup>832</sup> As the persons of the Holy Trinity dwell in one another (*pericóresis/circuminsessio*), the person praying the prayer of Love wishes to dwell in God and to allow God to dwell in him, conscious of the Christian vocation to become “Body of Christ”, a body in and through which Christ executes the will of the Father. It is thus proposed as a response of faith and prayer of thanksgiving at the end of Holy Mass, for the Eucharistic adoration, and as spiritual communion.

The Prayer contains several “Amen”, which divide it into parts. According to the explanation of the founder<sup>833</sup>, the first part (Act of Love) leads to purification of the soul,<sup>834</sup> it is an “act of reparation” which always belongs to the devotion of the Sacred Heart.<sup>835</sup> This “reparation” is not only the childlike attempt to console Jesus in his continued passion in his Body, the Church. It is also an act of solidarity with those brothers and sisters in Christ who have fallen into the disgrace of sin in acts or omissions, which happens to every person continuously.

The act of Love begins with the invocation of Jesus and Mary, after which comes immediately “I”. The “I” is not left to contemplate his needs, but is led to a personal confession of love, connecting the “I” with the “you” in a relationship of love. The next exclamation (“Be appeased!”) concentrates the attention on the “you” of Jesus and Mary, on their sorrow for the many sins committed against God and his plan of salvation.<sup>836</sup> It is an act of penitence. The last short sentence widens the view to “all”, to the whole Church, the whole world and to past, present and future generations, attuning the soul of the person praying to the wish of God that all the souls he created may be saved, as every true prayer is always prayed for all, never excluding anybody, and in union with all the Church.

The second part is an invocation of the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary, a request for transformation and a consecration to Christ and his Mother.<sup>837</sup> Calling on Jesus and Mary as the

<sup>832</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 100 § 2; appendix 3.

<sup>833</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, Art. 63.

<sup>834</sup> To call on the holy names of Jesus and Mary can already be seen as purifying, releasing the soul from earthly things; the declaration of love does the same; the consoling “be appeased” is also a request of forgiveness of one’s sins and the sins of the world. The founder proposes the Prayer of the Hearts of Love often as prayer for repentance and reparation, e.g. after confession.

<sup>835</sup> Reparation(al adoration) and consecration (of persons, communities, mankind) as part of the devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart, cf. CDWDS, *Directory*, n. 171. Other principal practices of the devotion to the Sacred Heart are the Holy Hour and scapulars. Concerning consecrations and becoming members of a confraternity or pious society, or taking the scapular of a religious family, CDWDS, *Orientations and proposals for the celebration of the Marian year 1987-1988* (3/4/1987), n. 86-88, in AAS 79 (1987) 361-433, in English in Salesiana, Manila, 1987, warns of the seriousness of such a pious act and prescribes a proper preparation, to enable the faithful to make their personal decision freely and maturely.

<sup>836</sup> Cf. appendix 4, Father Montfort in a sermon on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011 at Holy Hour: “Every sin rushes to pierce, to slice, to spit at these hearts. The Lord asked me: ‘Please, help me to bear all these injuries! Stay with me, console me!’ The first call comes from pity for the wounded, bleeding Heart. ‘I love you, be appeased!’ The first is to console Him.” Further, on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2011, at Holy Hour: “It is our union with Him which consoles Jesus.”

<sup>837</sup> This part of the prayer is the loving “handing over” of oneself to Jesus and Mary, with the confession of “unworthiness”, which does not deny the great worth of every human being, but contemplates the great gap between the

“Hearts of Love”, the prayer intends honouring their intimate union. This is expressed mainly by the change to singular (“Thyself”) in the second part of the prayer, which prays for a change<sup>838</sup> to love in the faithful: the source of Love and changing agent is only one: God, who is accessible in the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. Mary ‘disappears’ for the moment (in the Prayer of the Hearts of Love), after she helped Christ to bring the faithful into close contact with God.

The third part prays for mystical immolation. The “pure Love”, the “holy Love” is asked to pierce the person praying.<sup>839</sup> This “Love” is clearly the Divinity; it may refer to one or to all the three divine persons.<sup>840</sup> In the piercing, one may think of a request to God of the transverberation, the mystical experience of being pierced through, which causes pain but also annihilates all egoism and fills with love of God.<sup>841</sup> The founder does not interpret it thus, to him the request is not aimed primarily at an experience, but at its consequences: a love of God that banishes all self-love and attachments.<sup>842</sup> This part of the prayer recalls the symbolic meaning of the wound as sign of death, and the symbolic importance of blood as the love and life (cf. Lv 17,11) of the person, which Mary<sup>843</sup> is asked to bring together with herself into the divine Heart of Jesus, and the blood/life

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Creator (and holy Mary) and his creatures in pilgrimage on earth; it is the permission to Jesus and Mary to use the person as an instrument for God’s plan of salvation.

<sup>838</sup> The exchange of heart is traditionally part of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, p. 168, where he quotes the invocation “Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make our hearts like unto Thine.” Cf. also the promise of a new heart in Ezekiel, 18,31; 36,26-27.

<sup>839</sup> The wish to be “pierced” by the Love of God, in order to have part in an experienced way in his passion, and thus, to have one’s heart and thoughts permanently bound to God, has a long tradition in Christian mystics. Cf. Abbot St. COLUMBANUS († 615) (Cf. Instructions 13 on Christ, fount of life, n. 2-3, in *Opera*, s.ed. Dublin 1957, p. 120, published in the British Divine Office, vol. III, p. 474 – Thursday of 21<sup>st</sup> week), Jan Gereecht (Lanspergius, † 1539), Cathusian propagator of the devotion of the Sacred Heart and author of the “Quiver of Divine Love” (*Pharetra divini amoris*; cf. M. Walsh, *A dictionary of devotions*, Burns, Wellwood 1993), St. Teresa of Avila, whose heart is not decayed and shows the wound of a mystical piercing she experienced by the hand of an angel, and St. Rita, who prayed to receive a thorn of His crown, shall be mentioned here; many more could be enumerated. Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, p. 168: “Il desiderio di soffrire con Cristo può certo essere più o meno esplicito, ma non può mancare in nessun cuore cristiano.” Even Song of Songs, 8,6 may be translated as Love’s “arrows are arrows of fire, flames of Yah”. The translation of “arrows” in this passage is testified by St. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, *Sermone in Cantica*, in *PL* 183, col. 932D-933: the love of Christ is the “chosen arrow” that pierced the soul of Mary, model of all Christians, piercing her through, to fill the “virginal breast” completely with love. Some modern OT-Exegetes suggest this translation, e.g. L. SCHWIENHORST-SCHÖNBERGER, “Das Hohelied”, in E. ZENGER et al., *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1995, p. 351. The expression “send my blood flowing into the wounds of the Immaculate Heart. O Immaculate Heart! Unite with the Sacred Heart, to give life, to comfort, to glorify and to love”, recalls the vision Montfort had as a child: Jesus showing him his pale heart, which needs blood, and the promise: “If this heart can turn red again, the world will be saved.” Even as a child he felt that the blood of human beings is not pure enough to be given to Jesus. The solution is to pass through Mary, to give to her our blood/life/love, and to let her present it to God within her own heart. Cf. the description of the vision by Fr. Montfort in TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 12.

<sup>840</sup> It seems adequate to see in Love, wherever it is mentioned in the Prayer of the Two Hearts of Love, a name of the Holy Trinity. Jesus and Mary are together the “heart” of Love in the sense of a dwelling place: both the dwelling place of the Trinitarian Love, and the dwelling place for human beings in heaven, the centre of relationship of the Holy Trinity with mankind.

<sup>841</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 112-113, giving the examples of St. Francis of Assisi (E. CAROLI (ed.), *Fonti Francescane*, Padova 2000<sup>4</sup>, 484-486, 1222-1228; 1375-1376), St. Teresa of Avila (Teresa di Gesù, *Vita*, 29, 10-13) and St. Pio of Pietrelcina (*Epistolario*, S. Giovanni Rotondo 2002<sup>4</sup>, vol. 1, p. 238, 300, 1065).

<sup>842</sup> Cf. appendix 4, Midday Prayer on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011: “This detachment from all is the meaning of the ‘pierce me with your arrows... Unite with the Sacred Heart’. Attach yourself only to the highest, the person” of Christ.

<sup>843</sup> The sentence “Unite with the Sacred Heart to give life, to comfort, to glorify and to love” is unspecific on the subject and on the receiver of life, comfort, glory and love. Thus, it could be understood that the Immaculate Heart will unite the faithful (and herself) to the Sacred Heart, so that they (and the world) may receive life, comfort, glory and love. And/or that she will unite herself (and the faithful and all the world) to the Sacred Heart in order to give life, comfort,

which has become a gift overcomes death: it gives “life”, “comfort” “glory” and “love” to Christ. The Fathers of the desert (the first religious) used to say: ‘give your blood to God and He will give you his Spirit.’<sup>844</sup> To allow oneself to be “wounded by love” and using the “blood” of the “wound” to show love to Jesus unites the creature intimately to Christ, to his life, glory and resurrection. This part of the Prayer is therefore also a consecration to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, but with stronger expressions than before.

The terms of giving oneself are deepened again in the fourth part, which shall lead to “consumption” of the “victim” by the Love of God. Here, the language follows the teaching of St. Therese of the Child Jesus on being a victim of the Love of God. This doctor of the Church wanted to oppose the spirituality of her time, which urged people to offer themselves as victims of God’s justice, giving God the opportunity to pour out his just wrath, accepting the due punishment for the sins of the world. St. Therese, as victim of Love, on 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1895, wanted to give God the opportunity to pour out his Love in fullness, being the recipient of his Love and allowing the Love of God to consume her completely.<sup>845</sup> The “atonement”<sup>846</sup> and the consecration as “victim of Love” in the Hearts of Love, following the teaching of St. Therese has the aim to make good the lack of love from both those who pray and others towards God, considering always one’s own negligence towards the call and promises of God as the greatest sin. The verb “consume” in the Prayer of the Hearts of Love refers also to the cry of Jesus, the first “Victim of Love”, on the cross: “It is consummated!” (Jn 19,30), thus implying, equally to the noun “victim”, a readiness to die for God. This fifth part is used as the SHL “Anthem”.

The last part is reconfirming the readiness for “consumption” in a summary of the whole Prayer, ideally perfecting the union with Jesus and Mary.

The Prayer of the Hearts of Love is propagated by the Society as a prayer of consecration to the Two Hearts, Jesus and Mary in their unity. Whoever prays the prayer as a consecration of oneself or for others, is called by the Society to live a good Christian life, receiving the sacraments

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glory and love to him. Father Montfort specifies in a sermon at Vigil on 10/12/2011, (appendix 4): “‘Pierce me with your arrows...’ Whom do we want to give life, comfort, glory and love? The only answer is ‘Jesus’! Jesus is dying!”

<sup>844</sup> Cf. N. DELL’AGLI, “Eucharistia e guarigione delle ferite”, in CISM (ed.), *L’Eucharistia, guarigione*, p. 59.

<sup>845</sup> The idea of offering oneself to God as “victim of divine Justice” followed a degenerated “theology of sacrifice”, in which the death of Jesus was seen as a necessary sacrifice to appease an annoyed God, a theology which Jews and Moslems accused Christians to follow in the time of St. Anselm of Canterbury († 1109). St. Anselm, in *Cur Deus homo* (1098), trying to overcome such a view in this interreligious dialogue, developed the theory of satisfaction with a juridical language. The order between God and man had been destroyed by sin, thus, it needed either punishment or satisfaction to re-establish the order. The free human decision of Jesus to accept the salvation of God and to give glory to God alone till the death on a cross gave the satisfaction to divine Justice and established the new order of justice (justification of all through faith in Christ). Cf. G. L. MÜLLER, *Katholische Dogmatik*, p. 381-383. This teaching, which was never dogmatized by the Church, neither was it formulated for the internal use of the Church, did not succeed overcoming the popular idea of a God who had to be appeased by a human sacrifice. It came up again and was tightly connected with the devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Many preachers in the time of St. Therese called for prayers and sacrifices to appease God, using the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as a weapon to fight against a certain heresy or wrong morality. The consecration as “holocaust to the Merciful Love of God”, cf. THERESE VOM KINDE JESUS, *Selbstbiographische Schriften*, p. 185-187, 280-282. The “victimhood” has a long tradition in the Christian mystic. It can be traced back to the victims of all times and religions – cf. footnote 125 on sacrifices. The theological-spiritual concept of “victim” is founded also on the Pauline spirituality of offering oneself to God as his servant. Thysian in Rm 12,1 (“offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him”, in Latin translated as “hostia”, can be called victim, sacrifice or offering. Prosforá in Rm 15,16 (“be an offering acceptable to God”), in Latin “oblata”, can be translated as the (act of) offering, the oblation, the victim, the sacrifice. In the classical Greek, it bears also the connotation of food and eating. Cf. L. ROCCI, *Vocabulario greco-italiano*, Alighieri, Milano 1968<sup>21</sup>, p. 900 and p. 1607.

regularly and doing works of charity within the personal capacity, and to pray the Prayer of the Hearts of Love steadily, at least once a day. The consecration is done with a personal confession of love for Jesus and Mary, adding one's name in the first line: "Jesus Mary, I, Peter, love You! Be appeased. Save all souls! Amen. O Hearts of Love! [...] I am Your victim of Love! Amen."<sup>847</sup> The Prayer can be chanted, and thus it is used in SHL as Communion song and as homage to Our Lady before the final blessing. Sometimes the Prayer of the Hearts of Love is being prayed in the form of a rosary. It is done in the spirit of the "ruminatio" of the Fathers of the Church: "chewing" a prayer in its parts and as a whole, speaking it out again and again, in order to let it sink into the depth of the heart.<sup>848</sup>

A people needs, apart from a common language, also unifying symbols that keep the members aware of their common root in a vocation that called all alike. In a sacred image

«The invisible seems, it appears in a semblance (\*eikō/\*eoika) which, however, never reduces the invisible to the slackened wave of the visible. [...] The icon [...] attempts to render visible the invisible as such, hence to allow the visible not cease to refer to another than itself, without, however, that the other being reproduced in the visible. Thus the icon shows, strictly speaking, nothing [...]. It teaches the gaze, thus does not cease to correct it in order that it go back from visible to visible as far as the end of infinity, to find in infinity something new.»<sup>849</sup>

For the SHL, there is the "Image of the Hearts of Love",<sup>850</sup> which consists of very simple symbols: a red and white circle around a white cross, covered and surrounded by red drops (of blood). Being very simple, it evokes the mystery of the Holy Trinity (circle with cross at the centre)<sup>851</sup>, the life and passion of Christ, to which Mary is united, the Holy Eucharist (the white circle with the cross at the centre), the mystery of the Church and the structure of the SHL: God at the centre; all members united with Jesus and circling around him. Whoever aspires to be in a leading function in the Society must strive to be nearer to the Two Hearts of Love by showing greater love of God and neighbour than others. Thus the members are grouped in "circles" around the centre with always less obligations towards the "outskirts"; the last members are those who receive help as counselling from the Society without immediate reaction of praising God (the sick, the poor, the troubled), and those who love the name of Hearts of Love but do not undertake to pray the Prayer, both adults and little children.<sup>852</sup>

Not containing a picture of material hearts, the image of the Hearts of Love should not be repugnant to the Orthodox Christians, nor does it follow the sweetish art of the devotional market in modern time, which many Western people do not like to see again. It is used in a slightly different form on the prayer leaflets and everything published by the Society. As every holy picture, the Image of the Hearts of Love is a form of catechism, stimulating to the imitation of Christ and Mary,

<sup>846</sup> *Original Constitutions*, Art. 62; appendix 3

<sup>847</sup> In the case of praying for others: "Jesus! Mary! On behalf of John/my wife/the whole world/the Boko Haram people, I love you!..."

<sup>848</sup> Also St. Francis taught his brothers this technique. Cf. A. ROTZETTER, "Lebensgeschichte", p. 69.

<sup>849</sup> Cf. J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, p. 17-18.

<sup>850</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 36-37 (appendix 3).

<sup>851</sup> Cf. the sermon on 18/9/2004, at Morning Mass in Neunkirchen, appendix 4: "In the middle Jesus; the two circles, white and red: the Trinity enabling the Incarnation and the Redemption on the cross. The Trinity made the union of the Two Hearts of Love possible. [...] Das Abbild: Gott der Vater und der Geist umgeben Jesus, das Kreuz, der in der Mitte ist: Brennend, blutend. Maria ist mit Jesus vereint." In this view of the founder, no element in the Image "depicts" Mary; she is present through her union with Jesus, who is symbolized by the cross.

<sup>852</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 24-38 (appendix 3).



and it brings to the faithful a certain presence of the mysteries depicted or symbolised.<sup>853</sup> It is thus helping a group of the faithful to unite in one prayer direction, and creating a holy atmosphere in an ordinary room.

#### 2.4.4. The “Sanctuary” and Centres of the Hearts of Love

Every family needs a place to share life together. The founder, in beginning the Society, founded a place conducive to prayer, for the devotion of the Hearts of Love. Consequently, those who wished to follow this devotion came to that place. Anywhere the Society has some strong members, they try to establish a Centre of the Hearts of Love, following in a diminished way the first Centre (at Orlu), usually called the “Sanctuary” of the Hearts of Love.<sup>854</sup> Sanctuaries serve a people as a place for coming together for special prayer and to experience pilgrimage.<sup>855</sup> SHL has the aim of building up spiritual centres, hoping that they will become sanctuaries of the Hearts of Love. The “Sanctuary” of the Hearts of Love in Orlu has already become a place of grace to many, but it is not yet canonically recognized.

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<sup>853</sup> Two “promises of the Hearts of Love” are connected with the Image: “I promise, any person who even once kisses the Image of the Two Hearts of Love, will have the seal engraved in theirs.” “Any home that exposes and honours the Image of the Two Hearts of Love will be free from sudden death, and I will prevent any mortal sin from being committed in that room.” Both appendix 2. The Spiritual Director will give the Image only to persons and families whom he knows as serious members of the Society.

<sup>854</sup> “Sanctuary” is in inverted commas, as a Catholic sanctuary according to the definition of the CIC, apart from being the goal of pilgrims, needs the approval of the local Ordinary, in the case of an international sanctuary the approval of the Holy See (CIC, Can. 1230-1231). For this purpose a sanctuary is to have its own Constitutions on their aim, on the authority of the Rector and on the administration of goods. (CIC, Can 1233). Usually, Catholic sanctuaries begin to exist because people believe in the special help or nearness of God (directly or through a saint or angel) in a certain place, combined with a relic or remembrance of a saint (or Jesus himself) who lived there, with a miraculously not decaying consecrated host, with an apparition, with a picture or statue, e.g. the Holy Land, the Sacred Shroud of Turin, Rome with its many sanctuaries dedicated to various saints, Ephesus, Flüeli (Switzerland), Santiago de Compostela, Lanciano, Guadalupe, Fatima, Monte Gargano, Lujan. Many “sanctuaries” in Europe began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, as Andechs (after 1458), Einsiedeln (1466), Altötting (1489), Mariazell (1494). Cf. PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLA PASTORALE PER I MIGRANTI E GLI ITINERANTI, *Il santuario. Memoria, presenza e profezia del Dio vivente* (8/5/1999), LEV, Città del Vaticano 1999. For mainly Marian sanctuaries cf. G. BESUTTI, “Santuari”, in *NDM*, p. 1127-1145, L. M. DE CANDIDO, “Santuari”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 1050-1059, S. M. PERRELLA, *Impronte di Dio*, p 412-425. Sanctuaries exist in every part of the world, in every religion and in every time, always denominating a place seen as a place which God or a saint has “visited” or chosen as a “dwelling place”, usually accompanied by the experience of miracles, oracles or revelations. A “holy place” can also be founded by human initiative, as Pharaoh Ikhnaton († ca. 1352 BC) built the “holy town” of his god Aton. Sanctuaries are preferred places of cult and search for illumination; as such they are sometimes taken up by other religions who give them new significance, as Islam took up the sanctuary of “Ka’ba” in Mecca, or as Hindus visit Christian sanctuaries. In other cases, a sanctuary is built over the remains of an ancient temple as a sign of victory. The main sanctuaries of Islam, Mecca and Medina, are defined as such by the Koran, but Iraqi Moslems venerate also the burial place of some relations of Mohammed. Cf. G. LANCZKOWSKI, “Heilige Stätten I”, in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 14, p. 672-675. Nigeria, being a young Church, has not yet any officially acknowledged Catholic Sanctuary, as far as is known to the author. Some people in Nigeria travel far to attend special “services”, usually not because a place is seen as holy, but rather because of a certain person who is renowned as powerful in prayer, is present there.

<sup>855</sup> The first Christian pilgrimages were journeys of single persons, going to the Holy Land, Rome and the graves of martyrs, sometimes they remained there to continue in prayer. In the late MA, groups began to make pilgrimages, on the occasion of a feast or on the recurrence of a collective vow (e.g. in time of pestilence), generally to places that can be reached on foot within a day. The pilgrimage was organized in the way of a procession. The need to have a goal for pilgrimage not too far away multiplied the “sanctuaries” in Europe. K. GUTH, “Marien-Wallfahrten im Christentum. Zur Kulturgeschichte, Phänomenologie und Theologie der Wallfahrt”, in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *De cultu Mariano saeculo XX. Maria, Mater Domini, in mysterio salutis quod ad Orientis et Occidentis Ecclesiis in Spiritu Sancto hodie celebratur. Acta congressus mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in Santuario Mariano Czeszochoviensi Anno 1996 celebrati. Sectio Anglo Americana et Germanica*, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2000, p. 189-193.

In the Bible, God chose places where he gave special experiences of his presence, as Mt. Sinai or Mt. Tabor. Though the initiative of the founding of a sanctuary is from God, by giving special graces, the building, the up keeping, the organization of pilgrimages to the place: all these activities are in the freedom of human beings. It is the number and provenance of pilgrims to a place of prayer, which makes the Church recognize the place as local, national or international sanctuary. Furthermore, a church can be built in the simple intention of honouring Mary, as Pope Sixtus III did in 432, building the Basilica of St. Mary Major, the first known church in the West dedicated to Mary.<sup>856</sup> It subsequently developed into an international sanctuary.

Places of prayer need an atmosphere of silence, of being removed from worldly business. The “Sanctuary” of the Hearts of Love began in the bush<sup>857</sup>, on farmland far from the busy roads of the town, allowing the exercise of the above described pious acts typical of the members of the Society as bowing and prostrating. Concerning the importance of sanctuaries, it is to be noted that they derive from the human need of having times and spaces reserved for prayer. God is not bound to a place, he rather walks with his people on their pilgrimage, or he calls/permits them to follow him, cf. Genesis to Deuteronomy; Micah 6,8; the Gospels, especially Lk 24,13-31.

A sanctuary is generally characterised by its life (of prayer and charity), history and very often by works of fine arts as a statue or a picture held as “miraculous” by the people.<sup>858</sup> The life of the “Sanctuary” of the Hearts of Love in Orlu, Nigeria, consists of a common prayer timetable as described above. Holy Mass takes place according to the indications of the local ordinary. Acts of charity are especially care for the sick, who come to the place for prayers, and teaching: catechism and consultation are offered. The OT prophets remind all that the cult must be united to social equity (e.g. Is. 66,1-4, Jer. 7,1-15), so that the rituals absolve their duty of bringing the people into union by worshipping God. In Zec 8,20-23, the sanctuary is seen as place of assembly and peace of all peoples: through worship of God, universal unity is achieved. The beginning and the short history of the “Sanctuary of the Hearts of Love” depend on personal experiences of Father Montfort in this place;<sup>859</sup> some experiences, as hearing angelic voices singing the anthem of the Hearts of Love around the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, have occurred also to other members.<sup>860</sup> Important art works are not yet present in the “Sanctuary”, with the exception of the beautiful monstrances; the main image is the “Image of the Hearts of Love” described above, in its symbolic simplicity. Ex-voto (i.e. pictures, marbles or other signs telling the grace the person has received) have not yet been donated to the sanctuary, although some stories of healings are circulating; such has not yet become part of the popular piety in Nigeria.

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<sup>856</sup> Cf. G. MEAOLO, “Dedicazione di S. Maria Maggiore”, in *NDM*, p. 417-418. He dedicated it to the divine Motherhood of Mary, on the occasion of the conclusion of the Council of Ephesus (431), and near the place where Pope Liberius (352-366) erected a previous basilica, which may have been destroyed shortly after his death.

<sup>857</sup> As the founder did not have his own parish, where he could have started it.

<sup>858</sup> Cf. G. LANCZKOWSKI, “Heilige Stätten I”, in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 14, p. 672-675.

<sup>859</sup> According to his comments to the author, it was in the sanctuary (at Umuchima) that he saw the Image of the Hearts of Love in the sky; he sometimes spoke of directions from God on how to build there (in Orlu), as “simple, lasting, but majestic”; there he saw an angel wearing the future habit of the sisters of the Hearts of Love, (without scapular, which he saw only on 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1998, in Germany) long before the first noviciate was opened; there he received many messages.

<sup>860</sup> Some sisters gave such a testimony to the author.

#### 2.4.5. The proclamation of the union of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary

The image of the united Hearts of the Saviour and his first disciple which recalls the totality of all Marian Biblical passages and dogmatic teachings of the Church (cf. sub-chapter 3.3.) gives to the Society a common hope for the future: the fact that one human being is *perfectly* united with the one who is the “way”, is the light of hope for all mankind in their search for God. The intimate, indissoluble union of the Hearts of Love is proclaimed by the Society through teaching and in their prayers.

The Catholic tradition has different ways of describing in human language the union of man and Christ: it is called “imitation of Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 11,1), which stresses the effort of man to live as Jesus did; or “following Christ” (cf. Mt 4,19), which stresses the dynamic side, and the aspect of leaving all other things, or, as the founder prefers, “uniting with Christ” (cf. Gal 5,6), which stresses the interpersonal relationship and the free gift of acceptance from the side of Jesus, referring also both to the active aspect of doing and speaking like Christ (Cf. Eph 4,15: “by speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head.”) and the contemplative aspect of loving God like Christ. (Cf. Eph 3,12: “In union with Christ and through our faith in him we have the boldness to go into God’s presence with all confidence.”)

The devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary has a long history in the Church.<sup>861</sup> It developed in the West historically (together with other devotions) in the Benedictine and Cistercian Medieval spirituality,<sup>862</sup> due to a Medieval special attention to the sacred humanity of Christ, which

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<sup>861</sup> Some indications on the development and the significance of the devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary will be seen in sub-chapter 3.1., where various meanings of the term ‘heart’ are treated. The Biblical meditations on the pierced side of Christ (Jn 19,34-37) and his being meek and humble of heart (Mt 11,29), and on the heart of Mary pondering on all the events around Jesus (Lk 2,19 and 51) are well known; they were continued by the Fathers of the Church in East and West, but they were not yet using the heart as a title or name.

<sup>862</sup> In the Western European MA we have an occasional praising mentioning of the heart of Mary, and the meditation on some Biblical passages as the pierced side of Christ. The Latin Hymn 2 of CELIO SEDULIO (5<sup>th</sup> century, a poet of the Latin liturgy, active mainly between 425 and 450, at the time of the Council of Ephesus; Hymn 2 was used for the liturgy in Christmastide) mentions the heart of Mary indirectly, talking of her pure breast (“pectoris”) in *PL* 19, 764B. The Italian Benedictine St. Anselm, bishop of Canterbury († 1109) wrote on the Heart of Jesus (cf. F. HOLBÖCK, *Aufblick zum Durchbohrten*, p. 80), his secretary and biographer EADMER († 1124), a Benedictine monk of Canterbury, wrote on the Heart of Mary, praising her faith at the annunciation in *De Excellentia Virginis Mariae*, 3, in *PL* 159, col. 561C, (“mundatum cor [...], ipsam voluntati Dominicae castissimo ac simplici corde obedientem omni holocausto suavius acceptaret”). The contemporary German Benedictine Rupert von Deutz also spoke of the heart of the Virgin. (Cf. P. H. GÖRG, “Die Verehrung des Herzens Mariens bei den deutschen Mystikerinnen des 13. Jahrhunderts”, in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 73, quoting J. LÉCUYER, “Rupert de Deutz et la devotion au Coeur de Marie”, in *ActaConMar* (1975) II, s.ed., Rome 1981 p. 323-344.) On St. Anselm, Eadmer and Rupert von Deutz cf. L. GAMBERO, *Maria nel pensiero*, p. 125-154. St. Bernard of Clairvaux and his friend, abbot Guillaume de Saint-Thierry († 1148) wrote explicitly on the mystery of the Heart of Christ as his “Intimum”. Cf. F. HOLBÖCK, *Aufblick zum Durchbohrten*, Christiana, Stein an Rhein 1990, p. 80. He presented Mary as a model of monastic life saying that the ‘heart of the King’ was moved by love for her. Cf. M. F. RIGHI, “La presenza della Beata Vergine”, p. 620-621, 626, quoting St. Bernard, *Praise of the Virgin mother*, homily 2, par. 2. In *Super Missus est* IV, St. Bernard says that Mary conceived “in devotissimo corde atque hilarissimo [most joyful]”. In *PL* 183, col. 82B. Arnald of Bonneval/Chartres (Abbot of the Benedictine monastery Bona Vallis, † after 1156), friend and biographer of St. Bernard, says that on Golgotha the sacrifice was offered on two altars contemporarily: on the altar in the body of Christ and the altar in the breast of Mary: “Nimirum in tabernaculo illo duo videres altaria, aliud in pectore Mariae, aliud in corpore Christi. Christus carnem, Maria immolabat animam.” ARNALD OF BONNEVAL, *Tractatus de septem verbis Domini in cruce. Tractatus tertius*, in *PL* 189, col. 1694B-C. (The heart of Christ is likened to the altar of incense in the Holy of holies; Mary’s heart is compared to the altar of the bread in front of the curtain. ” On Arnald of Bonneval, cf. L. GAMBERO, *Maria nel pensiero*, p. 177-184, and I. CECCHETTI, “Arnaldo (Arnaldo, Ernaldo), abate di Bonneval”, in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. 1, col. 2000. FRANCON D’AFLIGHEM, (abbot in the Belgian Benedictine monastery from 1109-1130) *De gratia Dei*, 6, in *PL* 166, col. 747B, mentioned Mary “mundissimo cordi”, and the Austrian GODEFROID D’ADMONT, (†

is his instrument of mediation of his divinity to mankind, and to the communion of saints. Especially mentioned shall be the German Benedictine Abbot Ekbert of Schönau († 1184),<sup>863</sup> who composed in 1170 a first (known) Biblically inspired *prayer to the heart of Mary* (praising it in its quality as temple of God), mentioning also the heart of the Son of God (before the incarnation), and another prayer in which Mary is asked to ‘speak to the heart’ of Jesus on behalf of the faithful, in her ‘loving embrace with the Son’ and in the ‘joy of her heart’, showing a clear underlying concept of union of Jesus and Mary. Barré sustains that the Patristic meditation on the “pierced side” was transferred to the Sacred Heart, the Patristic praise of the “pure womb” was transferred to the Immaculate Heart.<sup>864</sup> The attention to the Hearts of both Jesus and Mary flowered especially in the

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1165) *Homilia 31. In Festum Annuntiationis B. Mariae Virginis quinta*, in *PL* 174, col. 769D and 770B (767-773), spoke of the Virgin “sanctissimi cordis” (also in a homily on the Assumption, in *PL* 174, 966A). Cf. H. BARRE, “Une prière d’Ekbert de Schönau au saint Coeur de Marie”, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 2 (1952) 413 in footnote 16 and p. 417, footnote 33. An anonymous Cistercian monk of Pontigny of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, applying in a psalter praise of Mary the beatitude of Jesus of the “pure in heart” to Mary: “munda corde”. *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi* 35, quoted in G. BAROFFIO, “Tabella dei Titoli Mariani”, appendice al suo articolo “Mater Virgo Regina”, p. 480. The Cistercian nun St. Luitgard of Tongern/Aywières († 1246) is the first known person who had a vision of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Cf. F. HOLBÖCK, *Aufblick zum Durchbohrten*, p. 80. It is situated in the frame of the Christocentric Marian Cisterciensan devotion. The spirituality of the Two Hearts can be called familiar to the Medieval spirituality at large, to which most religious Orders of Medieval existence contributed. Cf. F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 18 and E. DAL COVOLO – A. SERRA (ed.), *Storia della Mariologia*, the whole chapter 7 with contributions of various authors (“Modello medievale: paradigma monastico e mendicante”), vol. 1, p. 593-840. Cf. also U. BLEYENBERG, “Die dogmatischen Grundlagen und die pastorale Bedeutung der Herz-Marien-Verehrung nach Leo Scheffczyk”, in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 313.)

<sup>863</sup> According to H. Barré, Ekbert, brother, spiritual director and author of the written records of the visions of the Benedictine mystic St. Elisabeth († 1164) of Schönau near Bonn, was influenced by St. Bernard and by the Augustinian mystic Hugo of St. Victor († 1141); his prayers had large diffusion in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century and were known to Richard of St. Laurent and to St. Jean Eudes. Cf. H. BARRE, “Une prière d’Ekbert de Schönau au saint Coeur de Marie”, p. 409-411. The visions of God/Jesus, Mary, saints, angels and demons followed mainly the liturgical year, they were described briefly with the impression they give, and there is an ample response of prayer from Elisabeth. The term “heart” can be found only referring to Elisabeth. Cf. ECKBERTUS ABBATE SCHONAUGENSE, *De Sancta Elisabeth Virgine. Magistra Sororum Ordinis S. Benedicti*, in *PL* 195, col. 113B-118, and *Sanctae Elisabeth Vita*, in *PL* 195, col. 119-194, and P. H. GÖRG, “Die Verehrung des Herzens Mariens”, p. 73. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und “Wunderglaube”*, p. 166, footnote 638 quotes A. Poulain, K. Köster, M. Schrader and Eusebius Amort as theologians who wrote studies on St. Elisabeth of Schönau, sustaining that her brother Ekbert turned her visions of living the liturgical year in a mystic way into visionary answers for ecclesial problems of the time (especially to fight the Cathari). These authors believe that Ekbert made the sister to ask questions which disturbed the self-abandonment to God, treating the apparitions as an oracle and turning the authentic mystical experience into self-deceit.

<sup>864</sup> Cf. H. BARRE, “Une prière d’Ekbert de Schönau au saint Coeur de Marie”, p. 416-417. The prayer mentioning the hearts of Jesus and Mary is part of a “homily” which is a single long prayer of praise to Mary. The part which is here interesting is published in Migne under the name of Pauli Diaconi, *Homilia LII. In nativitate Beatae Mariae Virginis* in *PL* 95, in 1518D, and with little additions (in brackets) as “spuria” of St. Bernard, *Sermo panegyricus as beatam virginem Deiparam* in *PL* 184, in 1014B: “Et quis tam idoneus, ut (pro nobis) loquatur ad cor Domini nostri Jesu Christi, (sic)ut tu, felix Maria, quae in secretissimis amplexibus amantissimi Filii tui (suaviter) (re)cubas in meridie sempiterno, ejusque familiarissimo colloquio, cum plena cordis laetitia perfrueris?” The prayer to the heart of Mary was published in 1884 by F. W. E. ROTH in *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth und die Schriften der Aebte Ekbert und Emencho*, s.ed., Brün 1884, p. 286-287. It uses again the phrase of “talking to the heart”, and contemplates the role of the purity of Mary and her heart in the mystery of the incarnation: “(Soliloquium ad b. mariam Ekeberti abbatis, fratris Elisabeth sanctimonialis.) Loquar ad cor tuum, o Maria, loquar ad cor tuum mundum, domina mundi, et adorabo ad templum sanctum dei [...]. Salutabo ex precordiis meis immaculatum cor tuum, quod primum sub sole suscipere dignum fuit egredientem de sinu patris filium dei.” Then followed “Salutationes” in Patristic style, obviously still directed to the heart of Mary, symbolizing her whole person: “Salve, sanctuarium singulare, quod sanctificavit sibi deus in spiritu sancto. Salve sanctum sanctorum, quod dedicavit summus Pontiff introitu suo (Hebr. IX). Salve archa sanctificationis (Ps. 131, 8) continens in te scripturam digiti dei. [...]. Cui comparabo, vel cui assimilabo beatitudinem cordis tui, Maria?” A third part are “Congratulationis salutatio”, bringing in the idea that the incarnation was the beginning of salvation, and that the faith of Mary in Lk 1,38 drew Christ to become man: “Vivas, vivas, et in eternum gaudeas, o sanctum, o amantissimum cor, in quo salus mundi initiate est, in quo pacem ferens mundo humanitatem divinitas

German Cistercian female convent of Helfta since its foundation in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>865</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the devotion to the two Hearts began to spread widely in the Church.<sup>866</sup> Beginning at the

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osculata est. Jubilo sempiterno implearis, [...] que sicienti nostram salutem superno regi probatissime fidei dulce poculum propinasti in illa hora, qua ad salutationem archangeli eructasti verbum bonum (Ps. XLIV, 2) [...]. Tunc oblectasti, tunc inebriasti cor eius in tantum, ut iam ex tunc hilarior de celo suo clamitet dicens: Delicie mee esse cum filiis hominum (Prov. VIII, 31). Magnificet te omnis anima, o mater dulcetudinis, et beatitudinem cordis tui, unde salus nostra profluxit". In *Ibidem*, p. 252, quoting the prayer of Ekbert *Super Magificat*, the involvement of the heart of Mary at conception and in the pregnancy is underlined, and the reciprocal love between Jesus and his mother. Cf. H. BARRE, "Une prière d'Ekbert de Schönau au saint Coeur de Marie", p. 410-423, quotations p. 412-414. P. H. GÖRG, "Die Verehrung des Herzens Mariens", p. 74 says, based on two German studies of Medard BARTH in the *Zeitschrift für Ascese und Mystik* (1927 and 1929) on the veneration of the Heart of Mary in handwritten prayer booklets of the MA, that especially Dominicans and also Franciscans helped in the spreading of such devotions from one monastery to the next.

<sup>865</sup> The community was founded in 1229 and moved to Helfta in 1258. It was then a center of the German mysticism through the presence of St. Mechthilde of Hackeborn († 1299), St. Gertrude the Great († 1302) and Mechthilde of Magdeburg († ca. 1283). Helfta was influenced by Dominicans and by the residing priest Otto. The "Minne", the poetic love of the MA towards God, a bridal mysticism, the contemplation of the heavenly "court" of "king" Jesus and the contemplation/veneration of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary were outstanding. St. Mechthilde of Hackeborn became at 20 in 1261 the teacher of (among others) the 5 years old orphan Gertrude. Only after 1290, bedridden, she spoke of her visions. The full text is quoted in P. H. Görg as *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechthildianae II: Sanctae Mechthildis Virginis Ordinis Sancti Benedicti Liber specialis gratiae; accedit Sororis Mechthildis eiusdem Ordinis Lux Divinitatis. Opus ad codicum fidem nunc primum integre editum Solesmensium OSB Monachorum cura et opera apud Henricum Oudin Fratres*, Pictavii Parisiis 1877, II, 1-421. Quoting a German translation (the first two 'books' of seven), Görg presents a "revelation" of Jesus, which exhorted St. Mechthilde to greet the 'virginal heart' of the mother because of her many treasures with which she helps mankind. These treasures are not the merits of Christ, but the virtues of Mary: being most pure, most humble, most desiring Christ, most faithfully paying attention to Jesus, most patient in bearing sorrow, most obedient to the will of God in the passion of Christ, most caring in prayer for the young Church, most assiduous in contemplation. Jesus taught Mechthilde to go first to the 'purest heart' of the Virgin to imitate her, and thus, to come to God. In a vision, the heart of Mary becomes her throne of sapphire (the colour which in St. Hildegard of Bingen is reserved for the godhead shows here the glorification of Mary), decorated with pearls (symbolising her virginity). Görg sees in Mechthilde a strong connection between the "loving Heart" of Mary and the "Heart of the Lord", especially as a fountain of sweetness and consolation for Mechthilde. Cf. P. H. GÖRG, "Die Verehrung des Herzens Mariens", p. 76-78; cf. also MECHTHILD VON HACKEBORN, *Das Buch vom strömenden Lob*, Herder, Freiburg 2001, e.g. p. 50. Mechthilde von Magdeburg lived ca. 40 years as a "beguine", i.e. she lived unmarried, in prayer and works of charity, but not in a monastery, which that time was the only possibility for women to live a recognized religious life. She entered the monastery of Helfta when she was ca. 60 years old. She also had famous visions, also emphasising the love of Mary. Her heart is contemplated in book 5,23 as 'seat' of God who entered the world: Jesus is born out of her heart; it is contemplated as deeply involved in the passion, and as treasury of divine wisdom. Cf. P. H. GÖRG, "Die Verehrung des Herzens Mariens", p. 79-81, referring to a German critical edition of her work, MECHTHILD VON MAGDEBURG, *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit. Nach der Einsiedler Handschrift in kritischem Vergleich mit der gesamten Überlieferung herausgegeben von Hans Neumann*, s.ed., München 1990 (vol.1) and 1993 (vol. 2). St. Gertrude studied in the monastery Latin, the Bible, the Fathers, St. Bernard and Hugo of St. Victor. With 25 years she received her first vision, and 8 years later the call to write down her experiences, which she did in the *Legatus divinae pietatis*. Görg quotes the *Legatus* 4,12, in which Gertrud had a vision during Mass on the feast of the Annunciation. When the 'Hail Mary' was sung, she saw the Holy Trinity communicate (in the image of three torrents) power, wisdom and meekness into the heart of the virginal mother, and it was added that she understood that this happens every time the Angel's greeting is prayed with devotion. Cf. P. H. GÖRG, "Die Verehrung des Herzens Mariens", p. 81-83. Generally in Gertrude, Mary appears mostly as receiver of the grace and love of God. The main attention is given to Christ. Cf. GERTRUD DIE GROßE, *Gesandter der göttlichen Liebe*, Herder, Freiburg 2001: in almost every chapter the heart of Jesus is mentioned or adored, Mary is mentioned often, but her heart only a few times: the heart 'most innocent and glowing with love', p. 260, the heart 'of motherly love', p. 261, the heart 'full of maternal love', p. 373, Mary that speaks with the 'heart to the heart of my [Mary's] beloved Son' to intercede for the sisters, p. 381; in the vision in p. 382, Jesus sends the song of his filial love from his heart through many little golden tubes into the heart of his mother, as Gertrude begged him to make good her own lack of love for Mary. Görg concludes on p. 83, that the Hearts of Jesus and Mary are seen in Helfta as involved in the communication between Jesus and Mary, and between the two and the faithful.

<sup>866</sup> Cf. T. MARSCHLER, "Das Herz Mariens", p. 86: in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, St. Jean Eudes took up a long heritage of devotion to the hearts of Jesus and Mary in the spirituality of religious, in mystic experiences and in the popular piety, with impulses from the spiritual world of the Baroque time, especially St. Francis de Sales, Bérulle and his school. For

end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, till the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the devotion to the Sacred Hearts, which had gained great renown in the Church, began to play a role in politics: baroque (triumphalistic), anti-enlightenment and anti-modernist Catholicism (of which the Two Hearts were already part) was used as an exterior sign of refusal of freemasons, atheistic rationalists, French revolutionists, etc. The call to “atonement”, the call to “comfort Jesus” for the sins of the world, (which belongs to the devotion of the Two Hearts and) which was originally a call to penitence to every human being, became an accusing finger against others. The devotion which should unite human beings in the Love of God became the sign of separation between “we (faithful!) Catholics” and the “rebels against God’s order”.<sup>867</sup>

In the proclamation of the Hearts of Love such misuse of the devotion to the Sacred Hearts must be shunned, by praying for “*all* souls” and avoiding any triumphalistic expression, using a poetic-mystical language, and stressing the theological importance (nearness to the Easter mystery) of the union of the Two Hearts as reason for the cult rendered to them. Furthermore, the consecration to the Hearts must not be propagated as a magical assurance for better life or automatic deeper faith: the freedom of man is never supplanted.

In SHL, the “emphasis is not just on honouring the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, rather the emphasis is on honouring them together as united.”<sup>868</sup> The understanding of the union of Jesus and Mary avoids the danger of presenting Mary as a somehow autonomous mediator between God and man (Mariological maximalism, where Mary may be accused as taking the place of the Holy Spirit), or of seeing her as a mere model and example of the grace of God to be admired or imitated (Mariological minimalism, the veneration of Mary thus becomes a free option, and there is no qualitative difference between the Mother of God and any other saint).<sup>869</sup>

Mary, with her whole heart, i.e. person, will, affection, reason, body and soul, stands in a personal relationship/covenant with Jesus, who, on his part, has accepted her with his own human-divine heart, person, will, affection, reason, body and soul.<sup>870</sup> Standing in this living relationship with each other, both Jesus and Mary communicate with the faithful. According to St. John of the Cross, “love creates a likeness between that which loves and that which is loved.”<sup>871</sup> Only in loving God is it possible to understand and accept fully the mystery of Mary, who according to rational theoretical logic, even in her union with Jesus, may not have any lasting meaning in a relationship between God and man. But loving God and then seeing Mary as his first beloved, one will not only not exclude her from his own love, but seek her intimacy and learn from her.<sup>872</sup> Thus Father

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Bavaria cf. K. GUTH, “Herzensfrömmigkeit in Süddeutschen Frauengemeinschaften des Barockzeitalters”, in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 109-130.

<sup>867</sup> This view had a peak in 1928, when Pius XI explained that the consecration to the Heart of Jesus is a weapon against the subversive activities of atheistic people, in the numbers 2, 5-7 of PIUS XI, *Litterae encyclicae Miserentissimus Redemptor. De communi expiatione Sacratissimo Cordi Iesu debito* (8/5/1928), in *AAS* 20 (1928) 165-178. The last four sentences cf. J. SCHMIEDL, “Herz-Jesu- und Herz-Mariä-Frömmigkeit”, p. 146-152.

<sup>868</sup> M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 85, appendix 6.

<sup>869</sup> For the Mariological maximalism and minimalism, especially in Germany, cf. A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und “Wunderglaube”*, p. 54-56.

<sup>870</sup> Cf. Chapter III.

<sup>871</sup> *Ascent*, p. 28, book I, chap. IV, n. 3.

<sup>872</sup> Cf. Sermon of Fr. Montfort in Germany on 22.8.2006, appendix 4: „Ich werde nichts tun, was Maria nicht approbiert hat. [...] Wie vereinigen wir uns mit Gott? Durch Maria. Sie reinigt unser Blut. Wenn du direkt zu Jesus gehst, wirst du ihn vergiften. Wir wollen heute die Weisheit Mariens lernen: sich weit, weit von aller Gefahr halten, denn wir haben

Montfort preached on 2.2.2008, during the Vigil, pointing out the usefulness of venerating Mary: “Let us learn to give ourselves to Mary, who will then wash us, clean us, clothe us, powder us, pomade us and amend us and bring us to God. God will accept us as God accepts Mary.”<sup>873</sup>

The proclamation of the Hearts of Love has an inviting character: Come!<sup>874</sup> Jesus and Mary are the “first members” of the SHL, in which people come together with the aim of loving God,<sup>875</sup> with the threefold answer of adoration, thanks/praise and loving devotion/self-sacrifice.

One of the means to proclaim the union of the Hearts of Love, and the whole divine plan of salvation as seen by Father Montfort, is the “rosary of Love”, an ordinary Marian rosary with only different mysteries for meditation, which is prayed alongside with the three traditional mysteries and the new mysteries of light in the Centres of the Hearts of Love. The first mystery, “God is Love”, meditates on the fact that God is the God of Love, the source and living community of eternal, infinite Love in the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The second mystery, “God has created everything out of Love and for Love” meditates on the Love of God in creating the world, giving creation the goal of uniting in love of God. It contemplates also the mystery that man is created in the image and likeness of God, as the centre of union of all creation with God in love. The third mystery reminds the members that before Christ came, that goal was not achieved (cf. Ps. 14,3, commented and quoted by Rm 3,9-18): “All men have sinned, but God continued to offer his covenants of Love.” All creatures have failed, because both in the people of the OT and in those of other religions that existed before Christ, few seem to have reached the understanding of the great commandment: “You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul and all your strength” (Dt 6,5). The best men of old reached only the level of worshipping God (as an external, superior entity), praising him, following his commandments as handed down by the ancestors and accepting all things in life as coming from him who cannot be questioned (cf. Job, or those who reached the height of the African Traditional Religion).<sup>876</sup>

The fourth mystery recalls the new and eternal covenant with the words: “God has united the Hearts of Jesus and Mary in his Love.” It meditates on the fact that the eternal Son became the Divine-human Heart of Love, who dies out of Love for human beings, but cannot remain in death. It points out the fact that *the human heart* (which points to the Church, who has her perfect prototype in Mary<sup>877</sup>), despite its original waywardness, was united by God with Jesus, the Heart of Love, in

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eine gefallene Natur. [...] Der Teufel versucht dich zu Fall zu bringen. Maria weiß, dass wir eine verwundete, geschwächte Natur haben mit Neigung zur Sünde. Maria baut eine Mauer. Nicht nur zwischen dir und dem Teufel, sondern auch zwischen einem heiligen Mann und einer heiligen Frau. [...] Maria wusste, was es heißt von Gott geschützt zu sein. Sie hat von Gott Regeln bekommen, was verboten ist, was sie nicht anfassen sollte. Sie war kein Roboter, sie folgte streng was Gott ihr sagte, so konnte sie sich unbefleckt bis zum Ende bewahren. Wir sind wie der Garten Gottes, Maria ist die Gärtnerin.“ The teaching of the founder follows the teaching of innumerable Catholic saints. In this line is also the new Anglican preface for the 15<sup>th</sup> of August: “And now we give thee thanks that thy glory is revealed in the Blessed Virgin Mary. In her life thou hast given us an example of faithfulness to Christ. In her holiness we find encouragement and hope. In our communion with her we share the unity of thy kingdom.” (THE ARCHBISHOPS’ COUNCIL, 2001).

<sup>873</sup> Appendix 4.

<sup>874</sup> “Come” is the title of the news letter, Father Montfort sometimes issued to members, and the theme of some of them. Cf. p. 2 in appendix 5.

<sup>875</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 23, appendix 3.

<sup>876</sup> Only with the revelation of the infinite Love of God in Christ the way opened for man to answer with the same love.

<sup>877</sup> Mt 1,20 (with St. Joseph, the patron of the Church), Jn 19,27 (with the Beloved Disciple, Image of the Church) and Acts 1,14 (with the college of the Apostles, foundation of the Church) could be seen as having one meaning: it is necessary for the people of God to be in union with Mary, as God made her presence fundamental in his plan to unite all in Christ.

an eternal covenant and has been assumed into the life of the Most Holy Trinity. The union of the Hearts of Love is here the key to understand the greatness of the Love of God for mankind and all his creation. He is willing to be in a personal, most intimate relationship of reciprocal Love, trust and taking possession of each other, with every creature who follows the Will of God. Thus the union of the Hearts of Love is also the key to understand the meaning of the Incarnation, which opened the possibility for such a union with God, possibility realised perfectly in Mary. It contemplates in Mary the vocation of the human being, his sense in life.

The last mystery, “God has planned to unite all things in Christ”, opens to the eschatological aspect of God’s plan, meditating again the goal of redemption that God has set for his creation, to unite all things, all creatures in heaven and on earth in Christ (cf. Eph 1,10), praying for the realisation of it on earth. Thus the union of the Two Hearts is presented and proclaimed in its theological importance.

The SHL prays for and champions the establishment of a Feast of the Two Hearts of Love on the Sunday following the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.<sup>878</sup> Every congregation, in order to form her members with and in the liturgy, but according to its own charism, is supposed to elaborate “proper” liturgical texts for its “proper” feasts (which then need the approval of the competent authority).<sup>879</sup> Thus the SHL has the duty to elaborate a suggestion for the liturgical celebration (Mass and Divine Office) of the Feast of the Two Hearts of Love, a duty not yet fulfilled.<sup>880</sup> Up to now, the Society uses the Mass formula and Breviary formula of the Sacred Heart of Jesus both for Friday and for Sunday of the Feast of the Hearts of Love.

#### 2.4.6. “The only solution”

A group that wants to be united needs a common goal. Father Montfort, since 1988/89 in writing<sup>881</sup>, proclaims that there is only one solution from God “for the redemption of all, for the salvation of the whole world”: to unite ourselves “to these Two Wounded and Bleeding Hearts”.<sup>882</sup>

The message of the Hearts of Love adopts the new elaboration of the meaning of salvation (cf. sub-chapter 3.2.4.), which might be more fitting for the post-modern man/woman,<sup>883</sup> as well as it is surely more understandable to the African man/woman, proposing the *concept of salvation as a*

<sup>878</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 36 §6, appendix 3, and sermon at Vigil on 11/4/2010, appendix 4.

<sup>879</sup> Cf. M. SODI et al., *La liturgia*, p. 68.

<sup>880</sup> In the elaboration of liturgical texts with Marian accent, it is necessary to keep in mind that eulogical texts, as the preface, are always directed to God alone, praising him for what he did (e.g. in Jesus and Mary) for us, while liturgical hymns, antiphons and responsories can address Jesus and also Mary directly, in praise and supplication, seeing Mary as member and model of the Church. The liturgy is to make Mary present (under Christ), is to make her to exercise her maternal mediation (depending on and leading to Christ), is to show her exemplarity (in following Christ) and is to bring the faithful into communion with her. Cf. C. MAGGIONI, “Liturgia”, p. 730-731.

<sup>881</sup> M. OKAA, *Come*, p. 8-9, 68; appendix 5.

<sup>882</sup> TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 48-49. It is very common among movements founded on private revelations that there is an element of absolutism, i.e. the messages contain statements as ‘This is the most important devotion for this time!’ Cf. e.g. <<http://www.preciousbloodinternational.com/home.html>>, seen on 6/2/2014. A Christian will understand this as not absolute, since only the public revelation (Bible) and the public worship (liturgy), based on the first coming of Christ, are most important for all. The second coming of Christ will lead the public Christian revelation, worship and Assembly to perfection. (Cf. LG, 2)

<sup>883</sup> Cf. also the Trinitarian theology of C. THEOBALD, “‘Dio è relazione’”. A proposito di alcuni approcci recenti del mistero della Trinità”, in *Concilium* 1(2001) 62: “Il tentativo di pensare Dio in termini di relazione, tradizionale nella teologia cristiana [cf. TOMMASO D’AQUINO, *STh* Ia, q. 29, a. 4, et. al.], sembra ricevere in tempo di postmodernità, una nuova attualità.”



*renewed cosmic relationship* with God: God wrought the beginning of salvation by uniting Mary, a mere human being, to himself in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. (The “Lord Jesus Christ [...] through the action of the Holy Spirit [...] unified divinity and humanity in the most pure and holy love [Love exists only between two *persons*, not between two natures]. Through the eternal will of God the Two Hearts [...] *remained* [italics by the author] ever united in Love.”)<sup>884</sup> This union, for which Mary was asked to agree to the plan of God with body and soul, in all the circumstances of her life, exalts her in heaven into the communitarian life of the Most Holy Trinity, thus into a special, personal, holistic relationship with God.<sup>885</sup> Jesus, the Saviour, forms a (saving) community with Mary, a model community, an intimate unity of heart in pure and holy love. Thus the founder stresses, after repeating the traditional theology of salvation (divinisation) coming through the union of godhead and humanity in the person of Christ: “But it is in and through Mary that mankind received Jesus.”<sup>886</sup> The union, by which Mary, as the prototype of mankind, receives her origin and all from Jesus, herself becoming a carrier of Christ and of his grace for others, is the inspiring image of the SHL, seen as leading to salvation. One may thus speak of the “salvific character of the union of Jesus and Mary for the whole of mankind”.

It is an integral part and condition of salvation that man allows himself to be inserted in a community of the faithful. Redemption is being granted by God in assembling a people, a family, cf. e.g. LG, 9, and LG, 1: the aim of the close union with God is the unity of all mankind. It may be said that Christ saved the world by founding the Church, and he will save the world by perfecting the Church.<sup>887</sup> The salvation which the members of the Church receive together is eschatological. It is only a beginning of the Kingdom of God, when the Spirit of God will reign in all. (Cf. LG, 7). Thus all mankind is invited to join in the union and communion of Jesus and Mary. The joining takes place by baptism, entrusting one’s life to Jesus in/and Mary, and by a living, personal relationship with Jesus and Mary, which shows in a life of prayer and in imitation. Art. 9 of the Original Constitutions emphasizes how the early disciples of Jesus had a relationship of love and attention towards Mother Mary. St. Joseph is called in the SHL “the first member of the Society”, because of his most intimate communion with Jesus and the Virgin.<sup>888</sup>

To accept and join Jesus and Mary in their union is the “only solution”: as a child who is not the first-born, though being a child of the same parents with a direct relationship with them, has to acknowledge the elder brother/sister, in the sense that the child cannot but join a family instead of joining only a couple, so the faithful have to acknowledge that Mary (the “first-born” daughter in this comparison) came before them, though all children of God have a direct relationship with the Father in Jesus Christ (the “parents”). Jesus exists only in his union with Mary. The Mother of God

<sup>884</sup> Cf. Art. 6 of the *Original Constitutions*, appendix 3.

<sup>885</sup> Cf. Art. 15 of *Ibidem*.

<sup>886</sup> Art. 14 of *Ivi*.

<sup>887</sup> Cf. appendix 4, 27/11/2011, Father Montfort in the Introduction of the Vigil: “The meaning of the Church is to prepare a community, praying, preaching, where the second coming of Christ can happen.”

<sup>888</sup> In the Orthodox Church, the greatest saint after Mary is John the Baptist, according to the word of Jesus. The Catholic Church sees St. Joseph in this privileged position. Cf. T. STRAMARE, *San Giuseppe. Il santo più vicino a Gesù*, Elledici, Leumann 2008. Contemplating the communion of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, one puts into the centre of attention the hidden life at Nazareth. Meditating the union of Jesus, Mary and John, conception, visitation and the early ministry of Jesus come to mind. Contemplating only the union of Jesus and Mary, the view is widened to the whole life of Jesus, his death and resurrection, and to the whole mystery of the Church. As the SHL desires to contemplate this complete mission of Christ, every saint remains a mere “member” of the Two Hearts of Love.

is a very significant “eldest sister”<sup>889</sup> to the Church, as the Church rejoices in the possibility of coming to Christ adorned with the privileges of grace of Mary. The Assumpta is believed as sharing her personal graces with all the faithful, in participation in the mediation of Christ. The Church openly claims the graces of “privilege” of Mary: to be Virgin in conserving the faith, hope and love, Mother in bringing people to become children of God, sinless through baptism and the grace of confession, united with Christ in the liturgical action and in the testimony for him, confessing the faith in words of doctrine and deeds of charity, sure of being assumed into heaven in body and soul on the last day. (Cf. LG 62-65, 68)

The proclamation of the union with Jesus and Mary as the “only solution” is directed in the first place towards practising atheists and deists. It recalls the importance of seeking God in the individual and communal (social) life. It means that Jesus, the son of Mary, is seen as the only saviour of the world.<sup>890</sup> It means that love and adhering to the will of God, like Jesus and Mary, is the only solution for all problems among human beings. It expresses the belief that only if man loves God and strives to receive his love, he fulfils the reason for his being created.<sup>891</sup> This is also expressed by Pope Benedict XVI: “One thing only is necessary (cf. *Lk* 10:42) and capable of quenching every human person’s thirst for eternity and all humanity’s desire for unity: love and contemplation of him before whom Saint Augustine († 430) cried out: ‘Eternal Truth, true Love, beloved Eternity!’”<sup>892</sup> The “only solution” means that only by loving all with the Love which comes from God, which leads to God and that is God, the Satanic forces active in many human hearts can be driven out. It implies that actions of protesting and fighting against industries, bankers or politicians who assemble riches in an selfish way, and damaging things in the protest for the protection of the nature or the poor, have no meaning and can’t have a positive effect. Equally, new laws and political manoeuvres will not help to overcome a crisis, if these are not in union with Jesus and Mary and what the Two Hearts are standing for.

Father Montfort uses this word of the “only solution” also to warn those governments who try to build union on money, and those scientists, who strive to find solutions for sicknesses with the intention to make it less harmful for people to live an immoral life. In a prophetic way he warns that before they find a remedy for one sickness, another, more terrible sickness will have appeared, as he sees human nature revolting against its abuse. He proclaims his conviction that an immoral lifestyle, abortion and other crimes against the will of God, who wills life, must bring about new problems.<sup>893</sup> The call for union with the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts suggests that there is a great danger in the world,<sup>894</sup> a danger which calls for urgent action. According to Father Montfort,

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<sup>889</sup> Cf. BENEDETTO XVI, *Discorso ai partecipanti al quarto Convegno Nazionale della Chiesa Italiana* (19/10/2006), in the second to last paragraph: “Nell’unione a Cristo ci precede e ci guida la Vergine Maria”. I quote the Italian original of the speech, since the English translation in the Vatican website, for unknown reasons, puts the statement as a wish, and, thus, much weaker: “May the Virgin Mary [...]”

<sup>890</sup> Cf. TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 34. The urgency of recalling this truth to all Catholics was also seen by Card. Ratzinger, when the CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH published the declaration *Dominus Iesus* (6/8/2000) in AAS 92(2000) 742-765: the only way to enter into intimacy with the God of Love is Jesus Christ; in his cross, i.e. in his love for mankind is the only salvation for the world.

<sup>891</sup> Cf. M. OKAA, *Come*, p. 32-33. (Appendix 5).

<sup>892</sup> BENEDETTO XVI, *Africae munus*, p. 83

<sup>893</sup> Cf. TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 64-65.

<sup>894</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 65: “Please, My son, please My Love, warn the whole world. The forces of evil have teamed up from all sides and all are aimed at destroying My World, My creation. I will not allow that. The easiest way for the forces of

the action needed is constant prayer of love in a spirit of penitence, and he suggests the Prayer of the Two Hearts of Love to all as a most effective prayer for bringing people to the Love of God,<sup>895</sup> if it is said in the right spirit, in constancy and accompanied by the exercise of virtue and deeds of charity.<sup>896</sup> God may sometimes permit wars or calamities to happen, to make the people come back to seriousness in prayer and charitable attention to the neighbour, and many documents of former times report of a miraculous change of the situation after a public conversion of the majority of a people. The devotion to Mary helped some peoples as those of Poland, Hungary, Ethiopia, Mexico and Portugal (in the past), to unite spiritually and politically and to find the courage to organize resistance against stronger, usurping armies.<sup>897</sup>

The Prayer of the Hearts of Love is not proposed as absolute, rigid and the only prayer formula to be used, it is called “a version”<sup>898</sup> of the prayer of Love which is said in heaven, and the founder proposes it alongside with many other prayers of the Catholic tradition.<sup>899</sup> But according to the maxim “unite with the *Two* .... Hearts!” the act of giving oneself to God and the presence of Mary in the prayer of Love is fundamental, as also Pope Benedict XVI declared in a minor address.<sup>900</sup>

The call to unite with these Hearts is directed also to the Church, in so far as the devotion to the Two Hearts knew a serious decline in the last half century, because of its need of renewal. As theological debates and new practices made many faithful to doubt about the importance of devotions, this proclamation recalls the importance of mystical union (with the “hearts”, i.e. in will and intimacy) with Christ, in which Mary cannot be excluded. Calling them the two “wounded and bleeding” Hearts points to the urgency and the fact that suffering must be accepted in life by any Christian. One cannot think to be in union with wounded and bleeding Hearts while seeking only enjoyment and a comfortable life.

The devotion of the Hearts of Love (and in it, every devotion to the Love of God) is thus proclaimed as the only way to annihilation of (egocentric) self-love without loss of one’s personal identity, in which is fulfilled the human desire to see only the other person, and to see him as the perfect partner. It is the only way to compassion and to being pierced, which fulfils the human desire for heroic self-sacrifice and giving meaning to one’s life, a meaning which will last. It is the only way to a community life in perfect joy, fulfilling the human desire for love in purity and reciprocal respect. In the “promises of the Hearts of Love” (Appendix 2) it is said: “Those who practice this devotion constantly will turn into flaming fire of Divine Love and will never be lost.” The change of heart of a person, his proliferation of wise counsels and acts of charity within his

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evil to perpetrate and finish their evil terrible plans is the use of evil and sin and hatred and wickedness. My son, fight with the weapons of prayer and Pure and Holy Love.”

<sup>895</sup> Cf. e.g. M. OKAA, *Come*, p. 7-8. (Appendix 5).

<sup>896</sup> According to BENEDICT XVI, *Address at the Marian Vigil for the conclusion of the month of May* (31/5/2007), in *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI*, III,1 (2007), p. 992: “Every gesture of genuine love, even the smallest, contains within it a spark of the infinite mystery of God.”

<sup>897</sup> Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 116-282.

<sup>898</sup> Two HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 25.

<sup>899</sup> In his personal spirituality, as seen by the author, the founder uses the Prayer of the Hearts of Love as steps to climb into deep, wordless contemplative prayer, which is seeking to understand the will of God and uniting himself to this supreme Will and Love.

<sup>900</sup> “Pentecost is renewed in a special way in certain powerful moments, [...] whether it be in small assemblies or in large ones. [...] I would like to add that there is no Pentecost without the Virgin Mary. [...] Wherever Christians gather

capacity, is thus the proof that the person is really practising the devotion and prayer life of Love, allowing himself to be formed and used by God in constant dialogue with him.<sup>901</sup>

In former times, convictions of Mary as a powerful protection against the enemy, and a consecration to the Virgin as a covenant were often abused in a political sense, the covenant became a “Do, ut des”.<sup>902</sup> SHL, however, aims at a genuine attachment to the will of God, sought for in humility and prayer, which is called the “only solution” for every problem. Faith tells the Christians that union with God makes man to be able to overcome everything, as can be seen in the Virgin Mary. Her own union with Christ shall now be looked at.

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in prayer with Mary, the Lord grants his Spirit.” BENEDICT XVI, Regina Caeli *On the solemnity of Pentecost* (23/5/2010) in *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI*, VI, 1 (2010), p. 776.

<sup>901</sup> This is to say that devotion can be pretended, and there are many cases of it in history, as the King Michael VIII Paleologo, who humbly followed the procession in honour of the famous icon Hodigitria in Constantinople 1261, after he had killed the reigning king and blinded the lawful successor, thus taking over the power. He later died excommunicated. Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 130. Real and honest devotion always leads to the humble research of the will of God, and helps in putting it into practice.

<sup>902</sup> Man makes a vow of giving honour to Our Lady and expects help, e.g. in war against non-Catholic enemies, but also against very Catholic political rivals, as in Argentina in 1810, where Santiago di Liniers, “under the protection” of Our Lady of the Rosary, fought against Manuel Belgrano, who called on the Virgin of the Merced. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 281.

### **Chapter III. The Marian element in the Congregational sources of the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love”: the Hearts of Jesus and Mary as Centre of union for the world**

The conviction presented in the second chapter concerning the possibility of all being united with and in Jesus and Mary is based on the history of salvation and on the will of God. This is the Marian element in the main Congregational source, the Original Constitutions (Appendix 3) of the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love”: the Immaculate Heart of Mary indissolubly united with the Sacred Heart of Christ. The Immaculate Heart/Mary is named very often, generally in an exhorting context or presented as a model of union with Christ/Sacred Heart.

This chapter presents Mariology in its connection with Christology, ecclesiology, anthropology, amartiology, soteriology,<sup>903</sup> Sacred Scriptures and Magisterium, as well as sacred arts, liturgy and spirituality. The first seven are taken as sources for the understanding of the Christian faith concerning Mary, the other three are involved here as areas for consequences, re-connecting this part with the second chapter.

The Biblical, theological and anthropological symbolism of the “heart” shall be explained as a first step. A second sub-chapter will define and develop briefly the concept of the human person, of relationships, identity and salvation. The third sub-chapter, which will be the most extended, concentrates on the specific aspect of this research: The union of Jesus and Mary and the Church. Each aspect will be looked at in the opinion of theologians, in the confirmation given to some views in the Magisterium, and in Father Montfort. Finally, an evaluation will be attempted. For the understanding of the founder the basic text is articles 6-15 of the Original Constitutions (Appendix 3). They present an outline of the major moments of union of Mary with her Son, with the help of the symbolic-evocative image and title of the Two Hearts of Love. In the communion of Christ and his first disciple is always included the mystery of the Church, that Body of Christ that has Mary as a model and mother. In reviewing Divine Motherhood, Immaculate Conception, Perpetual Virginity, the discipleship of Mary, her “cooperation” with Jesus, the bodily Assumption into heaven and the spiritual “motherhood” for the Church, the union between Jesus and Mary is seen as concerning the whole Ecclesia Dei. The last sub-chapter shall attempt to draw some consequences from the idea of the Two Hearts of Love as Centre of union for all men for Christian iconography, and collocate the devotion into the frame of the general Catholic popular piety.

#### **3.1. The “heart” as human centre of relationships**

The Orthodox Church agrees with the Roman Catholic Church on the intimate unity of Jesus and Mary,<sup>904</sup> the two who are holy above all limit, the two who are pierced, the two who preside,<sup>905</sup>

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<sup>903</sup> The teachings on Christ, the Church, human beings, the experience of sin and salvation.

<sup>904</sup> In the Orthodox Churches, e.g. in catechisms, the Mother of God is generally treated under Christology. However, the title “Theotokos”, according to G. BRUNI, *Mariologia ecumenica. Approcci – Documenti – Prospettive*, p. 129-130 is a confession to the Incarnation as Trinitarian event: “Ne consegue che l’incarnazione non si risolve in un io-tu tra Cristo e Maria: è il Padre che le parla nell’angelo, è il Padre che le avvolge di Spirito; [... la mariologia è] capitolo della

painting this unity in many Marian icons,<sup>906</sup> although Jesus and Mary are not praised or invoked *together*, and the Orthodox in particular have not developed a devotion to the Two Hearts.<sup>907</sup> This sub-chapter has as focus to present the value of this type of devotion. Thus the sub-chapter will not remain generic, but refer very often to the hearts of Jesus and Mary, in the form of an example.

First, the anthropological and Biblical understanding of the word “heart” shall be exposed briefly, then the word is given to the theologians in their different disciplines.

### 3.1.1. The anthropological importance and the Biblical understanding of the “heart”

The “heart” occupies a central role in the religious, mystical and poetical language of almost all peoples.<sup>908</sup> Because of the fundamental importance of the Holy Scriptures for Christians, after having a look at the worldwide importance of the symbol, there will be a separate sub-chapter for the Biblical view.

#### 3.1.1.1. The meaning of “heart” in the general understanding of mankind

Quite world-wide the heart has anthropologically the meaning of the centre of life of a person.<sup>909</sup> The “heart” is seen as a term that combines both the corporal and the spiritual aspect of man, representing the whole man, body and soul. In the Christian theology of today, the “body” is used as a term to designate the whole human person in its physical aspect, an aspect that cannot

teologia, della pneumatologia e della cristologia. E altresì della antropologia”. Cf. also S. M. PERRELLA, *Immacolata e Assunta. Un'esistenza fra due grazie. Le ragioni del cattolicesimo nel dialogo ecumenico*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2011, p. 183, 188. The pages 173-203 form an appendix on the position of Orthodox Churches and theologians concerning the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption in body and soul.

<sup>905</sup> For Jesus, these titles are clearly applicable; also Mary is venerated in the Eastern Church as the “Esfagmeni”, the pierced one, and as “Geronissa”, the one who presides. Cf. C. CHARALAMPIDIS, “Ortodossi”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.), *Mariologia*, p. 906.

<sup>906</sup> Icons are pictures for liturgical and devotional use. They create the bridge to God and the saints and are a pillar in the eastern devotion. According to a strict rule, only what was seen in history can be represented in picture, never e.g. God the Father, unless in the symbol of a hand or an angel. They have to be painted according to ancient models. Cf. Th. NIKOLAOU, “Ikonen”, in *Marienlexikon* (1991) vol. 3, p. 281-284.

<sup>907</sup> Some Orthodox are sensitive towards such a devotion, but in the East it cannot enter the liturgy, as the Greek Orthodox Church closed their liturgy for additions in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Byzantine Greek Liturgy developed till the early MA; after that, only translations and quite irrelevant changes occurred. Cf. M. PAVONE, *La preghiera di ordinazione del diacono nel rito Romano e nel rito Bizantino-Greco. Saggio sulla lex orandi*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2006, p. 21. In the 10th-12th century, tropes (very short textual and musical introductions and/or intercalations to the introit antiphon, offertory antiphon and communion antiphon) were still composed and added. Cf. A.-K. ANDREWS JOHANSSON (ed.), *Tropes for the proper of Mass 4. The feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Almqvist, Stockholm 1998, p. 11.

<sup>908</sup> Cf. M. AUGÉ, “Cuore Immacolato”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 370. A clear exception is the Greek Platonic culture of the Stoa, which influenced the language of parts of the Holy Scriptures and made some of the sacred writers to avoid the term. In this culture, the heart is almost identified with the intelligence of a person, (cf. W. ECKERMANN, “Herz III Geistesgeschichtlich”, in *LThK* (1996) vol. 5, col. 50) and, thus, used very reluctantly in religious, mystical and poetical language, e.g. only with an explanation of the different meaning, as in St. GREGORIUS TAUMATURGUS, *Homilia II in Annuntiatione*, in *PG* 10, 1169-1170. Cf. M. AUGÉ, “Cuore Immacolato”, 372. The heart can be called “uranthropologischer Grundbegriff”, an original anthropological basic term of the human centre and unity of personal-spiritual disposition of self, symbol of unity of soul and human body, cf. K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMLER, “Herz”, p. 191. St. Thomas Aquinas might have had a different view of the heart, as he saw it as uncontrollable by the will, seat of the passions and origin of temptations. Cf. W. ECKERMANN, “Herz“, col. 51.

<sup>909</sup> The understanding of the heart as centre of life is due to the experience of the repercussion of feelings and decisions on the heartbeat, and (in former times) the connection of death with the standing still of the heart. Cf. *Ivi*.

perish definitely, because, like the soul, it is created by God, redeemed by Christ and inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Church proclaimed since the beginning the resurrection of the body. (Cf. 1 Cor 15, 12-26.)<sup>910</sup> But the physical aspect of man is to be always (explicitly or implicitly) integrated by the spiritual aspect, which in this research is usually called the “soul”. The “soul” is the specifically human “principle of life”, i.e. the human “breath of life” which, in union with the body, has the capacity to remember emotions and to reflect on them, to take decisions, to communicate with created and uncreated beings, to be conscious of one’s actions and thus to be responsible for them. The “soul”, in harmony with Catholic tradition, is thus the “spirit/life” of the human being, residing in the “heart” or in the whole body, and being subject to the judgement of God.<sup>911</sup>

The person, then, is an entity in whom values, such as life and dignity, are “incorporated”.<sup>912</sup> The heart, vulnerable as it is, calls therefore for respect for these values. The heart is the symbol of the conscience, seat of human life and of feelings. It is the symbol both of the singularity and communitarian character of a person, as it is used in most languages to define the individual character of a person, and as the heart (in many popular sayings) is a “container” of social relationships with other persons.

The female heart, in many languages, is seen in a special relationship with the womb. The woman is said to bear the child “under her heart”, stressing the special psychological/affective bond a mother develops during the months of pregnancy with her child. It also shows the woman as guardian of the mystery of life, which develops “under her heart”, i.e. under her care.<sup>913</sup>

### 3.1.1.2. The meaning of “heart” in the Holy Scripture

In the OT, the “hands”, symbol of action of a person, appear two times more often than “heart”, but still the “heart” is one of the most frequent words in the Bible, basically in its general anthropological meaning<sup>914</sup> (though feelings are also connoted with the liver or the intestine in the

<sup>910</sup> Cf. P. BARIGELLI-CALCARI, *L'ultimo desiderio nelle religioni*, p. 142-143.

<sup>911</sup> M. Faggioni explained that Christians used the “theologumenon” “soul” to express that in man there is something which exceeds the biological or material component. The term “soul” is defined as a linguistic instrument to indicate that man is different from animals. In the human person, “corpore et anima unus” (GS 14), means that on earth, reason and free will need the body to express themselves, and in heaven the body will participate in the glory of the soul. It is not right to say that man “possesses” a body or a soul, or that he “is” a body or a soul: man is an incarnated spirit. The body is condition and epiphany of the person. There is tension, but no dualism between body and soul, but a “unitotality” Cf. M. FAGGIONI, “La morte fra scienza e dogma”, in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *L'Assunzione di Maria Madre di Dio. Significato storico-salvifico a 50 anni dalla definizione dogmatica*. Atti del 1° Forum Internazionale di Mariologia. Roma, 30-31 ottobre 2000, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2001, p. 365-366.

<sup>912</sup> Cf. G. PIANA, “Il nichilismo e la crisi dei valori, verso una nuova fondazione dell’etica.” in *Studia Patavina* 57,1 (2010) 107, quoting M. SCHELER, *Il formalismo dell’etica e l’etica materiale dei valori*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1996, without giving the page.

<sup>913</sup> St. John Paul II, in his Encyclical letter *Redemptor hominis* (4/3/1979), n. 22, used this saying to explain the special intimacy of Mary with her Son, without making it a mere natural relationship, but stressing that it was under the particular action of the Holy Spirit. Cf. the document in AAS 71 (1979) 257-324, here esp. p. 323. *Redemptor hominis* was the first encyclical of John Paul II, presenting the guiding ideas of his Magisterium: the centrality of man (every human being) for the Church, in n. 14, the centrality of Christ, the redeemer of every man, and the quite “messianic” expectation of the year 2000. Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 310.

<sup>914</sup> It can also mean the inner part or the secret part, the great depths or great height of a non-human reality, as the sea (11 times in the OT, e.g. Jonah says in Jonah 2,3: “You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas,”) a tree (cf. 2 Sam 18,14: Absalom hanging in the “heart of the oak”) or the “heavens”. (Cf. the singular expression in Dtn 4,11, where Moses remembered the Sinai experience and the “fire blazing up to the heart of the heavens”.) Cf. R. WILLI,

Bible). It can be used pars pro toto for the whole person and his actions.<sup>915</sup> The Septuagint translates “lēb”/“lēbāb” mostly with “καρδία”, sometimes with “διάνοια” or “ψυχή”; very seldom with another term.<sup>916</sup> When the Bible mentions “lēb”/“lēbāb”/“καρδία”, it indicates psychological-spiritual perception of an event. The heart is the seat of spiritual riches, source and root of a person. In the Bible, the heart and the spirit (heart and “ru<sup>ah</sup>”, spirit, in Ps 16,9, and heart and “nāfæš”, soul, including even “bāsar”, flesh, in Ps 84,3,) are seen with the same operations, but the heart belongs completely to the person, while the spirit belongs to God and is given as a gift to man.<sup>917</sup> Also the “flesh” speaks of the whole man like a synonym of heart and soul, but underlining his being earthly, his corruptibility, his being mortal.<sup>918</sup>

The heart in the Bible experiences various sentiments: courage (cf. 2 Cr 17,6), joy (cf. Dt 28,47), pain (cf. Jer 4,19), affection (cf. 2 Sam 15,13; Esd 6,22), wrath (cf. Dt 19,6), displeasure (cf. Is 65,14), etc. From the heart comes the impulse to work (cf. Ex 36,2), to plan and to will (cf. Is 10,7; Jer 23,20). It is also the seat of intellect and knowledge (cf. 1Kg 3,12), of foolishness and bad thoughts (cf. Pro 10,20). Different from the Greek understanding of the Stoa,<sup>919</sup> the “intellect” and wisdom in the Bible are not mere rationality, but the capacity to reason and to understand oneself as a limited creature,<sup>920</sup> and to search for the will of God, the only important “knowledge”. In summary, the heart in the OT indicates man in all his impulses, and decisions, in the completeness of his personality (cf. Ps 22,27; 73,26; 84,3). In the heart, man takes his stand before God, in faith (cf. Is 51,7) in hardness (cf. Is 29,13) or in conversion (cf. Ps 51,12,19; Joel 2,12). The present magisterium, in describing the Biblical meaning of the heart, stresses also its relational character: the dimension of “openness to the world and to others” intersects in the heart with the interiority of man.<sup>921</sup> The “Heart of God”, in the OT, is pondering over man<sup>922</sup> and his redemption. It is mentioned 26 times in the Hebrew Bible, of which 8 times in Jeremiah, 4 times in Job. Usually the passages speak of the will of God, things that are touching and determining his decisions. E.g. in Gen 6,6, God is grieved to the heart over having created man, thus deciding the deluge. In Gen 8,21 God speaks in his heart, i.e. takes the patient decision “never again [to] curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination of the human heart is evil”. In Hos 11,8, compassion makes his heart to recoil from destroying Ephraim. It can also denote his presence and attention to man. E.g. Job

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“Grundlagen für die Verehrung des Herzens Mariens in der Heiligen Schrift”, in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 51.

<sup>915</sup> Cf. J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 147 uses the verses Lk 2,19,51 (Mary kept all these things in her heart) to affirm that she (as a person) remembered them (and related them after the resurrection to others). Cf. also M. NERI, “Spiritualità del Sacro Cuore. Per una cristologia simbolica”, in *Il Regno - Attualità* 50 (2005) 209-210. Cf. I. M. CALABUIG, “Il Cuore di Maria nell’attuale liturgia romana”, in M. M. PEDICO (ed.), *Maria nella teologia della riparazione, settimana di studio (Fatima, 23-26 aprile 1986)*, Centro Mariano, Rovigo 1988, p. 117.

<sup>916</sup> Cf. R. WILLI, “Grundlagen”, p. 62.

<sup>917</sup> A. LEFEVRE, “Cor et Cordis affectus, Usage biblique”, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. II/2, col. 2284-2285.

<sup>918</sup> Cf. R. WILLI, “Grundlagen”, p. 49-50.

<sup>919</sup> In the philosophical concept of stoicism, the world is made up of fire, air, water and earth. The Creator God seems to be identified with a primal fire. The incorporeal is divided in four categories: expressibles (propositions), void, place and time. In the “Stoa”, the heart was the seat of “*nous*”, which means the intelligence of man. The heart was, thus, only a place for reasoning and scientific knowledge. Stoicism was widely spread in the first century AD. It did not influence the Bible very much, but the Greek Fathers of the Church, also St. Ambrose, St. Augustine and philosophers of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. V. CAUCHY - M. SPANNEUT, “Stoicism”, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13, p. 717-721.

<sup>920</sup> Cf. M. G. MASCIARELLI, *Il cuore*, p. 165.

<sup>921</sup> FRANCIS, *Lumen fidei*, n. 26, p. 35-36.

<sup>922</sup> As Bernhard Meyer, 1972-2005 Professor of New Testament in the University of Eichstätt, used to comment every time on “men” or “brothers”: ‘According to the understanding of the NT, women are inclusive.’



7,17: “What are human beings, that you make so much of them, that you set your heart on them” to test them? In 1 Kg 9,3, the promise to Salomon for the temple: “my eyes and my heart will be there for all time.”<sup>923</sup> Speaking of a “heart” of God in dogmatics points to the fact that God, like the man he created in his image, has the faculty to will and decide in freedom and that he has a sensitivity for love and for hatred, which must be thought of as infinite. It must be seen as admissible to speak of “joy” of God concerning a person who gives a sign of love, thanksgiving or penitence, and consequently also of “sorrow” or “pain” of God, concerning a person who shows ingratitude or hatred towards God. To be able to feel joy in love and pain in rejection is inherent to being able to build up relationships, because the sensitivity in persons<sup>924</sup> is the attention to others, but also the door of influence of the other on the sensitive person, the door which makes an exchange possible.<sup>925</sup>

In the NT, the idea of the heart as the “Intimum” of the person is even more clear.<sup>926</sup> The heart is the “organ” able to perceive God, it is the place where man encounters God, where God reveals himself to man, where man can experience God. In the NT, the heart of (the baptized) man becomes a centre of faith and worship of God, a temple of Christ, who is meek and humble of heart.<sup>927</sup> The heart of man becomes the dwelling place of God (cf. 2 Cor 1,22), and God is revealed as the God who is not satisfied with facing his creatures, but who want them to dwell in him, (cf. e.g. Jn 15,4-7) i.e. in his own intimacy, in his good will, in his love: in his heart. The heart in Biblical language means the totality of the person, its centre where reason, memory, will, temperament, sentiment and sensitivity flow together and present themselves as a unity.<sup>928</sup> It evokes both the spiritual side of man and his being a body, while laying stress on interiority.<sup>929</sup>

The passages on Mary, conserving all in her heart (Lk 2,19.51) may have been used to connect Jesus and Mary in the mind of the reader of the Gospel with the visions of the wisdom-apocalyptic prophet Daniel, recalling the passage of Dn 7,28, where he keeps all his visions about the end, when the people of God will receive royal power for ever, in his heart.<sup>930</sup> “Lumen fidei”, referring to Lk 8,15, explains the “good soil” of the “honest and good heart which hears and keeps

<sup>923</sup> Cf. R. WILLI, “Grundlagen”, p. 62-65.

<sup>924</sup> “Person” being here referred both to divine persons, angels and human beings.

<sup>925</sup> Cf. R. RICCIARDO, *Pianto di Maria e dolore di Dio. L'evento di Siracusa*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2004, based on theologians and philosophers as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Jacques Maritain, Abraham Herschel, Carlo Maria Martini. St. ANSELM, in the *Proslogion seu Alloquium de Dei existentia*, chap. 6, asks the question how God can be sensitive/perceiving, since having senses needs a body? He answers that the spirit is greater than the body and concludes: “Ergo, Domine, quamvis non sis corpus; vere tamen eo modo summe sensibilis es”. In the same chapter, the impassibility of God is affirmed. In *PL* 158, 229C-230A.

<sup>926</sup> Cf. R. WILLI, “Grundlagen”, p. 65: the understanding of “heart” in the Koiné-Greek is similar to the Hebrew one, and does not follow the classical Greek. The heart is the main “organ” for the life of soul and spirit, and the “place” where God reveals himself. Cf. also John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Redemptor hominis* (4/3/1979), n. 22.

<sup>927</sup> Cf. M. NERI, “Spiritualità del Sacro Cuore”, p. 209-210.

<sup>928</sup> The whole paragraph and the Biblical passages from the upper paragraph cf. M. AUGÉ “Cuore Immacolato”, p. 371. *Ibidem*, p. 372: also S. Augustine uses “heart” in this Biblical sense.

<sup>929</sup> G. BUSI, *Simboli del pensiero ebraico. Lessico ragionato in settanta voci*, Einaudi, Torino 1999, p. 139.

<sup>930</sup> Cf. J. M. ALONSO, “Cuore Immacolato I-IV”, in *NDM*, p. 401, referring to “studiosi moderni”, without giving a reference. The idea seems interesting, also because in the neighbouring chapters (chapter 8 in Daniel, chapter 1 in Luke) the same angel Gabriel is being sent to Daniel, respectively to Mary, to explain something. J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 25 says that in mentioning “Gabriel” there is “no doubt that Luke is here [chapter 1-2] consciously alluding to the Book of Daniel” and its theme “of the coming of a new age, the age of the ‘Son of Man’ (Dan 7-12)” Bringing together the ancient wisdom with the actual situation of receiving a revelation from God, in order to understand better: *symbállein*, to meditate, is made a typical action of the “new” heart.

the word” as “an implicit portrayal of the faith of the Virgin Mary”,<sup>931</sup> connecting Lk 8,15 with Lk 2,19.51. Thus the “heart” in the NT is not only a key word by its meaning and frequency, but also by its use to inter-connect passages.

In the patristic Western exegesis, St. Augustine frequently used the heart to designate the “Intimum” of a person, a centre of intimate relationships, also in reference to Mary.<sup>932</sup> The heart, as the place of decision making, carries the responsibility for the actions of man and is thus subject to the judgement of God.<sup>933</sup> St. Ambrose used the key word “heart” to connect two NT-passages together: Lk 1,27-38 and Mt 11,29, calling Mary “corde humilis”.<sup>934</sup>

In summary, it can be asserted that the heart in the Bible is personified; only in the case of God and a person who is filled with the love of God can it be called a “symbol of Love”.

### **3.1.2. The value of the word “heart” in different theological disciplines**

After the look at the Biblical view, it needs to be analysed whether this view was retained, changed or developed in the different fields of theological research making use of it: Liturgy, spirituality, dogmatics. A special sub-chapter shall be reserved for the use of the “heart” in ecumenically engaged theology.

#### **3.1.2.1. The heart in Liturgy**

Due to the vast use of the “heart” in liturgy, the research will here be limited to some comments on the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. In French (episcopally approved) liturgy of the time between 1668 and 1855, the Heart of Mary was venerated as the place of presence and action of the Son, his bridal chamber and place of rest, a place where the mysteries of his life were being kept in memory and glorified. Her Heart is a model of union with God and also the way to union with God by means of the union of all with the united two Hearts. The fullness of grace in Mary is presented as given to her for our sake: it is her office to pass it on like a channel. The Immaculate Heart was presented for imitation in faith and virtues, and the intercession of her Heart, i.e. of her person, was requested. Her merits played a role, the understanding of Mass as a sacrifice and the idea of hearts set on fire or wounded by love. The sequences sang of the beauty of her Heart, i.e. her being full of virtue.<sup>935</sup>

In the actual Roman liturgy, the Heart of Mary is specified as “house” (“domus”) of the Word and temple of the Spirit, as immaculate, wise and docile, prepared and eager to capture every indication of God’s will, as new and meek, signed by the law of the new covenant, as simple and

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<sup>931</sup> FRANCIS, *Lumen fidei*, n. 58. The Encyclical presents the human heart as the place where the Word of God is received or not, and where it will bear fruit or remain fruitless.

<sup>932</sup> Cf. St. AUGUSTINE, *Sancta virginitate*, 1, 3, in *PL* 40, 398: “Sic et maternal propinquitatis nihil Mariae profuisset, nisi felicius Christum corde quam carne gestasset”: for Augustine it is possible to carry a person “in the heart”.

<sup>933</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Questionum S. Augustini in Heptateuchum*, 4, 19, in *PL* 34, 726: “Deus non de verbis, sed de cordibus iudicat”.

<sup>934</sup> St. AMBROSE, *De virginibus*, II, 7, in *PL* 16, col. 220.

<sup>935</sup> Cf. J. NEBEL, “Das Unbefleckte Herz Mariens in der Römischen Messliturgie”, in M. HAUKE (ed.), *Die Herz-Mariä-Verehrung*, p. 246-260, 270, quoting the texts from J. EUDES, *Oeuvres complètes*, and from N. NILLES, *De rationibus festorum Sacratissimi Cordis Jesu et Purissimi Cordis Mariae*, s.ed., Innsbruck 1885<sup>5</sup> (first edition ca. 1865), vol. 2.

pure, strong and vigilant.<sup>936</sup> The Heart of Jesus in liturgy is celebrated bringing together the aspect of God (in Christ) as origin of all graces, and the image of blood and water, “symbol of the sacraments of the Church” (Preface of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart), that mediate the graces in an ordinary way. The Divine Heart is acclaimed as the everlasting fountain of salvation (preface), as the inexhaustible fountain of the abundance of God’s gifts (first Collect of the Solemnity), the infinite treasury of love (second Collect). The Collect for year B says that from the pierced Heart the sublime knowledge of God’s love can be drawn (as from a well). The one of year C speaks of the torrent of grace that pours fourth from his Heart. For the liturgist, as for the biblist, the heart means the whole personality, the interior life, the religious conscience, the spiritual activity of knowing, willing and loving.<sup>937</sup>

### 3.1.2.2. The heart in spirituality/homiletics

In Western spirituality, the ‘heart’ retained its biblical value of a “key word”. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Mary is called “thief of hearts”, “Raptrix cordium”, and asked to conserve this stolen heart in the blood of the Lamb, and to place it in the pierced side of the Son.<sup>938</sup> The heart became a gift of oneself and mystics began to hope for a response from heaven in the form of an “exchange of hearts” with Jesus or Mary.<sup>939</sup> A lot of the attraction of the word “heart” is caused by the fact that it is perceived as a space within the person (of Christ or Mary), where the person can invite others into, to protect them there from every attack. Thus the heart, the centre of intimate relationships, is also the place of reciprocal indwelling. The heart as “space” within the person, which can serve as a dwelling place for others, opens the possibility to answer the desire and/or command of Christ to be and remain “in” Jesus, and to have him “in” oneself (cf. Jn 15,4). In a pre-Vatican II spirituality, it

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Apart from the use of the term “merit”, and the comparison of Mary with a channel, many ideas of that time seem attractive today, also to the same J. Nebel.

<sup>936</sup> Cf. CEI, *Messe della Beata Vergine Maria, raccolta di formulari secondo l'anno liturgico*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1987, n. 28, p. 92-94: Mass of the “Cuore Immacolato della Beata Vergine Maria”. Cf. there especially the collect and the preface. The entrance antiphon and the “Super oblata” was taken (With the exchange of “cum Virgine Maria” in the Claretian payer by “eius exempla sectantes”, underlining the example-character of Mary instead of the living and praying of the faithful “with” Mary.) from the Proprium of the Claretian Congregation of 1976. The post communion prayer is identical with the “Post communionem” of the Common of the B.V.M. 2 of the Roman Missal 1975; the preface was created obviously in the 80’s in the CDWDS. Cf. D. THÖNNES, *Die Euchologie der Collectio Missarum de Beata Maria Vergine. Textkritische Quellenforschung und systematisch-theologische Studien*, Lang, Frankfurt a.M., 1993, p. 381, 387, 391-392. Much less critical is J. SCHMIEDL, “Ordensspiritualitäten im Marienmessbuch”, in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *De culto Mariano saeculo XX. Maria, Mater Domini, in mysterio salutis quod ad Orienti set Occidentis Ecclesiis in Spiritu Sancto hodie celebratur. Acta congressus Mariologici-Mariani internationalis in sanctuario Mariano Cęstochoviensi anno 1996 celebrati*, vol. 2, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2000, p. 395. The idea of the heart of Mary as dwelling place of Christ (the Word) is especially emphasized. Cf. D. THÖNNES, *Die Euchologie der Collectio*, p. 382-383. The *Collectio Missarum* is a collection (with many adaptations, changes and additions) of already approved Marian Masses in use in various religious congregations and sanctuaries, issued especially for Marian sanctuaries, where Masses in honour of Our Lady are frequent, in order to give a greater variety. The Mass of “Mary, disciple of the Lord”, was created ex nihilo. J. NEBEL, “Das Unbefleckte Herz Mariens”, p. 278-300 analyses word by word the relative dogmatic-spiritual poverty of the masses of the Immaculate Heart in Missale and *Collectio*.

<sup>937</sup> Cf. I. M. CALABUIG, “Il Cuore di Maria”, p. 118.

<sup>938</sup> Cf. the quotation in J. M. ALONSO, “Cuore Immacolato I-IV”, p. 406: Pseudo-ANSELM OF LUCCA, *Meditatio super “Salve Regina”*, 3, in *PL* 149, 585. J. M. Alonso sees the origin of the devotion to the Sacred Hearts in the medieval “Humanism” of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, in which also the rosary has its beginning. For the beginning of the devotion, cf. sub-chapter 2.4.5.

was often affirmed that it needs absolute, immaculate purity and holiness for staying in a place as the very heart of God, such that only Mary can be thought of being worthy of it. Thus spiritual writers recommended taking refuge to the heart of Mary, so that she would cover one's sinfulness and lack with her virtues, and at the same time bring the sinners within her heart into the joy of heaven.<sup>940</sup> The heart of Mary as a source of virtues given to the faithful can be found in St. John Eudes: the heart of Mary is a fountain, collecting all the graces she received and pouring forth all virtues.<sup>941</sup> The French baroque theologian maintained that a relationship of heart means a reciprocal participation in the spiritual qualities of the person.<sup>942</sup> He did thus not hesitate to transfer the idea of the Heart of Christ as fountain to Mary. Today, this is being avoided, and the receptivity of the human heart is underlined. The pioneer of the liturgical cult of the Heart of Mary saw it as an

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<sup>939</sup> As mentioned in sub-chapter 2.3.2.1, the experience of union with Jesus or Mary described by the term "exchange of hearts" began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century with St. Luitgard of Tongern and continued with St. Gertrude the Great of Helfta in the same century, cf. sub-chapter 2.4.5.

<sup>940</sup> Cf. J. M. ALONSO, "Cuore Immacolato I-IV", p. 406, referring to Fr. Croiset, a priest close to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.

<sup>941</sup> Cf. the quotations *Ibidem*, p. 403.

<sup>942</sup> T. Marschler is postulating such for the relationship of heart of Mary with Jesus in Jean Eudes, giving the reference in "Coeur admirable" 4,2 (in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, p. 365). Because of his historical importance, a longer outline of the mystic of J. Eudes shall be given here. J. Eudes called the Son the "heart" of the Father, the Holy Spirit the "heart" of Father and Son, and "Love" the "heart" of the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, he saw in Jesus a heart of flesh, a 'spiritual heart' and a 'divine heart', seeing the three 'hearts' as one. Defining Mary from the view of his theology on the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, he distinguished in Mary also a bodily heart, a 'spiritual heart', and a 'divine heart', which is Christ himself. As centre of her love, Christ becomes the centre of her person. Also in her, the three "hearts" are one. The collect of the Mass in honour of the Heart of Mary reads: "Deus qui Unigenitum tuum in Corde tuo ab aeterno viventem, in Corde Virginis Matris Mariae vivere et regnare in aeternum voluisti: da nobis, quaesumus, hanc sanctissimam Jesu et Mariae in corde uno vitam jugiter celebrare, cor unum inter nos et cum ipsis habere, tuamque in omnibus voluntatem corde magno et animo volenti adimplere; ut secundum Cor tuum a te inveniri mereamur." (God, who wanted your only Son, who lives since all eternity in your Heart, to live and reign for ever in the Heart of the virginal Mother Mary; we pray you, grant us to celebrate always this most holy life of Jesus and Mary, which is in one heart; to have among ourselves and with them one heart and to fulfil your will in everything with generous heart and ready mind, so that we can merit to be found by you as living after your heart.) The post-communal prayer makes the heart of Mary the place of preservation and glorification of the mysteries of life, passion and resurrection of Christ. J. Eudes argued that with the incarnation, Mary has become "fons divinitatis": she has become a permanent source of Christ, who is God. He also advanced the opinion that her power is not restricted to intercession, but that she participates in the power of the heavenly Father to command (according to his will): the relationship of the heart of the Father with the heart of Mary is the reason for her special position. In the relationship with Jesus, he postulated a quasi identity of the physical body of the two, and since the 'bodily heart' is one with the 'spiritual heart', leads to the opinion of a quasi-identity of emotions and direction of life of mother and Son. He underlines that this identity is governed by Jesus, who reigns in the heart of Mary. Thus, according to the 'bodily' and 'spiritual heart' of Mary, Jesus is inseparable from her, because he himself is the 'divine heart' of Mary: her soul and her body are a "place" inhabited by Christ. The heart of Mary is presented as altar, on which the mother in union with Christ priestly offers (constantly) not only the sacrifice of the Son, but also her own, the spiritual immolation of her will. Mary is further presented as 'never touched by the wisdom of the world', but gifted with great knowledge of divine truths (including her future glorification). Thus, he tried to transfer the scholastic opinion of the supernatural "scientia Christi" also on Mary, based on private revelations, allegorical exegesis and theologians as Francisco Suárez. († 1617, Jesuit and greatly esteemed theologian and lawyer in his time. He was important in the development of Mariology as a theological discipline. Cf. S. DE FIORES, "Suárez Francisco", in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 3, p. 761-799.) The relationship of Mary with the Holy Spirit, the one who unites Father and Son, enables her heart in J. Eudes to become an agent of union between the heart of God and the heart of men, and between men among themselves. Thus, not only Jesus is the 'divine heart' of Mary, but also the Spirit, making her the completion of all works of the Trinity in creation, the "place" from which the Spirit is transmitted to men and the Easter-sacrifice of Jesus to the Father perpetuated. It can be seen that Eudes, due to a Christology of his time which over-stressed the divine nature in Christ, was faulty of several exaggerations in the Mariological field. He can be read today as a spiritual author, but not a dogmatic one. Cf. T. MARSCHLER, always giving the reference in "Coeur admirable", in "Das Herz Mariens", p. 86-98, 101-102, 105-106. Cf. also J. NEBEL, "Das Unbefleckte Herz Mariens", p. 241-264.

honouring the source and the origin of the holiness and the dignity of all her mysteries and actions, i.e. her love and charity<sup>943</sup> - which have their source in the Heart of Christ.

Only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century did the devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary begin to inspire the *names* of (first) fraternities<sup>944</sup> and (then) religious institutes.<sup>945</sup> Spirituality that takes into account the messages of “apparitions” has to give attention to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.<sup>946</sup> The message of e.g. Fatima recommended consecrating peoples who were in rebellion against God and his laws of life to the Immaculate Heart as the only way of bringing about a change.<sup>947</sup>

If mentioned in theological treatises or sermons, the “heart” is based almost exclusively on the Biblical connotations, because if it is understood simply as an organ or as seat of the

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<sup>943</sup> Cf. J. EUDES, in the third volume of the “Cœur admirable”, named “La dévotion au très saint Cœur et au très saint Nom de Marie”, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 8, Beauchesne, Paris 1908, p. 431.

<sup>944</sup> In 1666, Pope Alexander VII recognized the first fraternity which was consecrated to the cult of the Heart of Mary. It was founded in 1640 in Naples by V. Guinigi. (Cf. J. STÖHR, “Die Rezeption der Marienweihe”, p. 197.) The liturgical cult began in 1643 (creation of the text) and 1648 (diocesan approval at Autun) with St. John Eudes. Some years later the liturgical Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus began, approved by the Holy See in 1765. The formula for Divine Office and Mass in honour of the Heart of Holy Mary of St. Eudes was rejected by the Vatican in 1669 and taken up again in part by Pope Pius IX in 1855. Cf. J. M. ALONSO - D. SARTOR, “Cuore Immacolato”, p. 404, 408.

<sup>945</sup> Most of them were founded after the French Revolution. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century only, 625 congregations were founded, generally with a spirit of counter-secularization. Alone in the years 1880 till 1900 and 1920 till 1950 fell the foundation of 202 Institutes bearing either the name of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or of the Heart of Mary, or of both. In 1987, there are 449 altogether, of which 54 of the Two Hearts. Cf. J. SCHMIEDL, “Herz-Jesu- und Herz-Mariä-Frömmigkeit”, p. 152, quoting the article of P. NAPOLETANO, “Sacri Cuori, Sacro Cuore di Gesù, Sacro Cuore di Maria”, in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* (1988) vol. 8, col. 258-274. (The comprehensive number of religious Institutes recognized on at least the diocesan level at the time of the Synod for religious life is 2.973 female and 492 male Institutes, plus some 200 Secular Institutes and Societies of Apostolic life. Cf. J. C. R. GARCÍA PAREDES, *Teologia della vita religiosa*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2004, p. 127. The number of new foundations of Institutes, especially in mission countries, in the time after the Council – over 800! – is above the number of Institutes that died in the same period of time.) The devotion to the Two Hearts underwent a crisis after the Second Vatican Council and the ‘revolutionary’ sixties in Europe, because it had been connected with baroque and anti-modernistic expressions. Especially through new Catholic movements orientated towards prayer, and new congregations, the devotion is increasing again in many places. In a Google-search on “two hearts Jesus Mary” (thus searching only among English sites!) a long list of small and big associations and movements appear, of which some shall be quoted here (all seen on 25/2/2014): <<http://allianceofthetwoheartsireland.com/about-us>>, <<http://allianceofthetwoheartsgeorgia.com>>, <<http://ath-stl.org>>: The Alliance of the Two Hearts grew out of the Alliance of the Holy Family, founded in 1990 by Fr. “Bing” Arellano, with activities in Philippines (in Cebu a parish is dedicated to the Alliance of the Two Hearts), and in U.S., especially Georgia and St. Louis in Missouri, and in Ireland; in English, Polish and Spanish. John Paul II dedicated an encouraging address to them. Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Discorso a un Simposio *Attraverso il Cuore della Madre scopriamo l'amore del Salvatore* (22/9/1986) in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, 2 (1986) 698-700. Further <[http://devocionesypromesas.com.ar/english/dos\\_grandes\\_novenas\\_eng.htm](http://devocionesypromesas.com.ar/english/dos_grandes_novenas_eng.htm)>, with the messages of the Two Hearts to the Hungarian Sister of the Good Shepherd of St. Mary Magdalene, Sr. Natalia Magdolna († 1992), that were published first in Mexico. <<http://piercedhearts.org>>: site of the “Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary”, founded by Adela Galinda (born maybe 1964 in Nicaragua) in Florida and Illinois. <<http://heartsofjesusandmary.com>> is the site of the “Order of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary” from Ohio, U.S., established in 1997 as private association of faithful. <[http://sticna.com/consecration\\_to\\_the\\_Hearts\\_of\\_Jesus\\_and\\_Mary.html](http://sticna.com/consecration_to_the_Hearts_of_Jesus_and_Mary.html)> is a website from Slovenia, with the possibilities to choose the language Slovenian, English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Polish, Croatian or Italian. J. Stöhr presents the opinion that movements as the “Blue Army”, (Founded in 1947 in the U.S. by Fr. Harold V. Colgan. Membership comports a consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It had in 2010 22 million members and was recognized on 3/2/2006 as international association of Papal right.) the Marian Priests’ Movement of Don Stefano Gobbi (It is based on a consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and was founded in 1972.) and many other movements and societies all over the globe, including Germany, have undeniable impact on the life of many faithful. As the devotion to the two Hearts inspires many people, sustaining their faith, it gains new actuality in the crisis of faith of the Church in the Western world. Cf. J. STÖHR, “Die Rezeption der Marienweihe”, p. 208-210.

<sup>946</sup> Cf. e.g. i messaggi di Paray-le-Monial, Rue de Bac and Fatima. Cf. J. SCHMIEDL, “Herz-Jesu- und Herz-Mariä-Frömmigkeit”, p. 156, 160.

intelligence, it is hardly mentioned at all in theology and homiletics.<sup>948</sup> In modern homiletics, the recourse to the heart as symbol of integrity of the person in its organic, ontological, spiritual and moral aspects, shows the change to a unitarian anthropology.<sup>949</sup> The stress is often on the imitable activities of the heart, especially the “συμβάλλουσα” of Lk 2,19: remembering, confronting, reflecting over in order to actualize.<sup>950</sup> Some popes, in speeches and homilies, adopted the idea of the hearts of Jesus and Mary as possible “places to stay” and invited the faithful to take refuge in them.<sup>951</sup>

<sup>947</sup> Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 652. In fact, every attempt to defeat with argumentations or violence those who are ready to kill for the sake of an ideology can only make things grow worse.

<sup>948</sup> An exception is the case of using the “heart” as symbol and seat of mere affection: This is not Biblical, but can be found in sermons, and also in A. VANHOYE, “Così Gesù rivela il suo amore”, in *Vita Pastorale*, 46, 6 (2008) 76-78. He approaches the Scriptures from the aspect of the translator, who is interested in rendering the Biblical passage in words which give the right connotations to the people of today. He, thus, sees the „heart“ in many passages, which literally speak of the intestine of Jesus, i.e. Mk 1,41; 6,34; 8,2; Lk 7,13; Mt 9,36; 14,14; 15,32; 20,34, talking of the compassion of Jesus, translated in the New Jerusalem Bible as “he felt sorry”, “he took pity”.

<sup>949</sup> Cf. N. VALENTINI, “Nascosta bellezza del cuore”, in *Il Regno – Attualità*, 49, 1 (2004), p. 68, quoted in S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 444.

<sup>950</sup> On the importance of “remembrance” in Israel and the significance of the verb used in Luke, cf. A. SERRA “Memoria e contemplazione (Lc 2,19.51b)” in *Theotokos* 8 (2000), 821-859, and D. SARTOR, “Cuore Immacolato, V”, in *NDM*, p. 409.

<sup>951</sup> Three examples (from the ordinary non-universal Magisterium) shall be quoted here: PIO IX, *Discorso* (6/10/1873), in *Manualetto dei discorsi del Sommo Pontefice*, Roma, 1876, p. 465: “Mettiamoci tutti nel Cuore di Maria SS. E saremo come nell’Arca di Noè in mezzo di questo diluvio che ne circonda. [...] la Vergine benedetta potrà fare il miracolo e non permettere che i nemici di Dio vengano a toccarci nell’arca del suo Cuore, dove noi ci rifugiamo.” PIO XII, Radiomessaggio ai partecipanti del Congresso Mariano Nazionale della Spagna *Quién Nos pudiera* (12/10/1954), in *AAS*, 46 (1954) 680-683: “crediamo che l’umanità tutta debba dirigersi a questo Porto di salvezza, che Noi abbiamo indicato come principale finalità di questo Anno Mariano, deve cioè rifugiarsi in questa Roccaforte, deve confidare in questo Cuore dolcissimo che, per salvarci, chiede solamente corrispondenza”. JOHN PAUL II, in the 6<sup>th</sup> meditation, *Cuore di Gesù, Tempio santo di Dio, Tabernacolo dell’Altissimo* (9/6/1985) on the invocations of the Litany of the Sacred Heart, meditations pronounced in various Angelus Domini during the summer month of the years 1985-89, says: “il Cuore di Gesù, nel suo tempio interiore, abbraccia tutti gli uomini. Tutti vi abitano, abbracciati dell’eterno amore. [...] Mediante il Cuore immacolato di Maria rimaniamo nell’alleanza con il Cuore di Gesù”. The text can be found in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII, 1 (1985), LEV, Città del Vaticano 1985, p. 1758-1759. What was the historical background of the statements? The early 70’s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were marked by suppression of the Catholic Church. The Prussian reign under Bismarck (similarly liberalist governments in other German states, in Austria, Netherlands and some parts of Switzerland) suppressed Catholic influence in schools and expelled several religious congregations. In mid-May 1873, the Prussian government imposed on clerics an exam on “culture” (i.e. patriotism), seminarians had to study in governmental universities, and permission had to be sought for ecclesiastical nominations. This policy met with strong Catholic resistance; priests and bishops were imprisoned. In Italy, the early 70’s were marked by the French-German war, used by the Italian army to take Rome and to make an end of the Vatican State (9/10/1870). The Italian government tried to integrate the Pope as one of the Italian princes (receiving honour, but no jurisdictional power, while the Pope, requested a small territory and autonomy); many religious houses in Rome were confiscated, the clergy was obliged to military service, religious processions were forbidden. 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1871, France promulgated the separation of Church and state and the confiscation of the properties of religious congregations. In April and May, churches and convents were plundered, clergy was arrested and some were killed. On 29/6/1873, many members of the national Assembly (in their majority Catholic, but not based on a majority of the population) consecrated a “penitent France” to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In Spain, the relationship between Church and state rapidly grew worse. In Brazil, the Church fought against “progressive” free masons; in most other American states (e.g. Mexico and Argentina) anticlericalism grew rapidly. In many places, the Church was very weak. Cf. A. FLICHE ET AL. (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa. Il pontificato di Pio IX*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1990, vol. 21/2, esp. p. 497-569, 575-577, 594-599, 602-603, 605-606, 613, 615, 679, 682-683. The year 1954 belongs to the beginning of the Cold War, in which Pius XII sought energetically to mobilise all Catholic forces. Cf. *Ibidem*, vol. 23, p. 98-99. The meditation of Saint John Paul II is located historically in a time of secularisation and still the Cold War, when the fall of the walls between East and West Europe were not yet to be expected.

### 3.1.2.3. The heart in dogmatics

Western dogmatics, through the centuries, has taken great distance from the Biblical Semitic symbolic language of images and parables,<sup>952</sup> that need to be interpreted, and began to define non-Biblical terms as “person”, “nature”, “substance” and “essence” for the use of explaining the mysteries of the Trinity, the two natures in Christ, etc. Dogmatic works are reluctant in the use of the term “heart”, with the exception of G. Moiola. The same asserts that the word “heart” is the most synthetic expression for the true and singular way of Christ being man. He further pleads for the acceptance of the Christological title of “Heart of Love” as synthetic expression of his being “Son of man”, truly incarnate, and characterized by Love.<sup>953</sup>

It is to be observed fundamentally that theology does not base on reason and philosophy, but on a story: the story told in the bible, first of all the story of Jesus Christ, which communicates to man that God which is the Centre of theology. H. U. v. Balthasar reminds of the fact that in the early Church the pagans were induced to accept both the Scriptures of NT and OT, as the death and resurrection of Christ can be understood only with the images taken from all the Scriptures and with biblical categories. The Swiss theologian says that even “resurrection” and “being raised” are images, communicating the subjective experience of the witnesses and rallying around an unreachable centre.<sup>954</sup> A “narrative” dogmatics, using biblical images and symbols, cannot be discarded apriori. Especially the terms “heart” and “cordial union” should not be excluded in dogmatics when it comes to the issue of expressing an interior life, the holistic view of a person, or an intimate union. However, dogmatics has to put into consideration that the symbolic word has also an appealing homiletic effect.

### 3.1.2.4. The heart in ecumenically engaged theology

In the ecumenical field, the image of the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary as a theological intuition of an expressive symbol seems a thorny question, and also the veneration of these Hearts is a problem, as other denominations apart from the Catholic Church did not develop traditions for such. The Greek Platonic language and culture, i.e. the cultural background of the Greek Orthodox Church, is an exception concerning the anthropological understanding of the heart. It does not see the heart, but the intelligence<sup>955</sup> as the centre of the person. This is an obstacle for a possibility of a

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<sup>952</sup> Even the Johannine “logos” can be named under the language of images and parables, for “the Word became flesh”: the Greek “logos” is not used in John as it is used in Greek philosophy.

<sup>953</sup> Cf. M. NERI, “Spiritualità del Sacro Cuore”, p. 209-210, where he quotes G. MOIOLI, *Cristologia. Proposta sistematica*, Glossa, Milano 1989, p. 243-244, as the only post-Vatican II Christological dogmatic who treats the theme of the heart of Jesus in a significant way: “Che, biblicamente parlando, il ‘cuore’ esprima l’uomo nella sua unità e profondità, e al livello di valore, è fuori discussione. Che, quindi, volendo sinteticamente esprimere il modo vero e singolare di essere-uomo di Gesù si dovrebbe parlare di lui come ‘cuore’, ci sembra pienamente conseguente. Che, infine, si possa (o si debba) assumere la categoria neotestamentaria di ‘agape’ per qualificare la realtà di Gesù intesa come ‘cuore’, ci sembra ancora del tutto giustificato [...] Il ‘cuore’ è la radicale unità dell’uomo, in quanto si ‘corporalizza’ e quindi si ‘simbolizza’. E il ‘simbolo’ è l’esprimersi ‘corporalizzandosi’ di quella originaria, radicale, ontologica unità. Nel caso di Gesù, il ‘simbolo del cuore’ è il ‘simbolo reale’ del Figlio nel suo autoenunciarsi, quindi nel suo autoesprimersi”.

<sup>954</sup> Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni*, p. 176-177.

<sup>955</sup> This made Gnosis to arise, and Fathers as CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (*Stromata*, VI, 12, 102, in PG 9, col. 324 A) saw the need for including love and prayer in the stoic concept of “nous” (knowledge). Diadocus and Pseudo-Macarius followed him. In these stoic Greeks, the heart was no longer the seat of only intelligence, as “intelligence” inglobated

veneration of the heart of Jesus or Mary in the Greek Orthodox Church. D. Fernández related in 1987 33 times the Heart of Mary being mentioned in 21 Greek and Oriental Fathers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> century, and 31 times in 13 Latin Fathers, especially St. Ambrose. On p. 135-136 D. Fernández repeated that it is only a mentioning; the only sign of a cult is in Pseudo-Ephrem, which he quoted on p. 97: Mary invites the disciples to sorrow with her heart.<sup>956</sup> The Greek eastern Fathers mention the “καρδία” of Mary mainly because they are forced by the fact that this heart is named two times in Luke. E.g. St. Germanus († 733), Patriarch of Constantinople, quotes Luke in the places where he speaks of the heart of Mary.<sup>957</sup> The Greek apocryphal “Protogospel of James”<sup>958</sup> and St. Gregorius Taumaturgus, bishop of Neocesarea in Asia Minor (ca. † 270), who calls the heart of Mary the recipient of all mysteries,<sup>959</sup> reveal their Egyptian/Jewish/Palestinian cultural background. A. Ziegenaus points to the theology of the Egyptian monk and Father St. Maximus Confessor († 662) as the foundation for the theology of the Sacred Heart, because he insisted against the monothelism<sup>960</sup> on a human will in Christ, which submitted to his divine will, by making every effort, in compliance with his human nature, loving God “with all his heart”, as is commanded in the Law.<sup>961</sup> There is also Simon Metaphrast, († ca. 1000) Byzantine writer of little doctrinal importance and unknown origin, who contemplated the piercing of the heart of Mary on Golgotha.<sup>962</sup> The non-Greek Eastern attention to the Heart of Mary was developed on Mt. Athos, in

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then the relationship with God and man, making the heart once more the centre of the person. Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, p. 171, quoting A. LEFÈVRE, “Cor et Cordis affectus. Usage biblique”, in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, vol. II/2, col. 2285.

<sup>956</sup> “Lugete mecum, omnes discipuli Domini, dolorem meum et vulnus profundum cordis mei contuentes.” Cf. D. FERNANDEZ, in his article „El Corazón de María en los Santos Padres“, *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 37 (1987) 93-115. The particular *Hymno de Paradiso*, edited by Assemani in vol. 3, p. 574 in 1732-1746 under the name of Ephrem (who wrote 15 hymns on paradise), was not counted under the hymns of neither Ephrem († 373) nor a Pseudo-Ephrem of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, in the *TMPM*, vol. 4, and Fernández noted that it is unknown to which century it belongs. It can well date from the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>957</sup> GERMANUS PATRIARCHA CP., *Oratio V, In Annuntiationem SS. Deiparae*, in *PG* 98, col. 320-338. Also Teofane Niceno, a disciple of Gregorio Palamas of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, seems to use kardía in the Biblical sense.

<sup>958</sup> Especially Papyrus Bodmer 5, XVI, 1-2 explains that Mary was brought already at the age of three to the Temple, so that her heart would not be bound to anything outside the Temple of the Lord. Thus, the ancient text shows an early conviction among Christians that the heart of Mary was always dedicated only to God. The “Protogospel”, originating roughly from 145 AD, is not counted among the heretical texts, rejected for the canon of the NT only because it is not written in the sober style of other NT writings, but adorned with many details, in the Semitic style of narration. Although the historicity of the text is very limited, the faith expressed in the writings is a sure testimony of the faith of the early Palestinian Christians. For apocryphal texts that influenced the liturgy of the Church, cf. A. GILA, *Le più antiche testimonianze letterarie sulla morte e glorificazione della Madre di Dio. Racconti sul Transito di Maria tra fede e teologia*, Messaggero, Padova 2010, p. 12-20.

<sup>959</sup> *Homelia II in An.*, in *PG* 10, col. 1169-1170.

<sup>960</sup> The heresy that saw in Christ only a divine will, no human will, starting around 631. After many years of controversy, during which Maximus was in Constantinople, defending the position of the Bishop of Rome till he died, the 3<sup>rd</sup> council of Constantinople dealt with it in the 18<sup>th</sup> session on 16/9/681. Cf. J. COLLANTES (ed.), *La fede della Chiesa Cattolica*, p. 247-263.

<sup>961</sup> Cf. MAXIMUS CONFESSOR, *Liber asceticus*, quoting Mt 22,37 (or Mk 12,30 or Lk 10, 27: in all these passages the “Shema Israel” is quoted by Jesus): “ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου”, in *PG* 90, col. 920B, and cf. A. ZIEGENAUS, “Die Herz-Jesu-Verehrung”, p. 38.

<sup>962</sup> SIMON METAPHRAST, in his *Planctus B. Mariae corpus Christi amplexantis*, puts these words into the mouth of the Addolorata: “Τὴν πλευρὰν ἐκεντήθης, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἐμὴ καρδία τῆνικαῦτα συνεκεντέϊτό σοι.” [There may be a mistake in the accents, since the text in the copy of PG available for this research was not very well printed on column 216.] (in *PG* 114, col. 216D) (‘Your side has been pierced, contemporarily also my heart has been pierced through.’) M. Hauke comments that while the Holy Scriptures mentions the heart (or soul) of Mary only in connection with the mystery of Christmas and the 12-years-old Jesus (Lk 2,19.35.51), the tradition of the Church (in East and West) extended the meditation on the involvement of the heart (interior life) of Mary to the mystery of Easter. Cf. M. HAUKE, “Geschichliche und systematische Grundlinien“, p. 14-16.



the Georgian monastery of Iviron. Between 980 and 990, Euthyme the Hagiorite († 1028)<sup>963</sup> translated there the *Life of the Virgin* of Maximus Confessor into the Georgian language and writing. Maximus is not known for an attention to the heart of Mary, while Euthyme is known for translating very freely. A good century before an explicit attention to the Heart of Jesus or Mary in the West, Euthyme on Mt. Athos highly exalted the heart of Mary: her feelings, her love, her will power, her decisions.<sup>964</sup>

While the Greek Orthodox difficulty with the “heart” is still persisting, the modern Russian Orthodox theologians have a preference for the word heart (in the Biblical sense of the human organ able to perceive God).<sup>965</sup> After the persecutions and laws of Peter the Great (1682-1725), Anna Ivanovna (1730-1740) and Caterina II (1762-1796), and after the destructive influence of the German rationalism (e.g. Kant, 1724-1804), Russia woke up to a very lively reaction, in which the importance of the “heart”, “prayer of the heart” and the “sentiments of the heart” were almost officially recognized by the Orthodox theologians in their apologetic manuals on faith. The notion “heart” was used to stress that all in man, including his sentiments, are important on his way to know God and to holiness.<sup>966</sup> Vladimir Soloviev, 1853-1900, in his “Spiritual foundations of life”, 1884, calls Christ the head of the Church, and Mary the heart. Pavel Florenskij, 1882-1937, talks in “The column and the foundation of truth” of Divine Love as the heart of Wisdom<sup>967</sup>, of purity of heart, and also of Mary as heart of the Church and thus “heart” of Jesus Christ.<sup>968</sup> A Slavic theologian who studied the question whether the Catholic and Orthodox understanding of the heart are equal, comes to a positive result.<sup>969</sup> T. Špidlík is convinced that the oriental understanding of the heart can deepen the occidental view: the heart can be seen as principle of unity and stability, as organ not only of communication with God, but even of the natural desire for God.<sup>970</sup>

<sup>963</sup> Euthyme was a Greek Orthodox monk of Georgian origin, founder of the Monastery of Iviron and translator not only of the “life of the Virgin” into Georgian language, but also of works of St. Gregory of Nazianzen.

<sup>964</sup> Cf. M.-J. v. ESBROECK, *Introduction*, in *CSCO* 479, *Scriptores Iberici*, Tomus 22, p. VI. The Greek original of the work is not known, only the Georgian translation has survived. M.-J. v. Esbroeck translated the Georgian text into French, the author translated from French to English, to quote some examples of how the heart of Mary was acclaimed by Euthyme. In n. 14, p. 11, line 34: Mary praying with sorrowful and holy heart; n. 23, p. 18, line 3: Mary had established virginity in her heart; n. 24, p. 19, line 27: Mary keeps the mystery in her heart hidden, as she was full of wisdom; n. 53, p. 43, line 17: the passion of the Son was the sadness of her heart; n. 53, p. 44, line 5: anguish and doubt, like a sword, have touched the immaculate heart of Mary; n. 53, p. 44, line 8: he strengthens their heart (the heart of Mary and the Apostles). Seeing the scientific introduction to the translation, it seems very unlikely that Esbroeck should have used the word “heart” in his French translation, while the Georgian text uses a word which in reality expresses something else.

<sup>965</sup> Cf. A. LEFEVRE, “Cor et Cordis affectus”, col. 2284-2285.

<sup>966</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, especially p. 7-8, quoting T. SPÁČIL, *Doctrina theol. Orientis separati de revelatione, fide, domate*, s.ed., Roma 1935, p. 106ss, and p. 324.

<sup>967</sup> In P. Florenskij, this Wisdom is not Christ, but a kind of guardian angel of the earth, the personified ‘root of all creation’. It must be understood as a philosophical term, not as a contribution to dogmatic or Biblical theology.

<sup>968</sup> P. FLORENSKIJ, *La colonna e il fondamento della verità*, Rusconi, Milano 1974, p. 388, 414, 418, 421-422.

<sup>969</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLÍK, *Il Cuore e lo Spirito*, p. 160-161, quoting the study of B. VYŠESLAVECEV, *Serce v christianskoj i indijskoj mistike (Il cuore nella mistica cristiana e indiana)*, s. ed., Paris 1929, p. 43. Despite the “positive result” on the heart as symbol of love and union of spirit and flesh, the author criticizes the Catholic images and prayers for the Sacred Heart. An Orthodox Christian may however consent to the idea that the flesh of Christ is venerable, as ŠPIDLÍK tries to convince the reader on p. 163.

<sup>970</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 169. On p. 170, he quotes Theophanes in an Exegesis of Phil 1,8, where he sees St. Paul as loving his addressees ‘by the grace of Christ, by the heart of Christ’ (“per la grazia di Cristo, per il cuore di Cristo”), thus translating *splánknois* with heart. If one agrees that the heart has a natural desire for God, it means a non-religious heart is lacking an important dimension of its functionality. Then the unity of the person in itself is no longer stable.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical Marian document, alluding to a well-known word of St. Augustine, sees the heart as a reception place for other persons and for God, speaking of “the one who would receive the Word in her heart and in her body”.<sup>971</sup> Putting into account also the above demonstrated importance of “heart” in the Bible, a reception of the veneration of the Two Hearts among Protestants cannot be excluded a priori as impossible and not in harmony with Protestant doctrine and spirituality.

As the union of Jesus and Mary concerns two human beings, the next sub-chapter shall look at the science of anthropology concerning union between human beings, and its use in dogmatics.

### **3.2. The social aspect of the Two Hearts of Love: relationships as foundation of union**

The human person exists in relationships.<sup>972</sup> This sub-chapter will briefly analyse the concept of the human person and his need to be in positive relationships with others,<sup>973</sup> the metaphysical foundation of human relationships, the need for a conscience of self and the capacity for communication in order to build positive relationships, and finally the gain received from it: living in communion and finding one’s identity. The sub-chapter will not only consult anthropologists, but rather theologians, to develop with them a theologically based anthropology.

#### **3.2.1. The human person and its need of relationship**

The human being is both sustained and limited by given facts from nature (inherited static facts as DNA<sup>974</sup> and male or female body, and dynamic facts as the bio-rhythm of hormones) and culture (knowledge, belief, arts, laws and customs of the society or community or group). It is a problem of science to find out how the corporeity intrinsically structures one’s way of thinking, wanting and relating oneself to others, and how the society influences. The given facts from nature and culture are sometimes accepted, sometimes rebelled against.<sup>975</sup> Thus each person builds his

<sup>971</sup> ARCIC II (ed.), *Mary, grace and hope in Christ. The Seattle statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission*, Continuum, London 2006, n. 11, p. 19. The document is a Marian reflection of theologians who have been chosen and authorized by their ecclesiastical authorities to reflect together. The same authorities permitted the outcome to be published, so that further and wider discussion might happen. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>972</sup> Many philosophers of Christian and Jewish tradition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century emphasize this, as E. Mournier († 1950), Paul Ricoeur († 2005), Martin Buber († 1965) who ascribes to the relationship an ontological importance, and Emmanuel Lévinas († 1995), who examines the relationship between the I and the Other. For Buber and Lévinas cf. I. SANNA, *L’identità aperta*, p. 36. Modern psychologists postulate that it is not possible not to communicate, thus, a person cannot not be in a relationship. Cf. P. WATZLAWICK – J. H. BEAVIN – D. D. JACKSON, *Pragmatica della comunicazione umana*, Astrolabio, Roma 1971, 40-61, quoted in D. CANDIDO, “Maria persona in relazione alla luce della Bibbia”, in *Theotokos* 15 (2007) 361. Cf. also S. ZUCAL, “L’uomo ‘essere dialogico’”, in *Rivista di Teologia Morale* 46 (2014) 189-196.

<sup>973</sup> J.-P. Sartre († 1980, French philosopher who promoted existentialism with its ‘programmatic atheism’ and the extreme left wing of the political groups in France. Cf. G. INVITTO, “Jean Paul Sartre”, in P. SALANDINI – R. LOLLI (ed.), *Filosofie nel tempo*, Vol. 3, Tomo 2, p. 1401, 1404.) tried to prove in his drama of three persons in a closed room (1943) that forced relationships can be terribly destructive. He is quoted in A. LANGELLA, “Maria, persona in relazione, il paradosso della relazione come ‘inferno’”, in *Theotokos* 15 (2007) 351-353. But even “forced” relationships depend on the personal decision of each, what to do with it: they are possibilities of positive relationships.

<sup>974</sup> The DNA of two human beings differ highest by 5%. Cf. I. SANNA, *L’identità aperta*, p. 50. In the same book on p. 131-162, I. Sanna explains the identitarian process as a process between nature and culture.

<sup>975</sup> E. FIZZOTTI, “La donna nell’antropologia. Sguardo storico e prospettiva di ricerca”, in M. TOSO (ed.), *Essere donna. Studi sulla lettera apostolica “Mulieris dignitatem” di Giovanni Paolo II*, ElleDiCi, Leumann 1989, p. 231.

relationships, or cuts them off. The human nature and culture of an individual can be summed up in the traditional philosophical term “substance of the human person”<sup>976</sup>; in the modern “structuralism” the fundamental category is no longer the being, but communication and relationship. S. De Fiores sees these changes brought about by personalism and a philosophy of dialogue.<sup>977</sup>

Africans say that the individual is a dead branch when it is cut off from the living stem of the community. The relationships of man with the universe and the community are seen as relationships of communion, sharing in a common life-force. E. Przwara elaborated that there is a polarity between spirit and body, man and woman, individual and community.<sup>978</sup> F. Nwaigbo differentiates between a “one-to-many relationship [...] in which one partner makes a regular input in the existence of *Many* and thereby challenges them to meet with a response”, and the “one-to-one relationship [...] where each partner makes a reciprocal input in the life of the *Other*, and continue to be radically interdependent with each other.”<sup>979</sup> Also in the Western world it has become a common saying that man is a being-for-others, realizing himself in relationship with others.<sup>980</sup> In the German context, Ratzinger can be mentioned as one of the early defenders (in 1977) of the fact that relationships form one of the three constitutional truths of a person, through which a person can (may) find the meaning of his life: the subsistence (the conscious “being-with” oneself), the existence (facing the world in liberty), the communication (giving oneself in love to another person).<sup>981</sup>

The discovery of the importance of relationships has led some scientists to define a human person as a being that exercises presently and with consciousness a reciprocal relationship. Unconscious human beings, including the unborn babies in the early stage of development, were called “non-persons”.<sup>982</sup> However, conscious relationships are only outward signs of the fact that the being is able to communicate. Furthermore, in the human experience, there is not only the experience of “I act”, but also “something is happening in me”<sup>983</sup>: receiving inspiration, new courage, understanding, or being subjected to negative spiritual influences. There are

<sup>976</sup> Cf. S. BOEZIO, *De persona et duabus naturis*, chap. 3, in *PL* 64, col. 1343C-D.

<sup>977</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 473. He quotes B. MONDIN, *Cultura, marxismo e cristianesimo*, Milano 1979, p. 30-31, E. MOUNIER, *Il personalismo*, Roma 1964, G. MARCEL, *L'uomo problematico*, Torino 1967, and others. He concludes on p. 473: “La visione equilibrata che scorge nella persona un intreccio vivo [...] della] sussistenza o inseità e la relazione o rapporto con gli altri, si addice a Maria”.

<sup>978</sup> Cf. E. PRZYWARA, especially *Mensch, typologische Anthropologie I*, Glock, Nürnberg 1952.

<sup>979</sup> F. NWAIGBO, *Mary – mother of the African church*, p. 27. Strangely, the author applies the “one-to-one relationship” on p. 28 to the relationship of Mary with those Non-Catholics, who *refuse* to communicate with her. For the relationships of communion, cf. *Ibidem*, p. 36: “the mother earth is the womb that binds living beings with the potency of life”, and cf. G. G. TATA, *L'anthropologie communautaire africaine*, p. 44, quoting E. MVENG, “Essai d'anthropologie négro-africaine: la personne humaine”, in IDEM, *L'Afrique dans l'Eglise. Paroles d'un croyant*, L'Harmattan, Paris 1985, p. 7-18.

<sup>980</sup> Cf. U. GALEAZZI, *Identità umana e libertà. Narrazioni rivali nella storia della filosofia*, Milella, Lecce 2002, p. 21: “La mia identità dipende in modo cruciale dalle mie relazioni dialogiche con gli altri”, quoted in I. SANNA, *L'identità aperta*, p. 33.

<sup>981</sup> Cf. J. AUER - J. RATZINGER, *Il mondo come creazione*, Cittadella, Assisi 1977, p. 380.

<sup>982</sup> Cf. G. T. ENGELHARDT, *Manuale di Bioetica*, Saggiatore, Milano 1991, p. 126, quoted in F. MUZUMANGA MAMUBIMBI, “Persona/relazionalità”, p. 941. Even I. SANNA, *L'identità aperta*, is among those who call newborn babies ‘not different to the babies of monkeys’, until they, ca. in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> week of life, begin to try to catch the eyes of the mother: not only looking, but seeking to be watched. He calls this the event with which ‘the baby enters into an unequivocal human world’. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 33-34. In this view, only immanent, empirically “measurable” acts count for the capacity to establish relationships.

<sup>983</sup> Cf. A. STAGLIANÒ, *Madre di Dio*, p. 62.

metaphysically based relationships that do not necessarily need a physical expression. Human relationships and the relationships of God with a human person can begin before that person can be conscious of it and continue also in situations of unconsciousness (e.g. coma), lifting that being into the dignity of a human person. Whether there is a response or not to acts, words or thoughts of love towards the person was not yet possible to prove empirically in the past. Recently, scientists have seen signs of consciousness and response to stimulations in the brain-activity of some (not all) people in vegetative coma.<sup>984</sup>

A human person can be male or female.<sup>985</sup> The relationship man-woman is often called paradigmatic:<sup>986</sup> if this relationship is being deprecated or even cancelled, all other human relationships become superficial and virtual.<sup>987</sup> Human beings are created in the “likeness of God” (Gn 1,27) for a loving relationship of man and woman, one being for the other.<sup>988</sup> G. P. Di Nicola

<sup>984</sup> At the university of Cambridge it was found that the cerebral circuit is sometimes well conserved in patients in vegetative state. The English scientists are convinced that these functioning or re-functioning circuits are a sign that the person is in conscience, without being able to manifest it externally, and thus, on the way to betterment of his condition. Cf. V. SALINARO, “Stati vegetative. Cambridge: ecco le ‘firme’ della coscienza”, in *Avvenire* 47, no. 245 (17/10/2014) 12.

<sup>985</sup> With the exception of few persons who are born neither with complete female nor with complete masculine physical dispositions as organs and structure of brain. Although M. PERRONI in “Principio Mariano – principio Petri: Questio disputanda?” in *Marianum* 72 (2010) 550-552 proclaims that the ‘epistemology of gender has become undoubtable principle of thinking and judging’, claiming a fragility of definitions of what is male and what is female, these exceptional natural defects cannot be proclaimed as the foundation of a “norm” of “freedom” for every human being to choose his “gender”. Cf. G. P. DI NICOLA – A. DANESE, “L’Antropologia uni duale al cuore della relazione interpersonale”, in *Theotokos* 15 (2007) 415-418. D. DEL GAUDIO, in her studies on Edith Stein: “La differenziazione dei sessi significa perciò una dimensione complementare per la piena comprensione dell’essere persona in senso relazionale. Come, infatti, l’io si manifesta nel rapporto con il tu, a maggior ragione l’incontro della mascolinità con la femminilità rivela la piena identità dell’uno e dell’altra ed anche la fecondità della natura umana nel dono della vita che genera nuova vita. In questa comunione entrambi si completano nel noi che riproduce l’immagine di Dio nei suoi caratteri di paternità e di maternità divina, ma trovano anche la specificità del proprio essere persona maschile e femminile nei tratti caratteristici che li distinguono a livello fisico, psicologico e spirituale.” “Maria modello e compimento della relazione nel pensiero di Edith Stein”, in *Theotokos* 18 (2010) 272.

<sup>986</sup> M. X. BERTOLA underlines the difference between man and woman in feeling, perception and will: “Se la sessualità è vista come un principio di configurazione totale della persona, ne consegue che il sentire, il percepire, il volere dell’uomo si differenzia considerevolmente da quello della donna, ed ogni interpretazione della realtà finisce per essere segnata da questa essenziale differenza.” “Antropologia”, in *NDM*, p. 84. Man and woman have a biologically sustained capacity to complete and need each other, for example in the job of founding a family, but also for finding the proper identity. The man is more easily the better leader and giver, always in need of someone who will allow himself to be led and given. Thus, it was natural for God to choose to incarnate in a male body, and man is naturally the better representative of Christ in ministerial priesthood; “Father” is a much more fitting title for God than “Mother”, though He has no sex. The woman is more easily the faithful follower and receiver, once she perceived that someone is leading and giving with love; she is in tendency the better perceiver, consoler, counsellor, keeper and distributor. Thus, the woman is naturally the better representation of the Church as a whole. The fact that some Fathers of the Church saw Eve and Mary in a parallel could be seen as a proof of the symbolic expression of the significance of the woman: Eve, “mother of the living”, is the beginning of all mankind, representing all mankind, while Adam, the man, is the responsible guardian of these living, the one who could and should have prevented the fall. Equally Mary is representing mankind in her adherence to the saviour, Christ. Cf. M.T. BELLENZIER, “Donna”, in *NDM*, p. 458.

<sup>987</sup> Cf. C. MCNELLY KEARNS, *The Virgin Mary, monotheism, and sacrifice*, p. 30, postulating with Mary Douglas an analogy between personal body and social body, structured by binary oppositions: “purity and danger, sacred and profane, living and dead, man and woman, human and animal, inside and outside. To blur or challenge these oppositions, Douglas argues, is to create a threat both to personal identity and to the community”. Cf. also M. FARINA, “Maria, donna in relazione”, p. 485, and P. DE BENEDETTI, “A immagine di Dio. L’origine dei generi nel racconto biblico”, in M. BORSARI - D. FRANCESCONI (ed.), *Maschio e femmina le creò*, p. 38: “ogni alterità, in qualche modo, ha la sua fondazione originaria nell’alterità della coppia uomo-donna, anche se le alterità sono di molti tipi.”

<sup>988</sup> Cf. A. STAGLIANÒ, *Madre di Dio*, p. 83. P. N. EVDOKIMOV († 1970), famous russian-orthodox theologian, sustained as a young professor that the woman is created to bring man into a loving relationship with others and with God. He called the woman the “relational principle”, and therefore the “religious principle”, in *La donna e la salvezza del mondo*, Jaka Book, Milano 1989, p. 158-159.

emphasized the aspect of difference and complementarity of the two sexes.<sup>989</sup> She stressed that the complementarity does not mean that the other is a *means* to achieve one's completeness, neither is the other the *means* to reach the wholeness and inner harmony which only God can give, but every "you" remains necessary for the fundamental experience of communication and donation of self. In relationship, every "you" is a partner which is to be respected both as equal (in freedom and capacity to choose what to do) and different (in the way of thinking).<sup>990</sup> Femininity can be seen in the free adherence to a project and a constant relationship with all forms of life.<sup>991</sup> Consequently, the man has the duty to elaborate a common and possible project to which a woman can happily agree, a project that does allow her to live and develop her relationships.

Another basic human relationship is the one between mother and child. Psychology stresses the importance of the role of the mother for the processes of identification and in the development of emotive-affective energy in any child.<sup>992</sup> It is mainly the mother that has to do her part for the initial socialization of a child into the communion of faith.<sup>993</sup>

### **3.2.2. The foundation of relationship: metaphysically based communion, conscience of self and communication**

The relationship of human beings with others is not only a need; in many cultures it has a foundation in God. The communion which exists according to the testimony of the Holy Scriptures among mankind as a people with an historical single origin (the first couple) and a metaphysical single Origin and End (God) precedes the personal differentiation. It may be affirmed that the communion among mankind is very effective before God in the sense of both sins and holiness of single members having negative or positive effect on all the people.<sup>994</sup> The intuition of African Traditional Religion that lack of union in the community causes problems and death to single members, widens to much broader dimensions in the view of the universal Body of Christ, in which every created person can<sup>995</sup> be included. This communion is obviously a non-conscious relationship for many members of mankind, as it is rarely consciously experienced. It shall be called here a "fundamental relationship", to distinguish it from the "personal relationship". The increased

<sup>989</sup> Cf. G. P. DI NICOLA, "Maria in relazione", in *Theotokos* 2/1 (1994) 241. Di Nicola is a married sociologist. Three years after her article, the periodical gave a vaster treatment to the theme of "Mary in relationship".

<sup>990</sup> Cf. IDEM, "Introduzione. Continuità e mutamento nel pensiero della chiesa", in IDEM - A. DANESE (ed.), *Il Papa scrive. Le donne rispondono*, Dehoniane, Bologna 1996, p. 14.

<sup>991</sup> Cf. P. BARIGELLI-CALCARI, *L'ultimo desiderio nelle religioni*, p. 120-121: "L'essere femminile della Vergine sembra strutturato su due dimensioni costitutive: la prima è la sua libera adesione al progetto salvifico; la seconda, derivata ed alimentata dalla prima, è la sua costante relazione con la sua famiglia, col suo popolo, con tutto il genere umano e tutte le forme di vita."

<sup>992</sup> Cf. A. SPINGER, "Mutterbindung", in *Frauenlexikon. Wirklichkeiten und Wünsche von Frauen*, Herder, Freiburg 1991, p. 772-777.

<sup>993</sup> Cf. P. BARIGELLI-CALCARI, *L'ultimo desiderio nelle religioni*, p. 183-184, quoting C. OTTAVIANO, "Giovani, esperienza religiosa e famiglia", in *La Famiglia* 40 (2006) 235, 42-43 and A. BAZZANELLA - M. FRONTINI, "Appartenenza religiosa, percezione delle norme sociali e trasgressione", in R. GRASSI (ed.), *Giovani, religione e vita quotidiana*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2006, p. 104.

<sup>994</sup> Cf. Gen 18, 26-32: ten just people can make God to spare a sinful city.

<sup>995</sup> The inclusion remains only a possibility till the soul responds with love to the love of the only Saviour of mankind.

“fundamental relationship” of all men grants them the possibility for personal relationships. The communion of mankind builds on the latter.<sup>996</sup>

St. John Chrisostomos († 407) asked in a sermon why God divided the human nature into two different beings, male and female? His answer is, because God wanted to give a possibility of a union which is transcending nature: the unity of love among two free persons, as image of the unity existing in the Holy Trinity.<sup>997</sup> The reflection on the Two Hearts of Love underline also the oneness of all mankind: God has become man in a male body, in Jesus, but for all mankind, for both sexes. Mary, the woman, has been raised to the dignity of reciprocation with God, being a symbol and including type of all mankind, a model for both sexes.<sup>998</sup> The masculinity and the femininity of the Two are an indication of the necessity of relationships of self-donation, but not only between man and woman, but also between every person and all mankind, between every person and God.

Every human being needs the experience of entering into intimate personal relationship and a stable covenant with another person, a co-involving relationship of reciprocity and care for the life of the partner, as God cares for his people.<sup>999</sup> Personal relationships are possible only for a person who possesses himself to the extent one knows and accepts oneself and to the extent one is able to control and to communicate oneself (as Mary did in the Magnificat<sup>1000</sup>). Only then can one donate oneself, entering into a symmetric relationship with the other.<sup>1001</sup> The answer of Mary at the Annunciation proves a conscience of self which is above the normal.<sup>1002</sup> Relationships of brotherhood/comradeship/friendship/spiritual direction are limited in the giving of oneself to the other, even in a friendship of special confidence. Of a friend of confidence one will trustfully expect that he will never enter certain areas. In a relationship of love, i.e. in the highest possible relationship<sup>1003</sup>, no area of life must be excluded categorically in the communication of oneself.<sup>1004</sup> That is why the person must know and own (accept) himself, before he can enter into a real relationship of love. McNelly Kearns states that for the maturation of a child from a state of preverbal and immediate association with the body of the mother, the child has to renounce the security and satisfaction given by the bodily contact with her, in order to reach the “language-based, rule-governed, and individuated association with the father and with the culture at large.”<sup>1005</sup>

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<sup>996</sup> Equally, faith takes place within the communion of the Church, cf. FRANCIS, *Lumen fidei*, n. 39. As the faith of each member is strengthening that same communion, so every personal positive relationship between two persons sustains the communion and peace among all mankind.

<sup>997</sup> Cf. T. ŠPIDLIK – M. TENACE – R. ČEMUS, *Il Monachesimo*, p. 90, quoting JOHN CHRYSOSTOMOS, homily 12, *In ep. ad Coloss.*, in PG 62, 387. Cf. also S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 386: “occorre vedere la società e la Chiesa come icona della Trinità, dove ogni persona divina è dall'altra (l'altro costituisce), con l'altra (comunione), nell'altra (pericorese) e per l'altra (sussidiarietà) e dove esiste la massima distinzione nella massima unità.”

<sup>998</sup> Cf. this thought also in G. P. DI NICOLA, “Maria in relazione”, in *Theotokos* 2/1 (1994) 248-249.

<sup>999</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Maria persona in relazione sullo sfondo e nel contesto della storia salvifica”, in *Theotokos* 15 (2007) 375.

<sup>1000</sup> Cf. L. SEBASTIANI, “Maria e le domande attuali dell'etica relazionale”, in *Theotokos* 15,2 (2007) 500: the Magnificat shows her relationship and communication with God and with the world.

<sup>1001</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 492. Cf. also L. PINKUS, “Alma Redemptoris Mater. Un approccio psicodinamico al tema: Maria nell'educazione di Cristo e del cristiano”, in G. LOPARCO – M. P. MANELLO (ed.), *Maria nell'educazione di Gesù Cristo e del cristiano. 2. Approccio interdisciplinare a Gv 19,25-27*. Atti del pre-seminario di studio promosso dalla Pontificia Facoltà di scienze dell'Educazione “Auxilium”. Roma, 8 febbraio 2003, LAS, Roma 2003, p. 118-119.

<sup>1002</sup> Cf. L. SEBASTIANI, “Maria e le domande”, p. 497.

<sup>1003</sup> Cf. C. AUGIAS – V. MANCUSO, *Disputa su Dio e dintorni*, Mondadori, Milano 2009, p. 113.

<sup>1004</sup> There may be moments that need respect of the human limitations of the other, waiting for the right time and disposition before giving further communication.

<sup>1005</sup> C. MCNELLY KEARNS, *The Virgin Mary, monotheism, and sacrifice*, p. 40-41.

Communication is a necessity for the building of relationships, but communication passes not only through the word and other sounds, but also through the face (cf. the newborn baby that develops first of all a relationship with the eyes of the mother)<sup>1006</sup> and all expressions of the “language of the body”<sup>1007</sup>. In communication for the sake of building a relationship, listening/watching is as important as expressing something; the receiver is as important as the sender.<sup>1008</sup>

A relationship with God and with one another is fragile, it can break, but it can also be re-attached.<sup>1009</sup> As no creature is perfect, positive relationships of human beings include necessarily requests for forgiveness.

Relationships can be built in communication among persons in equality, or between a human and a divine person. In the second case, the relationship is a commandment, based on the authority of the One who calls, without cancelling the freedom of the human person to decide.<sup>1010</sup> It is the gift of his presence and his word requiring the answer of consecration to him.<sup>1011</sup> The communication with God is prayer; in prayer man becomes related to God and fulfils the purpose of his creation and thus also realizing his personality.<sup>1012</sup> The Christian God of Alliance, in his calling, makes it possible for man not only to pray to God from below, but to correspond to God, to become a “partner” and “spouse” of God.<sup>1013</sup>

To communicate with the fellow human beings, with angels and with God, needs time, energy and attention. This is recompensed by a rich gain which shall be treated in the following sub-chapter.

### 3.2.3. The gain of positive relationship: union and identity

Human relationships can be positive or negative. Positive relationships consist of peaceful communication, effort of understanding the emotions and the intentions of the other, a gift of oneself in liberty – to some extent, or as a gift of oneself in love without limitations a priori. These relationships are directed towards producing communion and harmony in will, word and action.<sup>1014</sup>

<sup>1006</sup> Cf. I. SANNA, *L'identità aperta*, p. 34.

<sup>1007</sup> “Gli studiosi della comunicazione umana attribuiscono al “tono di voce” il 30% della totalità della comunicazione medesima. [...] Il 10% del comunicare è dato dal pensiero, dal concetto, dal *contenuto*, [...] e il rimanente 60% è dato dalla *gestualità fisica* (postura della persona, espressione del volto, sguardo, ...). [...] Il buon pastore si riconosce dalla “voce” perché la “voce” trasmette subito il calore del sentimento, il calore dell’amore.” G. BUSANI, “La risorsa educativa della liturgia. Ordo communionis”, in *Rivista Liturgica* 98/2 (2011) 264-265.

<sup>1008</sup> The body of a person in coma or of a deceased person still communicates the presence of the person. That is another reason why the Church urges her children to pray at the bed of those in coma or dying, to help them to begin a new way of communication with their loved ones – a communication in God. The body of a saint – both alive or dead – can even communicate graces from God, i.e. help to establish a relationship between the faithful and God. For this reason the Church venerates the relics of saints. Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, Istruzione per lo svolgimento delle Inchieste Diocesane o Eparchiali nelle Cause dei Santi *Sanctorum Mater* (17/5/2007), Appendice, Art. 1, §1: “Secondo l’antica tradizione della Chiesa, le reliquie dei Santi e dei Beati sono oggetto di venerazione e le loro tombe sono meta di pellegrinaggio.” The document was published in AAS 99 (2007) 465-510.

<sup>1009</sup> Cf. D. CANDIDO, “Maria persona”, p. 362-364.

<sup>1010</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 365-366.

<sup>1011</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Maria persona”, p. 375.

<sup>1012</sup> Cf. A. STAGLIANÒ, *Madre di Dio*, p. 77.

<sup>1013</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 97. If a person is called “being in the grace of God”, it means that the person has a positive personal relationship with God. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 57.

<sup>1014</sup> E.g. the relationship in the early Church in Acts 1,14. According to D. Candido, Mary did not vindicate her primacy as the mother and the first disciple, but all were “united in prayer”. Cf. D. CANDIDO, “Maria persona”, p. 371.

The harmony and union of heart does not cancel the differences of nature, style and character of the persons. Union among two is never achieved if there is no real duality. Only from a relationship “face to face”, when two are standing in front of each other in freedom and love, each donating himself, can a real unity grow. The gift of oneself includes the maturity of taking up of responsibility for the other, his life and happiness, finding the just compromise between giving freedom for the decisions of the other and binding the other to oneself.<sup>1015</sup> Positive human relationships always take God as guarantee, guide and aim. It is only the inhabitation of the Holy Trinity with its perfect relationships of love that permits human beings to reach a harmonious communion.<sup>1016</sup> The human person<sup>1017</sup> is created by God in order to respond to love – first of all to the Love of God. This response is not aimed only at communication but at a union. A human person is a being that is inhabitable by God and fellow men, in the process of becoming more and more inhabitable.<sup>1018</sup>

The concept of “identity”, the “being oneself” which belongs to the “Dasein”, the existence, is described by I. Sanna as “narrative identity”: an identity which results from all experiences throughout life. To possess a clear identity shows in fidelity to oneself, in knowing what one can promise and in maintaining the promises.<sup>1019</sup> At the same time, contemporary philosophers and anthropologists emphasize that identity is a “mobile” reality: the process of “self-creation” never ends.<sup>1020</sup> Psychologists go so far as to define “identity” as a construction made of relationships.<sup>1021</sup>

<sup>1015</sup> Cf. M. SPÒLNİK, “Alcuni aspetti per educare alle relazioni adulte”, in *Theotokos* 15 (2007) 509, 514-516.

<sup>1016</sup> Cf. F. MUZUMANGA MA-MUBIMBI, “Persona/relazionalità”, p. 943. A relationship that knowingly and willingly excludes God from life and aims must automatically have selfish aims: my pleasure, my well-being, my career and position; my food, my money, my family.... It usually turns into a negative relationship, with the aim to get the maximum of help and satisfaction while giving the minimum of understanding and time, refusing to take up responsibilities for the other. Negative relationships are directly or indirectly tending towards the destruction of the other in a first step, and to the destruction of self in the second, when the understanding dawns that in destroying the other one has already corroded one’s life and happiness. Negative relationships are actually the destruction of a relationship: the “other” becomes a “foreigner” to one’s life, and generally the act of destroying relationships is seen as an act of madness, as the person alienates with it also himself from himself. Cf. E. MOURNIER, *Le personnalisme, Oeuvres*, III, Seuil, Paris 1961-63, quoted in G. P. DI NICOLA – A. DANESE, “L’Antropologia”, p. 420.

<sup>1017</sup> It is to be remembered that the term “person” was applied and developed in the Christological and Theological discussions around the first Ecumenical Councils. The Fathers tried to express the mystery of personal communion and union, entering into each other and still being distinct, of the three divine persons. The term can be applied to human beings, as they are created in the “image and likeness” of God.

<sup>1018</sup> Cf. A. STAGLIANÒ, *Madre di Dio*, p. 38, 54.

<sup>1019</sup> Cf. I. SANNA, *L’identità aperta*, p. 24, quoting P. RICOEUR, “L’identité narrative”, in *Esprit* 1 (1988) 295-314; IDEM, *Sé come altro*, Jaka Book, Milano 1994; IDEM, *La persona*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1997.

<sup>1020</sup> I. Sanna quotes J. Seel, D. Parfit and J. Elster as examples of postmodern studies. They sustain that the “I” is completely undetermined, and that in various situations, people have different roles and, thus, also different “part time identities”. Cf. IDEM, *L’identità aperta*, p. 29-30. These authors see the problem that many people today try to identify with something, try to build up a positive relationship with someone, and fail. But they also fall into the error of confusing a social role with identity. Identity is influenced by the experience made in various roles and it is the foundation for being able to assume a social role properly. Whoever does not identify with e.g. the social group of his co-workers in a big enterprise, making the condition of a worker a part of his life and identity, can hardly work well. But the two terms cannot be used as synonyms. A man can e.g. assume the social role of a woman: undergo operations, take hormonal drugs (which give a high risk of cancer), adorn himself with cosmetics and jewels and “marry” a man, but he can never have the identity of a woman because the brain, the voice, the skin and e.g. the experience of skin contact are still that of a male person. Neither can he have the experience of pregnancy. In the society of today, the possible social roles of an individual have greatly multiplied: the society of today is no longer divided in classes with the sheer impossibility to pass from one class (farmer) to another (nobleman). Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 31-32. This makes the process of finding and creating one’s identity more difficult (more decisions have to be taken), but for those who succeed in directing well their “process of building identity”, because they found criteria and, thus, a certain security in deciding, it is an enriching environment. (Here, this research disagrees with I. Sanna, who presents the present age as very negative.)



Inter-human relationships always precede the rising of an “I” that is conscious of himself, responsible, having the full capacity and desire to weave a net of communion. The “I” communicates himself as a gift and discovers that “you”, “he/she” and “we” are constitutive elements of his identity. The “I” begins to live in the mystery of the “one is *from* the other, *with* the other, *in* the other, *belonging to* the other, *for* the other and *similar to* the other”.<sup>1022</sup> In this research, Identity is understood as partly based on given limits of biological facts, social and moral laws and partly to be created by personal decisions which lead to various experiences. E.g. every beginning relationship reveals new aspects of one’s self to the person donating himself, giving the possibility to donate oneself in a more profound way. If the growth of a relationship is ended at any level, it shows that it is and was never a relationship of love, as love tends to ever deeper self-giving, ever dynamically growing. It is in relationships that a person finds his identity, discovering and defining himself through his communication with others, similar to the three divine persons and their relationships (“pericóresis”) with each other.<sup>1023</sup> In other words, positive relationships and union between two or more persons mean that there is a wanted interdependence. These persons have accepted the fact that no human being is completely autonomous but in need of others and live this fact gratefully.

### 3.2.4. Human salvation/holiness as intimate relationship with God and his creatures

This research presents salvation and human holiness as union with God and this union is first of all in the will. The union of individuals (in and through a relationship of theirs with the Church of Christ) with God was made possible by the fact that the Son of God incarnated, taking to himself the human nature in a hypostatic union<sup>1024</sup> and living a human life in limitation, insecurity and dependence on others, a life geared towards the cruel death on the cross. By the fact that the Father raised Jesus from the dead, making him to take up again his human nature, body and soul. By the fact that Jesus carried the human nature, its biological and cultural reality and all the human relationships attached to it, definitively into heaven and not only his male human nature, but in Mary also the female one, because “male and female he created them.” (Gen 1,27) These are three points where the present author sees happening historically the “objective redemption” of mankind. But there is also something which may be called the psychological side of the “objective redemption”: the power of attraction in the objective salvation that happened in Christ and was fulfilled in Mary is proposed here as integral part of the same objective salvation. Jesus redeemed mankind also in his function as the attractive model of a positive relationship with God in obedience and complete trust, and as carrier of relationships into which he entered as a human being. He

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<sup>1021</sup> M. ALETTI, “Allacciare legami, sciogliere nodi. Prospettive e problemi dei modelli delle relazioni oggettuali applicati alla religione.” In M. ALETTI – G. ROSSI (ed.) *Ricerca di sé e trascendenza*, p. 40.

<sup>1022</sup> Cf. F. MUZUMANGA MA-MUBIMBI, “Persona/relazionalità”, p. 942-943. There are cases of people who have built psychological “walls of protection” around themselves. They refuse to build stable relationships with human beings and concentrate e.g. on their work. Thus, those persons do not find their identity and the fulfilment in positive human relationships. The Director of Caritas Italiana, Mons. Francesco Soddu, noticed that those who do not have a personal intimate relationship with any person are to be counted among the poor and needy. Cf. S. CASCIELLO, ““L’amore è la sola risposta alla solitudine e alla povertà””, in *Il Rosario e la Nuova Pompei* 128 (2012) 258.

<sup>1023</sup> Cf. R. LAURENTIN, *Traité sur la Trinité. Principe, modèle et terme de tout amour. Testament spirituel*, Fayard, Paris 2000.

bound himself not only to a “human nature”, but also to concrete human beings around him. The first one was his mother Mary, not only chronologically, but also qualitatively: she was most ready to allow a reciprocal relationship of love to happen, as will be seen in sub-chapter 3.3.

“Subjective salvation” then happens when a person allows Christ like Mary to incarnate in oneself, to pray, give testimony, suffer, die, rise from the dead and go to heaven in oneself. If someone enters into relationship with God in Christ and following Christ, he becomes a “salvation” to God himself,<sup>1025</sup> as relationship is reciprocal, and a “saviour” to others, by attracting them to Christ who displays his love in them.<sup>1026</sup>

Salvation/redemption<sup>1027</sup> was not always seen like that. St. Anselm of Canterbury († 1109), in *Cur Deus homo* (1098), used the juridical language for his theory of Jesus accepting in the name of mankind the due punishment of God for mankind to the point of his death on the cross, which gave the satisfaction to divine Justice and established the new order in which man is justified before God.<sup>1028</sup> Though this theory was never officially adopted by the magisterium, e.g. Pius XI († 1939) termed redemption as “satisfaction” offered by Christ to God, to which man is called to add his own praise of God and reparation.<sup>1029</sup> The NT does not mention “satisfaction” or “reparation”, only “expiation” (cf. e.g. Rm 3,25; 1 Ptr 3,18; 1 Jn 2,2; Heb 2,17), thus using the expiatory sacrifice for

<sup>1024</sup> Cf. the Thomist theology in C. WESSELS, *The Mother of God. Her physical maternity: a reappraisal*, Aquinas, River Forest 1964, p. 36-37.

<sup>1025</sup> A Hebrew victim of the Shoah, Ester (Etty) Hillesum (1914-1943), fought in Auschwitz against becoming indifferent or full of hatred, trying to maintain simplicity and compassion. In her prayer, meditating the manifold human pain, she received the inspiration: it is not God who must help people in their sufferings, but it is the people who are bound to help God to *survive* in their hearts, defending to the last God’s dwelling place in them. As she was doing it, she experienced the constant help of God. E. HILLESUM, *Diario 1941-1943*, Adelphi, Milano 1996, p. 111, 118, 169, 172, 682. On p. 170 she wrote: “Esistono persone che all’ultimo momento si preoccupano di mettere in salvo aspirapolveri, forchette e cucchiaini d’argento, invece di salvare te, mio Dio.” The “saving” of God obviously means to give him the first place in life, to love him.

<sup>1026</sup> Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni*, on p. 41 states that in the pre-Augustinian Fathers “affiora il pensiero che il Creatore, nella creazione dell’uomo, abbia avuto come immagine ideale quella del Figlio incarnato in quanto Redentore.”

<sup>1027</sup> The two terms “salvation” and “redemption” are often being distinguished. For example the exegete A. BONORA, “Redenzione”, in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Biblica*, 1291-1292, sees “redemption” as the wider term, the vivifying auto-communication of God, while salvation is only an aspect of the same, an image that reminds one of the experience to have escaped from a grave danger or from death. A German exegete defines the redemption (*Erlösung*) as the salvific act of God in the history (of a people), while the salvation (*Heil*) is seen as the Reign of God in Christ, which will be perfected only in heaven, i.e. it has an eschatological aspect. Cf. J. GNILKA, “Heil”, in *LThK*, vol. 4, col. 1261, cf. also K. RAHNER – H. VORGRIMMER, “Erlösung”, “Heil”, in *Kleines Theologisches Wörterbuch*, 110-112; 177-178. According to this second view, John Paul II uses the two terms sometimes differently in his documents and pronouncements, while in others, e.g. JOHN PAUL II, apostolic letter *Salvifici doloris* (11/2/1984), n. 24, in AAS 76 (1984) 201-250, the term redemption is used for the participation of those who suffer in union with Christ in drawing Christ nearer to all mankind. G. L. Müller uses the term “redemption” for the historical event of passion, death and resurrection of Christ, his deed of self-sacrifice, the objective salvation, which won the forgiveness of all sins from the side of God. He reserves the term “salvation” for the subjective realization of salvation in the life of a person or the world at large, based on the redemption and showing in sanctification and liberation from evil, achieved by the Holy Spirit and the human acts of faith, hope and love, and which can be expected in its completion only in the “Escaton”, the “last day”. Cf. G. L. MÜLLER, *Katholische Dogmatik*, p. 372. The author of this present study uses the two terms as equivalent, distinguishing the historical event from the eschatological event with the categories of “objective salvation/redemption” and “subjective salvation/redemption”.

<sup>1028</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 381-383.

<sup>1029</sup> Cf. PIUS XI, Litterae Encyclicae *Misericordissimus Redemptor* (8/5/1928), in AAS 20 (1928) 170. “Reparation” is equal to acts of penitence, making good the (former) lack of love for God by special zeal in virtuous acts as prayer and charity. In the same encyclical, in the AAS on p. 171, it is emphasized that God calls for the human response of love in his act of salvation. Thus, the “salvation/satisfaction” of Christ was not seen as reaching the faithful without their union with Christ.

the forgiveness of sin of the OT, which was to repair the relationship between God and his people, disturbed by ritual impurity, as a key to understand the saving death of Christ.<sup>1030</sup> Traditionally, salvation was also defined as “liberation” of mankind from the “curse” of being put into situations that lead to violence and destruction, “liberation” or “washing” from the stain of sin, hatred, wickedness, heresy and its consequences,<sup>1031</sup> or as the “liberation” of mankind from being far from God, being freed from desperation and death,<sup>1032</sup> always given by God in and through Jesus Christ. According to M. Knapp, in the Christian understanding salvation (“Heil”) is the ultimate fulfilment of the being of man, by man being taken up with his body, soul and human society into the eternal life of God, receiving a participation in it: salvation as “going to heaven” in the “Escaton”. It becomes possible by ‘God breaking the self-enclosure of man’ in sin, which brings man under the power of death and man coming to God in faith, hope and love.<sup>1033</sup> As Knapp uses for sin the image of “locking oneself up” (Selbstverschließung), while calling salvation the liberation work of God who breaks the locked door, salvation is presented seemingly as an act of violence against the sinful human will, or reaching only those who wish to come out of sin.

C. Molari, in an overview on soteriologists in 1975, presented salvation as a fullness of life and existence, fullness of identification, definite achievement of one’s identity, becoming a person who has reached inner unification, fullness of communion: union with God and among men (cf. LG, 1), fullness of freedom, overcoming all evil, participation in the divine life. In a last point he wrote that instead of describing salvation as a fullness, which makes man to become like God, it might be better to see it as a healed situation, persistently lacking in perfection. Man remains a limited creature in the process of coming joyfully towards God. The human part of the way to salvation is indicated by Molari as following the example of Christ to love even in sufferings.<sup>1034</sup> In a more recent text, Molari equates salvation with the coming of the Reign of God and distinguishes three theological positions in soteriology: ‘dualism’ considers salvation as a pure gift, a gift by nature different from creation. Thus man can only prepare himself to receive it, but all that man does has no value for bringing about the Kingdom. Secondly there is the position of ‘transcendence of history’ which believes with Teilhard de Chardin<sup>1035</sup> († 1955) in a natural continuity between history in evolution and the Reign of God. Thirdly, the ‘Incarnationism’ insists on the grace of God in action in the human history through the Incarnation of Christ. In this position salvation is expected at the end of time as an initiative from God, in connection with what the grace of God has already built up in the world. (Molari connotes the ‘Incarnationism’ with Hans Urs von Balthasar, † 1988).<sup>1036</sup>

<sup>1030</sup> The use of this image does not automatically mean that God demanded an expiation, but only that the violent death of the Messiah was foreseen from of old.

<sup>1031</sup> Cf. S. MEO, “Mediatrice“, in *NDM*, p. 834. This understanding does not exclude that physical-rational limitations and its painful consequences as misunderstandings and the necessity of labour may remain a reality for ever on earth.

<sup>1032</sup> Cf. G. L. MÜLLER, *Katholische Dogmatik*, p. 372.

<sup>1033</sup> Cf. M. KNAPP, “Heil. IV. Systematisch-theologisch“, in *LThK*, vol. 4, col. 1262-1264. He also mentioned that in the patristic understanding, it is a historical process which is a gift from God, not an individual experience or an earthly process of liberation.

<sup>1034</sup> Cf. C. MOLARI, “La salvezza cristiana nella moderna teologia cattolica“, in ASSOCIAZIONE TEOLOGICA ITALIANA, *La salvezza cristiana*, Cittadella, Assisi 1975, p. 42-57, 115.

<sup>1035</sup> A French Jesuit, who used the biological terms of evolution in theology. Many of his works were first forbidden by the Church.

<sup>1036</sup> Cf. IDEM, “Salvezza universale. Introduzione alla edizione italiana“, in J. AUER, *Gesù il salvatore. Soteriologia. Mariologia*, Vol. 4/2, Cittadella, Assisi 1993, p. 11-40. Molari favours the position of transcendence of history,

Today, theologians as G. L. Müller continue in the line of seeing salvation as union with God. In his “Catholic Dogmatic” of 1995, the then professor explained the NT as presenting Jesus Christ as Salvation in person. He is not only the bringer of a gift termed such, but he himself *is* the salvation, sanctification, reconciliation, peace, truth, way, life, hope of glory (cf. 1 Cor 1,30; Eph 2,14; Jn 14,6; Col 1,27; 1 Jn 5,20). He is bringing a new and eternal covenant with God, communion and peace with God and man, he is giving man a share in the nature of God, for now, (cf. e.g. 1 Cor 11,25; Lk 22,20; 1 Cor 1,9; 1 Jn 1,3; Acts 10,36; 2 Ptr 1,4) and the vision of God, receiving a share in the glory of Christ, for the future (cf. Rm 8,17; 1 Cor 13,12; 1 Jn 3,2). A definition of salvation in terms of rational logic (as St. Anselm tried) is thus not possible. It can only be said that salvation lies in union with Christ, i.e. in Christian living according to the various vocations, in the renewal and deepening of the relationship with God in Christ, which he opened in his Easter mystery.<sup>1037</sup> “Subjective salvation” means to be transformed by the Holy Spirit into a lasting sacramental-mystic conjunction with the Son of God. The “evil” is the destruction of relationships.<sup>1038</sup> Liturgists have begun calling the Holy Eucharist the “form for transforming the crisis of relationships”<sup>1039</sup> L. Scheffczyk stated that grace and faith possess social and communicative power and are destined to be shared and passed on.<sup>1040</sup> The fact that a human person as Mary is completely related to another person,<sup>1041</sup> Christ, expropriating herself and immersing

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presenting it as the third theological position. In his work “Theology of the three days”, H. U. von Balthasar refuses the idea of salvation lying already in the incarnation and stresses very much the kenosis which he sees at its peak in the death on the cross and in the being with the dead. Thus, it is strange that Molari made him an “Incarnationist”. Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni*, chapter 1, p. 23-52.

<sup>1037</sup> Cf. G. L. MÜLLER, *Katholische Dogmatik*, p. 373-377, 385-387, esp. p. 386: sin is not just a moral lacking, but man radically misses his aim in sinning, as his essence is orientated towards perfection in a dialogical-personal communion of love with God. The physical death alone of Jesus did not bring the salvation. It is the love of Jesus which continued through all resistance. (“Sünde [ist] nicht lediglich eine moralische Fehlleistung, sondern in einem ganz radikalen Sinne die Selbstverfehlung des Menschen [...], der doch wesentlich auf die Vollendung in der dialogisch-personalen Liebesgemeinschaft mit Gott angelegt ist. [...] Nicht der physische Tod Jesu für sich betrachtet bringt das Heil. Es ist die sich gegenüber allem Widerstand durchhaltende *Liebe Jesu*“.) Apart from presenting salvation very well as the opening of the possibility for man to enter into covenant and intimate union with God in Christ and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the *Katholische Dogmatik* (on p. 386-387) has some tendency of then stepping back again to present salvation as a mere *revelation* of the love of God (to human reason), while the act of redemption (the death of Christ) is even almost denied in its value, in an over-reaction to a medieval over-stressing of its value. In the logic of the present work, in the following enters the importance of Mariology. It is Mary who shows that redemption/salvation was not only a revelation to be understood and its teaching to be imitated, but a person who had to be received and accepted by a person. In the Virgin, the salvation of Christ was historically first realized. She is the model and qualitatively first help for Christians to receive Jesus and his Holy Spirit. Thus, the SHL insists that the “only solution”, i.e. the only salvation for man is the union with Jesus and Mary (cf. sub-chapter 2.4.6.).

<sup>1038</sup> Cf. in 1975 C. MOLARI, “La salvezza cristiana nella moderna teologia cattolica”, p. 47-48: “Tutte le scienze umane mettono in luce, oggi, la condizione relazionale dell’uomo. [...] Il male, in questa prospettiva, è l’egoismo o la chiusura dell’uomo in se stesso, la divisione dei popoli, il razzismo, l’oppressione degli uni sugli altri: tutto ciò che nei rapporti individuali e in quelli sociali conduce alla divisione.”

<sup>1039</sup> “È il momento più alto del legame-intimità con i suoi, ma legame destinato alle moltitudini, per i molti e per tutti. E questo avviene nell’ultima cena, nel momento della crisi delle relazioni di Gesù con i suoi. La comunità crolla, i legami di sequela vengono negati e sovvertiti. Proprio in quest’ora Gesù trova nel rito della cena Eucaristica la forma per assumere e trasformare la crisi delle relazioni. [...] Proprio quando sta vivendo la più forte crisi dei legami, l’interruzione delle relazioni con i suoi discepoli, Gesù reagisce facendosi presente, come non aveva mai fatto: ‘Questo è il mio corpo’.” G. BUSANI, “La risorsa educativa della liturgia”, p. 267.

<sup>1040</sup> Cf. L. SCHEFFCZYK, “Marianischer Neubeginn? Marianisches Jahr – Marienzyklika – Marienweihe – Ökumene”, in *Klerusblatt* 68 (1988) 213: “Gnade und Glaube schon an sich soziale, kommunikative Kraft besitzen und zur Mitteilung und Weiterleitung bestimmt sind [...] erst recht [...] die mit dem universalen Muttersein verbundene Gnade”. (... ‘especially the grace connected with the universal motherhood.’)

<sup>1041</sup> According to F. MUZUMAGA MA-MUMBIMBI, “Persona/Relazionalità”, p. 938, the first spiritual writers who insisted on Mary being in relationship with God, that everything in her is related to God, were Pierre de Bérulle († 1629, in his

herself in love in the other, both following in all the will of God, does not extinguish her personality, it rather exalts her person<sup>1042</sup> and reveals the mystery of the person of Jesus.<sup>1043</sup> Subchapter 3.3.3.2. will postulate that her relationship reveals the mystery of Christ even to Jesus himself.

Vatican II imposed on the whole Church the new “modern” language of communion, stressing in LG 9 that God called men together as *one people* (cf. also LG 1-3), and finding in GS 25 that the human person “by nature stands completely in need of life in society”. LG 14 says about all Christians: “If they fail to respond in thought, word and deed to that grace [of salvation through incorporation in the Church], not only shall they not be saved, but they shall be the more severely judged.” Thus salvation is not seen only in the event of Easter made present in baptism, but in the *response* to the grace of baptism, in the personal, positive response to God. RM 10 defined redemption as belonging to Christ, as receiving from Christ the life in the order of grace. Benedict XVI recalled for Jesus and Mary the special relationship between mother and child that grows through mutual watching of the face and the eyes.<sup>1044</sup> The present Magisterium has taken up the language stressing the various aspects of the need of human and faith relationships among human beings and with God, and the presentation of God as one with whom men can and must be in relationship. “Lumen fidei” teaches: “persons always live in relationship. We come from others, we belong to others, and our lives are enlarged by our encounter with others. Even our knowledge and self-awareness are relational; they are linked to others who have gone before us.” The human “entire person” is defined by “body and spirit, interior life and relationships with others”.<sup>1045</sup> This is based on the fact that “God [...] is an eternal dialogue of communion, and he allows us to enter into this dialogue”.<sup>1046</sup> “Christ draws us to himself in order to save us.”<sup>1047</sup> “Evangelii gaudium” is one long exhortation to communion with God and others. The fact that Jesus is communicating e.g. the “Christian joy” to those who are united with him, is mentioned by Pope Francis in referring to the “brimming heart” of him who “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit”. He sees the “personal encounter with Jesus Christ” depending mainly on the openness of people “to letting him encounter them”, “the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us”, and the sharing of faith is called the “source of authentic personal fulfilment.”<sup>1048</sup> It is the relationship with God which should strengthen positive human relationships until it becomes what the Pontiff called “mystical fraternity”:

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work *Oeuvres de piété* 119, OC 1144.) and Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort († 1716, cf. L.-M. DE MONTFORT, *True devotion to Mary*, Montfort, Bay Shore 1960<sup>11</sup>, p. 225). But this “relationship” must have been understood more as a dependence than as a mutual relationship of communication.

<sup>1042</sup> Cf. A. STAGLIANÒ, *Madre di Dio*, p. 41.

<sup>1043</sup> As Mary is not only related to Christ, but also to the Holy Trinity, to the Church, humanity and to the whole universe, she reveals and irradiates also their mystery. Cf. PAMI, *La Madre del Signore*, n. 14-16, 39-42, 77, p. 21-23, 49-58, 129, stressing at length the relationship of Mary with the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, giver of life, giver of the charism of prophecy, Spirit of the New Covenant and of prayer, Spirit of self-oblation and transforming love. Also the text of the PAMI does not give a hint on reciprocity from the aspect of Jesus or God receiving something from the relationship with Mary. This research concentrates on the only relationship Jesus-Mary, where such may be postulated.

<sup>1044</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, homily on the solemnity of Mary Mother of God *La pace si costruisce anche rispettando l'ambiente*, (1/1/2010), in *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI*, VI, 1 (2010), LEV, Città del Vaticano, 2011, p. 2.

<sup>1045</sup> FRANCIS, *Lumen fidei*, n. 38, 40.

<sup>1046</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 36, quoting S. Bonaventure.

<sup>1047</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 59: “The movement of love between Father, Son and Spirit runs through our history, and Christ draws us to himself in order to save us (cf. *Jn* 12:32).”

<sup>1048</sup> IDEM, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 5, quoting *Lk* 10, 21, and n. 3, 39, 10.

«The individualism of our postmodern and globalized era favours a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. Pastoral activity needs to bring out more clearly the fact that our relationship with the Father demands and encourages a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds. [...] 71. The new Jerusalem, the holy city (cf. *Rev* 21:2-4), is the goal towards which all of humanity is moving. It is curious that God's revelation tells us that the fullness of humanity and of history is realized in a city. We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in their homes, in their streets and squares. God's presence accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find encouragement and meaning in their lives. He dwells among them, fostering solidarity, fraternity, and the desire for goodness, truth and justice. This presence must not be contrived, but found, uncovered. [...] 78. Today we are seeing in many pastoral workers, including consecrated men and women, an inordinate concern for their personal freedom and relaxation, which leads them to see their work as a mere appendage to their life, as if it were not part of their very identity. At the same time, the spiritual life comes to be identified with a few religious exercises which [...] do not encourage encounter with others, engagement with the world or passion for evangelization. As a result, one can observe in many agents of evangelization, even though they pray, a heightened individualism, a crisis of identity and a cooling of fervour. These are three evils which fuel one another. [...] 80. Pastoral workers can thus fall into a [...] practical relativism [which] consists of acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, [...] working as if people who have not received the Gospel did not exist. [...] 88. [...] True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. [...] 91. One important challenge is to show that the solution will never be found in fleeing from a personal and committed relationship with God which at the same time commits us to serving others. This happens frequently nowadays, as believers seek to hide or keep apart from others, or quietly flit from one place to another or from one task to another, without creating deep and stable bonds. "*Imaginatio locorum et mutatio multos fefellit*". [...] We need to help others to realize that the only way is to learn how to encounter others with the right attitude, which is to accept and esteem them as companions along the way, without interior resistance. Better yet, it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas. And learning to suffer in the embrace of the crucified Jesus whenever we are unjustly attacked or meet with ingratitude, never tiring of our decision to live in fraternity. 92. There indeed we find true healing, since the way to relate to others which truly heals instead of debilitating us, is a *mystical* fraternity, a contemplative fraternity. [...] 113. The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone. God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age. He has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals. [...] God attracts us by taking into account the complex interweaving of personal relationships entailed in a life of a human community.»<sup>1049</sup>

Pope Francis continues these thoughts and relational language in his first encyclical written without the help of Pope Benedict XVI, giving his own contribution in the contemporary Trinitarian discussion:

«The divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships. Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships. This leads us not only to marvel at the manifold connections existing among creatures, but also to discover a key to our own fulfilment. The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.»<sup>1050</sup>

<sup>1049</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 67, 71, 78, 80, 88, 91-92, 113. The Latin quotation is of THOMAS À KEMPIS, *De Imitatione Christi*, Lib. I, IX, 5: "Dreaming of different places, and moving from one to another, has mislead many".

<sup>1050</sup> IDEM, Encyclical letter on care for our common home *Laudati si* (24/5/2015), n. 240, in <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/2015/documents/papa-fancesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/2015/documents/papa-fancesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)>, seen on 27/6/2015.

The encyclical letter *Laudato si* shows a strong interest in ecumenical and interreligious cooperation, with quoting the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (Byzantine Orthodox Church, in the footnotes 14-18), and the Sufi Ali al-Klawas (footnote 159 of the encyclical)<sup>1051</sup>. The here quoted n. 240 seems to have a deep sympathy with African Traditional Religion.

Perfect salvation shows in holiness of the saved person. Also the understanding of holiness has changed. St. Thomas dedicated only a single article of the *Summa theologiae* (II, II, q. 81, a. 8) to the definition of the holiness of man, by which the ‘human mind applies itself and its acts to God’. To him, it is thus mainly an intellectual act, since to him the intellect was the centre of the human being. “To apply to God” means in Thomas “to refer, to relate”, taking God as the point of reference and goal of life.<sup>1052</sup> Thus in his definition does not feature any sign of reciprocation on the side of God. Asti used the anthropological terms to describe the “mystical life” (which should lead to holiness): It is a ‘continuously deepening comprehension of one’s person in relationship to the members of one’s family [under the ‘parents’: God and the Church], in which the [own] identity is specified and realized in the fraternal contact and with the reciprocal dialogue.’<sup>1053</sup> Also here a reciprocation is not explicit.

The Vatican Council II equated holiness in LG 50 to “perfect union with Christ”, i.e. to an intimate relationship with him.

Father Montfort, as an African and child of Vatican II, stated concerning Mary: “She gave birth to Jesus, and to the Church. She still gives birth to the Church: nursing her, teaching her, feeding her. She has an intimate relationship with all that exists. To God she is creature, mother, bride, and daughter. She has many relationships and many more are to come.”<sup>1054</sup> As a mystic, he emphasized in the concept of holiness not only the aspect of man answering and belonging to God but more so the mystery of God’s self-gift to man:

«“You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours.” That is the summary of all relationship between God and human beings and of what we are celebrating now: [...] To be His. [...] God’s presence, God’s dwelling. It has to do with marriage. You can compare it with marriage. When a king marries a peasant girl, what happens? Automatically that poor girl becomes the Queen, the First Lady, because the king has chosen her to be his wife. [...] Our Lady sang the Magnificat: Not to us, Lord, give the glory, the glory belongs to God. “My soul magnifies the Lord.” When we praise her, she will not refuse, but will pass everything to Jesus.»<sup>1055</sup>

The reciprocity of salvation in Father Montfort is also expressed in his insisting on “comforting Jesus”<sup>1056</sup>, the possibility of man to give something to God by seeking Him. Unlike creation, which God accomplished “de nihilo”,<sup>1057</sup> without the cooperation of a creature, in redemption he calls for and involves the human response of love.

<sup>1051</sup> Sufis quote the Muslim Quran, but “orthodox” Muslims reject them as following Hindu teachings of the oneness of man with God and God with creation. Cf. <[www.islamreligion.com/articles/1388/sufism-part-1](http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/1388/sufism-part-1)>, seen on 27/6/2015. The website invites to conversion to Islam.

<sup>1052</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 22-23.

<sup>1053</sup> F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 238, translated into English by the present author.

<sup>1054</sup> Sermon of Father Montfort, 2/10/2004, at Morning Mass in Blois, France. appendix 4.

<sup>1055</sup> Sermon of Father Montfort, 17/7/2007, 24 years priesthood of Father Montfort, small jubilee mass at Oyun (Sisters’ noviciate), Ilorin. appendix 4.

<sup>1056</sup> Cf. e.g. 4/12/2011, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, during Holy Hour, in appendix 4: “Let us comfort him in the hour of his death, so that he will come in our own hour of death.”

<sup>1057</sup> Cf. e.g. the COUNCIL OF FLORENCE/EUGENE IV, Papal bull *Cantate Domino* (session 11, 4/2/1442), against a double divine principle of good and bad at the origin of the creation, in DS 1333.

It can be said that the more relationships which are intimate, positive and stable a person has, the more his happiness and consciousness of his dignity and abilities grow. The relationships of Mary with God in Christ, and with all the faithful in Christ, their historical growth and reciprocal dynamics are to be elaborated in a special way in the following sub-chapter.

### **3.3. The growing holiness/relationship/union of Mary with God in Christ**

After the preliminary investigation on the symbolic meaning of the heart and the anthropological importance of relationships, now the present work will examine the Magisterially confirmed Marian doctrine and theological intuitions in the light of the union of Jesus and Mary. As a “relational” Mariology, this sub-chapter hopes to avoid the danger of “a-temporal and abstract idealization” of the person of Mary, although her universal and symbolical aspects (her being archetype and model of the Church) are not neglected.<sup>1058</sup> Any relationship the Virgin has is in Jesus: God the Father is for her as for all Christians the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”. The Holy Spirit is the one who came to her initially when she accepted to be the mother of Jesus, and for his sake, and later on he was the Paraclet promised and sent by Jesus. The disciples are her special children because of their union with Jesus. All souls are loved by her because her Son has shed his blood “for them”. The creation is to Mary as to all Christians all what was created “in him and for him”. It would exceed the limits of this research to elaborate all the relationships of Mary with the Triune God, all human beings and all creation. Only her union with Christ and the Church will be analysed broadly, touching her other relationships occasionally.

Regarding the content, this sub-chapter is the main point of the present work. Thus it contains the “thesis” of the author: the theological opinion that the understanding of salvation as a renewed personal relationship with God can be applied to Mariology. Thus the salvation of Mary can no longer be said to be found in her preservation from sin in the Immaculate Conception – this is only a preparation. Neither can the salvation of Mary be said to be found at the cross – this is only a peak-point. It cannot be located in the Assumption with body and soul into heaven – this is only a consequence. This research will present the salvation of Mary as standing in the fact that Christ united her (throughout life) to himself, and that Mary corresponded to this salvific action with the submission (in love, hope and faith) of will, sentiments, intelligence, physical, psychological and spiritual possibilities: with all her heart. This research wishes to demonstrate the intimate relationship of Christ and the Mother, and how this relationship grew historically from intimate into infinitely deep.

Articles 6-16 of the Original Constitutions<sup>1059</sup> are the main congregational source for this sub-chapter, as the founder here gives an outline of his Mariological opinions, taking up pious convictions of the Catholic tradition. The text should be read as a spiritual exhortation, presenting a model, and not as a dogmatic text. If in this sub-chapter only an article-number is quoted, it refers to the “Original Constitutions”.

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<sup>1058</sup> J. G. ROTEN, “The theological and cultural image of Mary”, in E. PERETTO (ed.), *L'immagine teologica di Maria*, p. 109 relates: “According to him [F. COURTH, “Marianische Spiritualität und Apostolat. Neue Richtungen auf dem Prüfstand”, in H. PETRI (ed.), *Christsein und marianische Spiritualität*, Pustet, Regensburg 1984, p. 58] one of the major tasks of (German) Mariology in the present is to point out the relation and difference between typological and personal statements in Mariology.”

<sup>1059</sup> Appendix 3, cf. also the apologetic version of it in M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 78-81, 85, 87. (Appendix 6.)



The vital union of Jesus and Mary, which makes it a necessity “de fide”<sup>1060</sup> to honour the Virgin together with the Lord,<sup>1061</sup> is one of the bones of contention between the Catholic Church and her Protestant and Pentecostal brothers and sisters. Therefore this chapter, apart from investigating on the Bible and the Catholic tradition, will quote some passages of the Seattle-Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission II, *Mary, grace and hope in Christ*, which shows that a “Protestant” Communion, reviewing its Biblical Mariology in dialogue with their Catholic brothers, can come very near to a union with them. It may be noted, however, that the Anglican Communion is nearest among all Protestant communities to the Catholic Church in Mariological issues, having conserved e.g. Marian feasts as her conception and nativity, and having taken up old ecclesial traditions as the feast of 15<sup>th</sup> of August in their liturgical renewal in the twentieth century.<sup>1062</sup>

The relationship of Mary with Christ in God (and the Church) will be used as a key to understand Mariology.<sup>1063</sup> For this purpose, the themes of Mariology will be ordered in a scheme of call or gift (from God) – response given by Mary – Marian response received by Jesus – the effects of union.

The “call” has three points, three graces God gave to Mary during her life: the Immaculate Conception, the Divine Motherhood and the gift of personal knowledge of Christ and his teaching.

The response of Mary equally has three points: the perpetual Virginity, her faith in receiving Christ with her “be it done to me”, and her willingly learning from Jesus as a disciple.

This research will venture to formulate an idea on how Jesus – as a human being – received the response of Mary and personally gained from it, based on the above developed importance of relationships as a gain on both sides. This acceptance of the disciple’s response by the Lord is equated here to the classical term of “Marian cooperation in salvation”, as salvation is union of all in Christ.

Finally, the fulfilment of the union of the Two Hearts shall be presented in three points of her influence on the Church: the care Mary showed for the early Christians, her being a sign of hope to all in her assumption, and her heavenly activity in union with God in favour of men on earth.

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<sup>1060</sup> Cf. MC 56.

<sup>1061</sup> The community of St. Luke is believed by exegetes to have venerated Mary in her motherhood and in her faith, cf. Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Bibbia”, in S. DE FIORES – V. FERRARI SCHIEFER – S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 202, 207, 210; even more the Johannine communities.

<sup>1062</sup> Cf. e.g. the ARCIC II - statements on the Marian cult: “Just as in Elizabeth’s salutation the mother receives a blessing of her own, [...] so also in the *Magnificat* Mary predicts that ‘all generations will call me blessed’ (1:48). This text provides the scriptural basis for an appropriate devotion to Mary, though never in separation from her role as mother of the Messiah. [...] We are to bless her [...] as the mother who pondered all things in her heart, [...] as the woman to whom Jesus entrusted his friends. We are at one with her and the apostles, as they pray for the outpouring of the Spirit”. *Ibidem*, n.15, 30, p. 22-23, 34-35. In its review on historic developments of Marian devotion, the document notes a division of a too rational theology and a too irrational spirituality on Catholic side in the late MA, and a too decisive reaction on the side of the Reformers, which “led also to the loss of some positive aspects of devotion and the diminution of her place in the life of the Church.” Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 43-44, p. 46-48. In all devotion to Mary, Anglicans and Catholics are urging to “see Mary as inseparably linked with Christ and the Church.” (*Ibidem*, n. 51, p. 54), just as the present work is eager to centre on.

<sup>1063</sup> According to B. FORTE, theology has to take up the tradition of the faith, perceive the life of the present time, and stimulate the latter in view of the promise of God: “Ascolto del tempo, ricordo rischioso e orientamento anticipante dell’avvenire [...] è la teologia vissuta come storia”. *La parola della fede. Introduzione alla Simbolica ecclesiale*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1996, p. 62-63.

### 3.3.1. The graces God communicated to Mary in her life

Human relationship with God always has the initiative in him who created every person and grants the possibility to communicate with him. Apart from this frame of possibility, the Church believes in a call to holiness, an availability of sanctifying grace and a divine guidance in the human conscience for every person. (Cf. CCC, 27-30.) These acts of God can be found in the life of Mary in a special way: creation as Immaculate Conception, the call to holiness in the communication of himself in the gift of the Divine Motherhood, the guidance in conscience not only through inspiration but also through the model and teaching of Christ.

#### 3.3.1.1. The gift of the Immaculate Conception

D. Fernández proposed in 1973 and 1985 to see the conception of Mary in the positive view of election and grace, as also Ineffabilis Deus and Lumen Gentium insist, in harmony with the Oriental Fathers, on the special holiness of Mary. He sees in the Immaculate Conception the gift of a special capacity to “possess God”, i.e. to be in union with him.<sup>1064</sup> Theologians like him thus want to evade the “questio disputata” of the original sin. Contemporary theologians try to find new words to express the mystery of the original sin,<sup>1065</sup> of which Mary was preserved, and which is removed for others at baptism.

##### a) The original sin

S. De Fiores discussed some contemporary attempts to develop a convincing doctrine of the original sin: according to the mariologist, A. Vanneste tried to explain the original sin as the ‘virtual act’ of every (unborn) child of refusing Christ, thus being in need of conversion. But the original sin is called a state, not an act, and especially not a personal sin of refusing Christ (cf. CCC 404). P. Schoonenberg described the original sin as a general “situation of perdition” of the world, visible and growing through the actual sins of people. The social view of Schoonenberg is rather about the mystery of evil in the world, and not a definition of the original sin.<sup>1066</sup> The original sin must be accepted as a state which is personal to every human being and which can be removed by

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<sup>1064</sup> D. FERNÁNDEZ, “La crisis de la theología del pecado original ¿afecta al dogma de la Inmaculada Concepción?”, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 35, 3-4 (1985) 277-297 goes as far as to say that one need not speak at all of an original “sin”. The present work does not follow Fernández in that aspect.

<sup>1065</sup> Cf. F. G. BRAMBILLA, “Cristo compimento dell’uomo e il problema del peccato originale. Rassegna di interpretazioni”, in E. M. TONIOLO (ed.), *Il dogma dell’Immacolata Concezione di Maria. Problemi attuali e tentativi di ricomprensione*. Atti del XIV Simposio Internazionale Mariologico (Roma, 7-10 ottobre 2003), Marianum, Roma 1996, p. 169-196. The explanation that all those who are not baptized hate God positively and must surely resist against his law was already condemned by Pope Pius V in the Bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus* (1/10/1567) (DZ 1948-1949). All creatures are loved by God. Cf. VATICAN II, *Nostra Aetate*, n.1: God’s “providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all men”. Thus, it can not be asserted that those not baptized are under a curse. Cf. M. BUIONI, “La riflessione mariologica in Karl Rahner”, in *Theotokos* 18 (2010) 303.

<sup>1066</sup> Accepting that the problem of the actual sins of men around each person, is different from the original sin, it seems that nothing forbids saying that people with saintly parents would be less affected by the mystery of evil than people with parents who live habitually in sin. For children with saintly parents it would then be easier to overcome the tendency to evil (with the grace of God!) than for others. Concerning Mary, there is the Catholic and Orthodox tradition and belief that she had saintly parents and then grew up in the temple. This belief is based on the Protogospel of James which gave much attention to the conception and birth of Mary, ascribing in narrative form to the parents only holy desires. Cf. S. M. CECCHIN, *L’Immacolata Concezione*, p. 7-18.

baptism. M. Flick and Z. Alszeghy defined the original sin in 1972 as a ‘dialogic alienation’ from God, his life and other human beings, caused by a decision of the forefathers. The original sin is a disturbance of the relationship with God. De Fiores deduced from it that the Immaculate Conception would then be the gift of a special capacity of dialogue with God and man.<sup>1067</sup> G. Lohfink and L. Weimer observed that the concept of “sin” developed only in Israel. In other religions there exists only “impurity”, which is caused not only by sins, but also e.g. by accidents, and can be removed by some rituals, which does not necessitate contrition. The German exegete and the dogmatic theologian concluded that in order to *understand* “sin”, there must be a relationship with a personal, loving God. They also emphasized that gifts of grace are given when someone opens up to God, while this opening up to God is predisposed (or hindered) by the language and all the person learned in his family and from the society he lives in.<sup>1068</sup> By seeing the obstacle on the way to holiness in the culture a person is being born into, they are on the line of the social view of Schoonenberg.

Since the time of St. Augustine the Church has explained the original sin in the man of today as an inborn-inherited deterioration of body and soul due to the fall of the first human beings, which results in corporal death, suffering and concupiscence (attraction of evil, tendency towards sin). (Cf. DS 223, DS 239, DS 271-272, CCC 400, 404-405).<sup>1069</sup> CCC 405 explains that the human nature after the fall is wounded in its natural faculties, but not completely destroyed. Original sin is a true obstacle for arriving at holiness, but with the help of God it can be overcome.<sup>1070</sup> CCC 1264 states that what remains after baptism are the *temporal* consequences of the original sin: corporal death, suffering and concupiscence.

Can cause and consequences be separated? To the author it seems obvious that if these temporal consequences remain after baptism, also the original sin itself (in its temporal aspect), the inborn deterioration of at least the body causing the consequences during the life of the person,

<sup>1067</sup> S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, p. 459-462, and IDEM, “Immacolata III-IV”, in *NDM*, p. 629-632, quoting A. VANNESTE, “Le dogme de l’Immaculée Conception et l’évolution actuelle de la théologie du péché originel”, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 23, 1-2 (1973) 77-93, and P. SCHOONENBERG, *Dal peccato alla redenzione*, Herder, Roma 1970. S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, p. 463-464 presents and discusses the work of M. FLICK – Z. ALSZEGHY, *Il peccato originale*, Brescia, Queriniana 1972, and the definition on p. 370. A. STAGLIANÒ, *Madre di Dio*, p. 48 is trying an explanation in the existential direction of Vanneste: “il peccato originale [...] consiste [...] in un fallimento della relazione, in una perversione della relazione fondante la realtà personale dell’uomo: l’uomo dice ‘no’ al ‘sì’ di Dio”. This is surely true for the original sin in the sense of a personal sin of the first man, but does not explain how this is being transmitted to children at the conception.

<sup>1068</sup> G. LOHFINK – L. WEIMER, *Maria, nicht ohne Israel. Eine neue Sicht der Lehre von der Unbefleckten Empfängnis*, Herder, Freiburg 2008, p. 13-14, 317: “Gnade in ihrer weltverändernden Kraft ereignet sich dort, wo sich Menschen über Generationen hin auf Gott geöffnet haben.” They stress on the same p. 317 that grace has a social dimension and conclude that the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception can be read as a dogma on the faith relationship of Israel with God: the grace of the Immaculate Conception means that Mary entered into the true faith, the narrations, the identity, the memory of Israel. Consequently, children’s baptism would be only the celebrational confirmation of the grace of being conceived in a Christian family. It would also mean that any child that is conceived in a Christian family and society has even a greater grace than the Immaculate Conception of Mary, as the Christian faith exceeds the faith of Israel by the grace of Christ. Thus, it must be stressed that not only the surrounding society of a newly conceived child influences, but also the purpose of life God gives to the person in that moment.

<sup>1069</sup> The Magisterial teaching is mainly of the Council of Carthage XVI (1/5/418): 200 African bishops, including St. Augustine, approved by the bishop of Rome, St. Zosimus, and of the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the Council of Trent (17/6/1546). Cf. also ASSOCIAZIONE TEOLOGICA ITALIANA, *Questioni sul peccato originale*. Atti del V corso di aggiornamento per docenti di Teologia Dogmatica, ATI, Padova 1996.

<sup>1070</sup> With this statement the Catholic doctrine tries to remain in the middle between the idea of Pelagius (man, by nature and even without grace, can arrive at sanctity, if only he puts enough effort) and Luther (man can do nothing, only the grace of God can sanctify those who are predestined to be saints). CCC 405 quotes GS 37, §2.

remains, and only the *eternal or transcendent aspects and consequences* of the original sin are removed in baptism, i.e. the fact that heaven was closed for human beings until Christ appeared and opened the way for all those who in their lives became united to Christ. In other words: with baptism, a person receives a purpose of life in view of Christ, a vocation to become one with Christ and to bring salvation to others in the own life.

#### b) The Immaculate Conception

Does it then follow that Mary was conceived without the eternal/transcendent aspects of the original sin, but in a “deteriorated” body, (with all the hormonal disturbances it can give,) a body destined to cause temptation, to suffer and to die? The Church has always affirmed that Christ took upon himself the sin of mankind and its consequences, by assuming a human body. C. M. Boff asserts (not against *Ineffabilis Deus*, which does not define a freedom of concupiscence for Mary) that Mary, despite her initial grace, cannot be thought of being free of negative emotions, sexual impulses and fears, i.e. free of the temptations coming from concupiscence, for this belongs to the human nature.<sup>1071</sup> Equally, contemporary theologians will not agree to ascribe to Mary an immortal and impassable nature, while the Council of Carthage and many other Magisterial documents define that the body of the first man was immortal before the fall. Whoever says that Adam had to die physically, even if he had not sinned: anathema sit! (DS 222). But today, the idea of a human Adam exempt of suffering, temptation and bodily death may be peacefully accepted as belonging to the symbolic narrations of the Genesis, warning man to obey God, the only one who can confer eternal life. This life is not a reparation of the damage caused by Adam, but on a completely different level.

How was Mary united to Christ already in the conception, in order to have the freedom from at least the eternal aspects and consequences of the original sin? The Immaculate Conception, traditionally and justly is a true act of preservation (from a life without vocation or sense) performed by God, and a preparation for the Divine Motherhood (sometimes overstressing the general sinfulness of all flesh as being under a curse).<sup>1072</sup> In the Western Church, the Immaculate Conception (celebrated at the beginning of Advent) is seen as the preparation/sanctification of Mary by grace for the ministry of being the Mother of God. In the East, the presentation of Mary in the temple (21<sup>st</sup> November – in the beginning of the longer oriental Advent)<sup>1073</sup> is seen as the preparation or sanctification by divine favours and by moral, personal effort, for being the Theotokos.<sup>1074</sup>

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<sup>1071</sup> Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 417-420.

<sup>1072</sup> The stress is generally on the sanctification of her soul, while some underlined more the flesh: e.g. St. AUGUSTIN, in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, 2, 24, in *PL* 44, 174-175: “Quod enim carnis inde suscepit, id profecto aut suscipiendum mundavit, aut suscipiendo mundavit.” (The flesh which Christ took from Mary, surely he either purified it in order to take it up, or he purified it while taking it.) PETRUS LOMBARDUS († 1160), *In tertium librum sententiarum*, Dist 3, following St. Augustin, spoke of the flesh of Mary being purified by the Holy Spirit from every infection of sin before the Incarnation of the Son. Cf. the quotations in S. M. CECCHIN, *L’Immacolata Concezione. Breve storia del dogma*, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2003, p. 10, 28.

<sup>1073</sup> For the Byzantine Church, it is a Feast of 2<sup>nd</sup> class (and belongs to the 12 main Feasts of the year). The text can be found in *Menea*, vol. 2, Roma 1889, p. 200-286. In the Slavic Church, it is of first class. For the Syro-occidental Church, cf. *Fanqîto*, vol. 2, Mossul 1886, p. 325-339. Advent begins in the East on 15<sup>th</sup> of November. The Coptic and Ethiopian Church celebrate the Feast on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November according to the Julian calendar. Cf. G. GHARIB, “Presentazione di Maria”, in *NDM*, p. 1039-1040.

<sup>1074</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 1043.

A Biblical indication towards the mystery is seen by theologians in the “κεχαριτωμένη” (Lk 1,28), announcing to Mary even before the conception of Christ, that she is permanently filled with the favour and love of God.<sup>1075</sup>

In the course of history, there were sometimes presentations of the exceptional holiness of Mary that were one-sided, giving the impression of Mary as exempted from any temptation and own effort.<sup>1076</sup> Was this the consequence of the Immaculate Conception? Today, theologians stress her personal effort and struggle with temptations.<sup>1077</sup>

The doctrine of the original sin is the affirmation that nobody can come near to God without union with his Son Jesus Christ (cf. CCC 389).<sup>1078</sup> This union with Jesus can be explicit-sacramental, or it can be mysterious, by ways known only to God, cf. GS 22. In the case of Mary she was united with Christ, or at least oriented towards Christ in a mysterious way already in her conception: God created her in view of Christ, as “Adam” was originally created in view of him.<sup>1079</sup> F. Muzumanga Ma-Mubimbi explains the Immaculate Conception as a genuine relationship God built up in love with the body and soul of Mary at the point of conception,<sup>1080</sup> a special relationship, in view of the free decisions of Mary which she had to take to respond to the ministry God wanted to entrust to her. The theologian thus avoids the question of a corporal change, and does not deny that God would have a certain relationship with every newly conceived child.

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed in 1854,<sup>1081</sup> using e.g. the angelic greeting to the “Full of grace” as a revelational indication for the dogma defining her preservation from the “original sin”, which is explained as proof of her being seat of all graces of God, adorned

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<sup>1075</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Immacolata III-IV”, in *NDM*, p. 634, and all serious studies on the Immaculate Conception.

<sup>1076</sup> E.g. St. JOHN OF THE CROSS taught that Mary was raised to the (highest mystical) state of “mystical marriage” with God “from the very beginning [...], she never had the form of any creature impressed in her soul, nor was she moved by any, for she was always moved by the Holy Spirit.” *Ascent III*, 2, 10.

<sup>1077</sup> Cf. e.g. P. LARGO DOMÍNGUEZ, “Maria, microcosmo de relaciones”, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 57/1 (2007) 87-88.

<sup>1078</sup> It was the clear intention of Pius IX to fight with the dogma the modern thought that human beings can realize themselves even without God and without accepting his laws, propagating e.g. that no-education is the best education (naturalism), having no king (who by that time represented the laws of God) is the best political order (socialism), having no God is the best religion (atheism). Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 484.

<sup>1079</sup> Every human being can be called „created in view of Christ“, created as a virgin with a role to play in the divine plan of salvation, but it is obvious that the case of Mary is on a qualitative different level: with Jesus and Mary, God set a new beginning for mankind. The former Cardinal J. RATZINGER wrote in his comment to the RM of a line from Adam to the patriarchs and to the Servant of the Lord; *by its side* and *with* it he sees a line from Eve to the “mothers of the tribe”, to persons like Debora, Esther, Rut, and finally to the “Sophia”. To him, as the Adamitic line receives its significance from Christ, so it is in the light of the person of Mary and the position of the Church, that the significance of the feminine line becomes clear, in its inseparable conjunction with the Christological mystery. Cf. J. RATZINGER, “Hinführung”, p. 111-112: “wie von Christus her die adamitische Linie ihren Sinn erhält, so wird im Licht der Gestalt Mariens und in der Stellung der Ecclesia die Bedeutung der weiblichen Linie in ihrem unteilbaren Ineinander mit dem christologischen Geheimnis deutlich”.

<sup>1080</sup> Cf. F. MUZUMANGA MA-MUBIMBI, “Persona/relazionalità”, p. 941. This theological opinion has its preparation in J. DUNS SCOTUS, *Reportatio Parisiensis*, 3, d. 7, q. 4, in C. BALIĆ, *Theologiae marianae elementa*, s.ed., Sibenik 1933, quoted in S. M. CECCHIN, *L’Immacolata Concezione. Breve storia del dogma*, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2003, p. 63-64: Duns Scotus († 1308) held the opinion that God did not decide to incarnate because of the sin of man and to repair a damage, but because he wanted to be loved by man and he wanted the union with this “nature”, i.e. mankind, that was supposed to love him, *not minding the obstacle* of sin, which caused, however, the passion of Christ. The Franciscan saint Duns Scotus is famous for his theological contribution in favour of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Duns Scoto Giovanni” in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 3, p. 261-289.

<sup>1081</sup> Cf. Dogmatic Bull of PIUS IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, 8/12/1854, in *Enchiridion delle Encicliche*, vol. 2, n. 739-765. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception does not exempt Mary from the consequences of the original sin as corporal death, suffering and concupiscence.

with all the charisms of the Divine Spirit.<sup>1082</sup> Instead, the dogma can be seen today as a clear affirmation that although Mary is of exceptional holiness and union with God, she fully belongs to struggling mankind in need of Christ the Saviour.<sup>1083</sup> The dogmatic bull also gives some indication that the redemption in Christ, which was begun in the Immaculate Conception, is not “repairing” a damage, but setting a new beginning, a new creation.<sup>1084</sup>

St. John Paul II remained substantially in the traditional expressions: in the Immaculate Conception, the Holy Trinity redeemed Mary by preservation through the grace in Christ, the only Redeemer.<sup>1085</sup> Also Benedict XVI approached the mystery in the traditional language of praise of God, who prepared for himself a fitting dwelling place in the heart of Mary.<sup>1086</sup>

In the presentation by the founder, the Holy Trinity prepared her in the Immaculate Conception as the “most beautiful masterpiece of creation” (Art. 7), alluding to the beauty of sanctity. Father Montfort said in a sermon on 23/7/2003:

«We know that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the creator, through Him all things came to be and were created, He chose a special person to be His mother and He preserved this person in a most special way and put all the qualities, all the graces, all the blessings, all in her, the most specially created and chosen virgin Mary.»<sup>1087</sup>

The sermon thus combines the gift of the Immaculate Conception with the gift of “all graces” to Mary, in no way underlining a purification. The “all graces” do not mean that the founder sees in the Immaculate Conception already the sure gift of the Divine Motherhood and of the bodily Assumption into the glory of heaven. He states on 11/12/2011, in the sermon at Vigil:

«Mama Maria is from birth Immaculate Conception, which is a negative concept. It means content-less. Nothing is there. If you go to the refectory, and your plate is sparkling clean, will you be happy? Mary’s vocation is not Immaculate Conception, it is just a preparation. The content is to be Jesus. Her vocation was realized when Jesus entered her.»<sup>1088</sup>

<sup>1082</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 752: “Deiparam fuisse omnium divinarum gratiarum sedem, omnibusque divini Spiritus charismatibus exornatam”.

<sup>1083</sup> Cf. S. M. CECCHIN, *L’Immacolata Concezione*, p. 197.

<sup>1084</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 198: the “new beginning” that connects Mary with Eve shows in the ‘same decree of origin of Mary and the Incarnation’, which was decreed “ab eternum”, cf. *Enchiridion delle Encicliche*, vol. 2, n. 740 (ending) and in 753, where the Pope refers to the Fathers who compared Mary to Eve before the fall, and even “praetulerunt”, giving Mary precedence to Eve.

<sup>1085</sup> Cf. e.g. RM 8-9, commenting Eph 1,4. RM 10, quoting the dogmatic bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (8/12/1954) and referring to two fathers of the Church, Germanus of Constantinople († 733) and Andrew of Crete († 720), calls Mary ‘redeemed by preservation in the Immaculate Conception’. Cf. also the Marian catechesis, GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienza generale *Immacolata: Redenta per preservazione* (5/6/1996), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIX,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, p. 1454-1455, which appreciates the contribution of Duns Scotus († 1308), and IDEM, Udienza generale, *Santa durante tutta la vita* (19 giugno 1996), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIX,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, p. 1528. According to the thesis of the present work, the “redemption by preservation” is not a complete redemption, but only a preparation.

<sup>1086</sup> E.g. BENEDICT XVI, dominical Angelus Domini, on 11/6/2006, *on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity*: “Capolavoro della Santissima Trinità, tra tutte le creature, è la Vergine Maria: nel suo cuore umile e pieno di fede Dio si è preparato una degna dimora, per portare a compimento il mistero della salvezza. L’Amore divino ha trovato in Lei corrispondenza perfetta”. I quote the Italian original, since the English translation in the Vatican website puts it much weaker by using for unknown reasons an indefinite article, which is neither theologically nor linguistically correct: “The Virgin Mary, among all creatures, is a masterpiece [...]”. <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/angelus/2006/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_ang\\_20060611\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20060611_it.html)>, and <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/angelus/2006/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_ang\\_20060611\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20060611_en.html)>, seen on 28/10/2011.

<sup>1087</sup> Vigil; appendix 4.

<sup>1088</sup> Appendix 4.

Here indeed there is a reference to a physical “purification”, a plate must be cleaned to prepare it for receiving the food. But in the context, where *the person of* Mary is the “plate”, and *the person of* Jesus the “food”, her being “clean” means not a physical or moral purification, but her being “content-less”. It is the ascetic purity of not being attached to anything, implying attention and availability for God.

In the Theology of the Hearts of Love, being the union of Jesus and Mary at the centre and the Divine Motherhood being only a first (fundamental!) step of this union, the Immaculate Conception is seen as a preparation for the final unity and a call to spiritual virginity, which shows more in the discipleship of Mary than in the (biological) motherhood. It is a first aspect of the mystery of the Theotokos: the relationship of the Divine Son with his mother, whom the Holy Trinity chose and prepared with special gifts of grace. Man, with his will power, is called to decide for the grace of Christ, for entering into communion with the paschal mystery and receiving the Holy Spirit of Love, against egoism/self-sufficiency/hatred, against building the de-humanizing wall of self-defence (or aggression) against God and against all. This decision, which should be taken in baptism, has to be re-affirmed continuously, as human beings are always free to reverse a decision taken once, until the point of death. It may be possible to see Mary from the beginning of her existence on the spiritual level of a baptised infant who was taught some basic virtues and daily prayers. Such a child, who has not yet taken a personal firm decision to follow the way of God, can still fall into mortal sin, shaken by emotions and torments. She needed the accompanying grace throughout life, and cooperate with it, in order not to sin. (Thus this research tends to the idea that Mary had a body like other human beings, a body that can give temptations which need to be controlled.)

The common idea in East and West is the necessity of special preparation for a unique ministry, which must involve a moral, personal effort (in order to be a human preparation) and which must be thought of as sustained and anticipated by the grace of God. The Western version of the preparation stresses the anticipating grace of God. In the Orthodox Church, the special grace given to Mary is expressed in the tradition on her education by saintly parents and in the temple.<sup>1089</sup>

As a gift of grace the Immaculate Conception does not overthrow the human freedom and is thus also a special call to preserve the gift in personal effort. She needed the same human will power that others need to accept the grace of God and personal vocation to a good Christian life or to sanctity, in order to decide to donate herself and to accept in the Annunciation (and later on) the extraordinary grace and vocation of being the Mother of God and of the Church.

### **3.3.1.2. The gift of the Divine Motherhood**

The earliest biblical text pondering the divine motherhood is Gal 4,4: “born of a woman”, in the context of the mission of Christ, his being sent by God in the fullness of time in order to be “under” the law, and thus (in a typical Pauline paradox) to liberate those who were under the law, raising them to become sons, through the gift of the Spirit. The gift of divine motherhood involves Mary in the “fullness of time” and in the divine plan of salvation which foresaw the “kenosi”, the

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<sup>1089</sup> This she received according to the apocryphal “Protogospel of St. James”.

abasement of the Son to the human condition to be bound to fulfill the law.<sup>1090</sup> The Thomist C. Wessels brought in the biological language of the generative act to express the dogma of the motherhood of Mary: as every mother, her body actively prepared the ovum and thus determined the formation of the body of Jesus, but the agent acting on the ovum was not a male sperm, but the power of God.<sup>1091</sup> In the psychological view, the motherhood changed Mary from a young, pious girl to a mother who takes up her responsibility for a child. Motherhood brings not only indescribable joy, but also worries for the life and well-being of the child. (Cf. Lk 2,7 and Mt 2,13-22: the main worry and decision for the flight to Egypt is carried by Joseph; however, Mary must have participated in it.) In the human experience of rejoicing in the child and worrying for him, a psychological, reciprocal bond grows, which must have become visible to the disciples of Christ. The association of the mother with the child and his destiny is expressed by the evangelists e.g. in Mt 2,11, and in Lk 2, verses 5; 16; 19; 22; 27, 34-35, 39. Luke, in his narration of the presentation of the child in the temple,<sup>1092</sup> even uses the word “*their* purification”. At first sight it seems to apply to Mary and Joseph, the two who bring the child to the temple. According to Lev 12,6-8, the law of “purification” applies only to the woman who has delivered. It may be the use of the grammatical figure of the “zeugma”, talking, apart from the purification of the mother, about the “redemption” of the first-born son, paying for his not being sacrificed to God 5 pieces of silver (cf. Ex 13,2.11-15).<sup>1093</sup> Thus the ceremony on the child is included in the same technical term. This avoids the talk about Jesus being “redeemed”, paid back from being God’s possession and *not* being offered in sacrifice. Propositively, Luke wished to stress exactly the opposite: the mentioning of Jerusalem (in the two journeys in Luke from Galilee to Judea/Jerusalem during the childhood of Jesus) is to evoke the end of the whole life of Christ, which in Luke’s presentation of the public ministry is one single journey from Galilee to Jerusalem.<sup>1094</sup> Equally, at the end of the same passage, Simeon combined the prophesy on the contradiction Jesus was going to suffer, for the sake of revealing the thoughts of

<sup>1090</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 57, analyzing Gal 4,4.

<sup>1091</sup> Cf. C. WESSELS, *The Mother of God*, p. 154: “Mary’s maternity was not divine because the faculty of generation was elevated prior to conception, but because her physical causality in the instant of the human generation of Christ had a divine Person as its adequate term.” P. 155-156: “At the moment that Mary gave her consent the power of the Most High acted upon the ovum in her womb and instantaneously produced in it all the dispositions necessary for the infusion of the human soul and the human generation of the Son of God. [...] It] is reasonable to hold the position that the chromosomes of the human body of Christ were taken entirely from the ovum provided by Mary presupposing the necessary mutation of the sex chromosomes in the instant of conception.” P. 158-159: “It must be stressed, however, that the material causality of the ovum is a vital, physical causality. [...] God chose to form Christ’s human nature from the proper genetic cell provided by Mary, and, thus, the material dispositions of the ovum as found principally in the chromosomes determined in their own order [the biological order] the individual physical and psychological characteristics of Christ. [...] When it is said that the ovum from Mary was purely passive in the conception of Christ, this does not deny to it the vital causality of a living cell, but this does deny to it the efficient causality of an agent [which ordinarily is the male sperm]. The ovum actively prepared by Mary prior to conception exercised the material causality in the instant of conception, and in this way she fulfilled the essential requirement for motherhood.”

<sup>1092</sup> According to McHugh, Luke made “the Presentation of Jesus the climax of his Infancy Gospel”, alluding to the “great and terrible Day of Yahweh” of Mal 3,23, when He will suddenly come to his temple (cf. Mal 3,1). Cf. J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 27-28.

<sup>1093</sup> Cf. G. MEAULO, “Presentazione del Signore”, in *NDM*, p. 1036. Five pieces of silver were the gain of 20 working-days.

<sup>1094</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 1038. There may be seen an allusion to the purification of the Nazarite, who came in contact with a corpse, as the prescribed sacrifice is the same “two doves or two pigeons” (Num 6,9-10). But the idea of Jesus as the Nazarene/Nazarite is found not in Luke (it is in Mt 2, 23); and there is no hint of a contact with a dead person.



many, with the sword that was going to pierce the mother's soul.<sup>1095</sup> In Luke, Mary receives attention as the mother, she is intimately united to the life and destiny of her son by way of her motherhood.<sup>1096</sup> Mary received in the Divine Motherhood an extraordinary dignity, which pastors and theologians express e.g. with the image taken from the book of Exodus: Mary as "Tent of Meeting" or "Ark of the Covenant". In Luke, the Tent of Meeting/Abode of God/Ark of the Covenant/Temple (e.g. Ex 40,34-35 or 1 Kgs 8,10-11: the cloud covered the tent or the temple of Solomon and Kabōd YHWH, the glory and presence of God, filled it) are symbols underlying the presentation of Mary in the narration of the Incarnation; this statement is widely accepted by exegetes.<sup>1097</sup> Some Catholic writers see in the going of Mary (bearing Jesus) to the hill-country of Judea (Lk 1,39-44.56) a recall of 2 Sam 6,2-16: David bringing the ark of the covenant (bearing the presence of God) to Jerusalem. They see six points of contact and they follow a tradition,<sup>1098</sup> but the parallel Mary – Ark of God in this particular *journey* is not very convincing.<sup>1099</sup>

<sup>1095</sup> Cf. the exegetical opinion in A. VALENTINI, "Bibbia", p. 207-208, and in A. SERRA, "Bibbia", in *NDM*, p. 237. A. Serra emphasizes that the "sword" means not only the sufferings of Mary at the foot of the cross, but the whole project of God concerning Jesus causing the transformation of her heart. Cf. A. SERRA, "'E anche a te una spada trafiggerà l'anima' (Lk 2,35a). Scrittura e tradizione a confronto", in *SIM* 13 (2001) 233-324.

<sup>1096</sup> Cf. G. MEAULO, "Presentazione del Signore", p. 1038.

<sup>1097</sup> Cf. A. M. SERRA, *La Donna dell'Alleanza. Prefigurazioni di Maria nell'Antico Testamento*, Messaggero, Padova 2006, p. 11, and J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 61.

<sup>1098</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 170-172, based on E. BURROWS, *The Gospel of the Infancy and other Biblical Essays*, Burns, London 1940, p. 47-48, who was followed by R. Laurentin and others. The six points of contact are: same place (Judea), same sentiment of joy, shown in the dance of David and the jumping of John in the womb of Elisabeth, the mediation or bringing of blessing to Obed-Edom and Elisabeth, the fear or awe expressed (using the same expression of "coming to me") by David and Elisabeth, the permanence of three months in the house of Obed-Edom and Elisabeth. Various Fathers speak of Mary as "Ark": EPHREM of Syria in *Hymni in Nativitatem Christi*, 11, 15, in *CSCO* 187, 77, ATHANASIUS in *De virginitate*, HESYCHIUS OF JERUSALEM († after 450) in *Homily 5, in honour of Holy Mary Mother of God*, 1, in *PG* 93, 1463D ("Surge, Domine, in requiem tuam, tu et arca sanctificationis tuae, quae est haud dubie Virgo Deipara. Si enim tu es gemma, merito illa est arca." The text recalls the Incarnation, the Son rising from the Father's breast to come to rest in Bethlehem.), CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA († 444) in *De adoratione in Spiritu et Veritate* (Mary is the "arc", containing the true Manna). Of the six points of contact, the central one was noted in a side-comment by an early Father: St. Gregory Nazianzen in *Oratio 38 in Theophania*, 17 (in *PG* 36, 330D), in speaking on the Baptism in the Jordan, likens the jumping of small John the Baptist in the womb to the dancing of David in 2 Sam 6,14.

<sup>1099</sup> The Fathers with exception of Gregory do not refer to Luke, but to the books of Exodus or Psalms. They do not contemplate the ark in being carried to Jerusalem, but e.g. Ephrem mentions it in its quality of incorruptible wood and untouchable object, Mary having a body uncorrupted by sin, with Joseph priestly ministering before it. It is commonly agreed on that Luke alludes frequently to OT-texts (cf. J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 11-23), but it is also agreed on that the narrations of Luke 1,5-38 are set up with the intention to show the superiority of Jesus (and his mother) towards John (and his parents). Cf. the parallelism and development between Annunciation and Visitation observed by A. VALENTINI, "Lc 1,39-45: Primi indizi di venerazione della Madre del Signore", in *Marianum* 58 (1996) 346-347, who sees realized a "Pentecostal" model: gift of the Spirit, proclamation of salvation, "cultic" joy. Rather than remembering 2 Sam 6, the periscope of the visitation seems to be the conclusion of the presentation of superiority of Jesus and his mother over John and his mother. The superiority lies in the presence and gift of the Holy Spirit. R. E. BROWN, *La nascita del Messia secondo Matteo e Luca*, Cittadella, Assisi 1981, p. 79-81 (the famous scholar died 1998) and S. C. NAPIÓRKOWSKI, "Ecumenismo", in *NDM*, p. 472 find the Biblical foundation lacking for calling Mary the "ark" because she went up to Judea. G. Rovira who also calls Mary the "ark" which carries the new Law of God, Christ himself, is inspired not only by Exodus, Psalms and Luke, but also by Rev 11,19, in which the ark in heaven is revealed. Rev 11,19 can be seen as introduction to the vision of the great sign of the "woman" in Rev 12, which in the Catholic theology is generally interpreted as both the Church and Mary. Cf. G. ROVIRA, "Familie Gottes", in *Sitz der Weisheit* 15,1 (2011) 106. J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 56-63, who sees the basis for Mary as "Ark" only in Lk 1,35, the overshadowing with the Holy Spirit. The comparison of her journey to 2 Sam 6 he called "far-fetched". ARCIC II (ed.), *Mary, grace and hope*, n. 15, p. 21-22 does not call Mary the "Ark", i.e. bearer of Christ and grace, but only "recipient": "the annunciation and the visit to Elizabeth [...] emphasize that Mary is in a unique way the recipient of God's election and grace". Noteworthy is the "unique" in this case, much used in Catholic Mariology, while many members of other Christian Communities refuse to assign any uniqueness to Mary. The reason may lie simply in the fact that they are not used to this word concerning Mary. In the Lutheran Reformation

The Divine Motherhood is the first Marian dogma both chronologically and in importance, defined at the council of Ephesus in 431 (cf. DS 251, with clear Biblical foundation and earliest testimonies of Fathers of the Church), in order to defend the divinity of Jesus Christ since his conception in the womb of the Virgin.<sup>1100</sup>

Today the Magisterium emphasizes the relational aspect of this motherhood: her entering into communion with the mystery of life,<sup>1101</sup> her awesome contemplation of the son and the joy of being nearer to the “Son of God”, as the angel called him.<sup>1102</sup> According to John Paul II, the Son-mother-relationship is already a very intimate union,<sup>1103</sup> the first step in their history of unity in love of God.

Pope Francis says in *Misericordiae vultus*, an apostolic letter of higher importance (as bull of indiction of a jubilee year) that “Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the Ark of the Covenant between God and man. She treasured divine mercy in her heart”, and the “face of mercy” is in the next paragraph defined as the person of Jesus.<sup>1104</sup>

Father Montfort did not underline the gift Mary received personally. In Art. 13 he stressed instead that the Son took flesh in her out of love of God and all men. Art 14 also shows her ministerial status in receiving the gift of Christ: “it is in and through Mary that mankind received Jesus”. However, in the Art. 11, which belongs to the Marian Articles, there is a general statement which can be applied to the Mother “in primis”. She received the “touch” of the “infinite love of God which became visible in His only Son”, “became changed” through the incarnation, birth and death of Christ: “With the incarnation, birth and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ everything became changed. Nothing remains untouched by the infinite love of God which became visible in His only Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

In addition, it could be said that in the Divine Motherhood, there is the first aspect of the mother receiving the experience of motherhood, as was shown above especially in the voice of theologians. There is the second aspect of receiving the sense of life, the vocation. The Incarnation reveals the knowledge of man which God has. He knows man as a social being, in need of being needed by others, drawing fulfilment and happiness only out of the fact of being able to be a help to someone, being important to somebody, both on the material/physical level as well as in spiritual/psychological aspects. The highest possible joy of a human being is to be completely for God, to be needed and possessed by Him, and thus to possess Him.<sup>1105</sup> God needs every person,

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till today, there is no doubt that Mary is the absolutely greatest saint. Cf. L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Maria. Mutter und Gefährtin Christi*, Ulrich, Augsburg 2003, p. 274-278.

<sup>1100</sup> Cf e.g. O. SEMMELROTH, “Die Christologische Bedeutung der Marianischen Dogmen”, in *Ephemerides Mariologicae* 23 (1973) 431-433.

<sup>1101</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 18. One may deduce from this that the kenosis of Christ in the Incarnation gives Mary not only the gift of motherhood, but also the capacity to love mankind in a feminine way.

<sup>1102</sup> Cf. IOANNES PAULUS II, Litterae encyclicae *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17/4/2003), n. 55, in AAS 95 (2003) 433-475, and RM 36: comment to the Magnificat, and n. 17: Mary was one of the first creatures to discover Christ. Concerning “Ecclesia de Eucharistia”, the letter accompanying the “year of the Holy Eucharist”, cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 405-435.

<sup>1103</sup> GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Discorso *Il mistero dell’Unione della Madre col Figlio* (7/6/1979), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, II,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1979, 1477.

<sup>1104</sup> FRANCIS, bull of indiction of the extraordinary jubilee of mercy *Misericordiae vultus* (11/4/2015), in <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html)>, seen on 27/6/2015.

<sup>1105</sup> Cf. PAULUS VI, Adhortatio apostolica on Christian joy *Gaudete in Domino* (9/5/1975), in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19750509\\_gaudete-in-](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19750509_gaudete-in-)

every one of his creatures for his plan of salvation. In this way one can speak of Mary being needed for the Incarnation: God willed to need human beings to draw all to follow his will and be saved, and each has a special task to accomplish.

### 3.3.1.3. The gift of knowing Christ and his teaching

It is most obvious that Mary knew Christ in a very personal way, having him always as a model before her eyes. The Holy Scriptures gives also some indications of an intention of Jesus to teach the mother. T. Goffi speaks of the impact of Jesus on Mary in the terms of ‘generating as new creature’.<sup>1106</sup> F. Manzi holds it for sure that Jesus taught her the superiority of faith-relationship with himself to blood relationship.<sup>1107</sup> According to Valentini, many Marian passages (Lk 11,28; 8,20-21; Mk 3,32-35 and par.; Mt 12,47-50; Jn 2,3-4; 19,25-27) can be taken as indirect proofs that Jesus was intended to teach Mary to change perspective.<sup>1108</sup> In the exegesis of Lk 2,35 by A. Serra, he explained the “sword” of Simeon as a symbol of the Word of God announced by Christ. The Marian exegete sees the “sword” “penetrating” and “piercing” the soul of Mary, as she shelters and meditates the word and will of God, experienced as painful especially in Lk 2,49-50 (finding of the Bar Mišwah in Jerusalem) and under the cross.<sup>1109</sup> Important is the finding of the child Jesus in the temple when she had to learn that Jesus has to give precedence to the will of God, and he was vindicating his right and duty to follow his mission.<sup>1110</sup> It was the first time when Jesus was teaching in the temple of Jerusalem, traditional teaching-hall of the Jewish Rabbis, where Luke later saw him imparting his lectures every day, beginning in the early morning, after praying the night on the Mount of Olives. (Cf. Lk 19,47a; 21,37-38; 22,53) What he discussed with the doctors of the law remains unrevealed; the only word of him transmitted by the evangelist, a word of prophetic profundity, which becomes understandable in the light of the other “third day” at Easter,<sup>1111</sup> was

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domino\_en.html>, esp. chapter 3, seen on 20/4/2013. Here, Paul VI presented Jesus as the model of such a union with God: “If Jesus radiates such peace, such assurance, such happiness, such availability, it is by reason of the inexpressible love by which He knows that He is loved by His Father. [...] It is an intimate knowledge which fills Him ‘... the Father knows me and I know the Father.’ (Jn 10,15) It is an unceasing and total exchange: ‘All I have is yours and all you have is mine.’ (Jn 17,10)” Cf. also FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (24/11/2013), esp. n. 10 and 113.

<sup>1106</sup> T. GOFFI, “Spiritualità”, in *NDM*, p. 1235: “la Vergine è generata creatura nuova dall’unico mediatore Gesù Cristo”.

<sup>1107</sup> Cf. F. MANZI, “Gesù Cristo”, p. 575.

<sup>1108</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Bibbia”, p. 209-214, on Lk 2,41-52, Jn 2,1-12, 19,25-27: seeming rejection is to make Mary to see the situation in the perspective of Jesus and his mission. This should be especially true for Mark, whose intention it was to show that Christ was so different that nobody understood him completely: the scribes, the pharisees, the masses following him, the disciples, the apostles, the relations, even the mother (Mk 3,31). Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 59. For all it was necessary to remove from their heads their own ideas of the messiah and to discover God’s Messiah in faith. Luke (e.g. 1,45) and John (e.g. 2,5) show that Mary followed this process of embracing the faith in Christ long before others. De Fiores (p. 58) says also concerning Mark that it shows that Mary was (sometimes) present in the public activity of Christ.

<sup>1109</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, “Bibbia”, p. 239-240.

<sup>1110</sup> Cf. M. G. MASCIARELLI, *Il cuore*, p. 210, quoting J. RATZINGER, “Erwägungen”, where the former Cardinal writes actually on the beginning of the participation of Mary in the passion of Christ. MASCIARELLI interprets it as the beginning of her discipleship. Cf. also A. AMATO, “Maria, la Theotókos, discepolo ed educatrice di Cristo e dei cristiani nella riflessione teologico-sistemica”, in M. FARINA – M. MARCHI (ed), *Maria nell’educazione di Gesù Cristo e del cristiano. I. La pedagogia interroga alcune fonti biblico-teologiche*. Atti del Seminario di studio promosso dalla Pontificia Facoltà di Scienze dell’Educazione “Auxilium”. Roma, 14-15 dicembre 2001, LAS, Roma 2002, vol. 1, p. 166-167. A. Amato sees in the finding in the temple a clear sign that Jesus educated Mary, since his childhood, to a deeper understanding of his complete belonging to the heavenly Father and the mission he received from God.

<sup>1111</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, “Bibbia”, p. 243. Also De Fiores has the opinion that Mary and Joseph knew who is the Father of Jesus; what they did not understand is the prophesy of the Paschal mystery, which is present in the vocabulary of the

addressed to the parents, especially to Mary, in response to her question. U. Vanni sees in Mary an “expert in Jesus”<sup>1112</sup>.

John Paul II taught that Marian passages in the Gospels can be taken as indirect proofs that Jesus was intended to teach Mary, to prepare her for her mission as mother of all men, in the order of grace.<sup>1113</sup> As the first disciple, she is also the first to benefit from the mediation of Christ, and from all the effects of his redemption.<sup>1114</sup> According to John Paul II, she is a ‘privileged witness’<sup>1115</sup> of the Love of God for man and the regenerating power of his Love.<sup>1116</sup> According to “*Mulieris dignitatem*” and RM, faith led Mary to receive the gift of virginity,<sup>1117</sup> the revelation of the mystery of Incarnation,<sup>1118</sup> the great change from the Jewish monotheistic faith to the belief in the Trinity.<sup>1119</sup> Jesus revealed to her “the other dimension of her maternity”, in which she has to guard the Word of God<sup>1120</sup>.

Father Montfort often meditates on the fact that in Christ the Love of God became something which could be humanly experienced and encountered: he is the revelation of the Love of God. This can be seen e.g. in Art. 6 of the Original Constitutions: “God made his infinite Love visible, more personal and exemplary by becoming a human being (like us in all things but sin) in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary”.<sup>1121</sup> The founder did not stress at all the gain of knowledge Mary had by having a privileged contact with the teaching of Christ. Art. 6 fixes the attention on the human experience of a person: knowing how he relates to others in love, what annoys him, what makes him happy. The fact that he emphasizes that Christ came to mankind through Mary may allow us to deduce that in the founder, she is the first who had access and experience of the Love of God in Christ. But it cannot be asserted that he contemplated in it a growth of understanding of mere cognitive knowledge of God in Mary. This should be due to the fact that in Africa, positive human relationships play a greater role than knowledge, and more time and energy is dedicated to the achievement of the first, while in the Western world the situation may be generally reversed. This research presents with European theologians and with John Paul II the addition to the thoughts of the founder, that Mary should be seen as gaining both spiritually and “theologically” from the teachings of Christ.

### 3.3.2. The response of Mary to the gifts of God

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narration: ascent to Jerusalem (Lk 2,41-42; 18,31), feast of Passover (Lk 2,41; 22,8), three days (Lk 2,46, 24,7), Why searching? (Lk 2,49; 24,5), it is necessary (Lk 2,49; 24,26) incomprehension (Lk 2,50; 24,25). Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 68.

<sup>1112</sup> U. VANNI, “Maria e l’incarnazione nell’esperienza della chiesa giovannea”, in *Theotokos* 3 (1995) 311.

<sup>1113</sup> Cf. RM 39.

<sup>1114</sup> Cf. RM 41.

<sup>1115</sup> Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienza Generale *Maria nella Sacra Scrittura e nella riflessione teologica* (8/11/1995), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII, 2, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, p. 1042. Cf. RM 26.

<sup>1116</sup> Cf. IDEM, Apostolic epistle *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (16/10/2002), n. 22.

<sup>1117</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 20.

<sup>1118</sup> Cf. RM 9.

<sup>1119</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 3.

<sup>1120</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 19.

<sup>1121</sup> Appendix 3.

Relationship is based on call and response, gift and acceptance. To the three gifts of God in view of Christ or in Jesus himself, Mary responded by preserving her virginity, receiving in faith the Son of God at the Annunciation, and by following Christ in the spirit of a disciple.

### 3.3.2.1. Perpetual Virginity

The presentation of the “virginitas ante partum” is historically credible especially in Matthew who aimed at proving to the Jews the messianity of Christ, as descendant of Joseph, “son of David, son of Abraham” (Mt 1,1). The virginity of Mary was rather disturbing to his aim and thus hardly invented. Mt mentions the conception of the Holy Spirit only briefly in 1,18 and 1,25 and underlines largely that still, Joseph is the juridical father by his matrimony with the mother (1,16.18.24) and by taking care of them (1,21.25; 2,13-14. 19-23).

In Luke, her question “πῶς ἔσται τοῦτο, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω?” (How can this be, since I do not know man?) presents her situation as a virgin, a young girl, inclined to the wish to remain a virgin, yet open to obey the guidance of God in any case.<sup>1122</sup>

Lk 1,46-55, the Magnificat, can be read as a confirmation of the active desire of Mary to serve God’s plan and to belong to Him completely, especially in the expressions of joy and gratitude, and in calling herself an existence in “ταπείνωσις”, (nothingness/humility), which may recall the “misery”, “affliction” and “humiliation” of childless women, cf. 1 Sam 1,11; Gen 16,11; 29,32 (a humiliation which God prevented for Mary), or the misery of the desolate and sterile Zion, cf. 4 Esd 9,45 (in its desperate expectation of a Messiah, in the time of Mary), or the misery of someone persecuted, cf. Ps 31 (30),8 (as Israel was oppressed by the Romans). Apart from this, “ταπείνωσις” is understood even before the NT as the ideal of religious humility and trust in God.<sup>1123</sup> A material aspect (poverty)<sup>1124</sup> and an educational aspect (e.g. no knowledge of rethorics, physical laws, medicine, geometrics and astrology) of her “nothingness” cannot be excluded, but

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<sup>1122</sup> St. Augustine interpreted this question as a proof for a previous vow of virginity of Mary, as it was seen in sub-chapter 2.1.1.1. J. McHugh reports that this opinion was accepted among Catholic theologians till 1909, thus, he uses 28 pages to discuss Lk 1,34 only concerning a possible vow of virginity, which he sees as historically unlikely, as the celibate women among the Essenes had entered a “convent”, not a betrothal. He concludes that the question was not historically posed, but that it was a literary device of Luke for structuring the message of Gabriel into two parts and for underlining the virginal conception. He also sees an intention of Luke to show that Mary had a strong intention or desire to remain a virgin: “The words he attributes to Mary are so absolute and so devoid of qualification that they represent Mary, even though betrothed, as one who does not regard the consummation of her marriage as imminent or positively probable. Why did Luke, after stating that she was a virgin, and betrothed, place such words on her lips? There seems to be only one possible explanation. When Luke composed this dialogue some seventy years after the birth of Jesus, he must have written these words because he believed that Mary had been *destined* to remain a virgin for ever, *i.e.* because he firmly believed that Mary had in fact remained a virgin all her life, before and after the birth of Jesus.” He advocates the idea (of K. Rahner) that Mary chose virginity only out of love of the Lord already incarnated, *i.e.* after the Annunciation. Cf. J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 173-199, 446-447, esp. p. 193 and 196-197. A. Serra does not contemplate an intention of Luke in the verse, neither does he take the verse as a proof of a vow of virginity, accepting the arguments of exegetes before him who called such a vow historically improbable. A. Serra believes in a mere aspiration or desire of virginity in Mary before the Annunciation, as the present work does. Cf. A. SERRA, *Maria nella tradizione biblica*, p. 18.

<sup>1123</sup> Cf. M. GOLASMICI, “Griglie interpretative di Lc 1,46-55” in *Theotokos* 5 (1997) 675: “humility” is to be seen as opposite of the arrogance of the mighty and the rich. M. Golasmici sees “tapeínosis” together with smallness, poverty and fear of God as characteristics of those who are in union with God. Cf. also E. PERETTO, “Magnificat”, in *NDM*, p. 772. Matthew puts the same word into the mouth of Jesus: “ταπεινὸς τῇ καρδίᾳ”, lowly/humble of heart, Mt 11,29.

<sup>1124</sup> In the early patristic era, only Tertullian called Mary materially poor, according to the knowledge of the author, while the apocryphal “Nativity of Mary” collocated her into a family of higher living standard.

seeing it as the foremost aspect has not much foundation in the Catholic tradition, which stands on the references of the song to various OT-psalms, praises and prophesies.<sup>1125</sup> In the Magnificat, the Virgin calls the fear of God the beginning of receiving his mercy, i.e. a relationship of friendship with him. As the “bride”, she exalts the strength of her “spouse”, who, as God of action in the moment of the incarnation (the happening in the past, indicated by the grammatical form of Aorist used in the Greek verbs), has scattered the proud in their evil machinations, brought justice, rewarded goodness, pulled those who seemed powerful down from their seat and made them to be at the margin of world-history. Who has filled the hungry with the only true “good”, which is God himself, leaving the rich to discover that their riches have no value. As the faithful Virgin Israel, she remembers the promises of God and sees them fulfilled in herself. (Cf. Lk 1,46-55)<sup>1126</sup>

De Fiores advocates to see that Jn 1,13 should be read against the early Greek codexes, but with the Fathers of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century in Gallia (Ireneus), North Africa (Origene and Tertullian), Rome (Justin), Syria and Palestine (Ignatius and the “letters of the apostles”) in the singular: “But to those who received him, he gave the power to become sons of God, to those who believe in His name, Who has been generated not of bloods, neither from the will of the flesh, nor from the will of man, but by God.” (Jn 1,12-13)<sup>1127</sup>

The first (known) Father of the Church who wrote about Mary is St. Ignatius of Antioch in Syria, and he stressed her motherhood and virginity, taken up soon by orthodox apocryphal writings as the “Ascension of Isaiah”, written at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century probably in Antioch.<sup>1128</sup> According to an introduction to his texts in *TMPM*, this second successor of St. Peter as bishop of Antioch, probably between the years 107-115, was arrested and led to Rome. During his journey, he wrote seven letters to Christian communities, the first is his letter to the Ephesians.<sup>1129</sup> The Marian text Ef 18,2-19,1 in particular has almost the value of a symbol of faith.<sup>1130</sup> Most patrologians agree on the authenticity of the letters.<sup>1131</sup> The Marian text can be translated thus:

«(18,2) In fact, our God Jesus the Christ was borne as embryo<sup>1132</sup> by Mary according to the economy [plan of salvation<sup>1133</sup>] of God, from seed of David, but from holy Spirit<sup>1134</sup>. He was generated and

<sup>1125</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 772-774.

<sup>1126</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Il senso degli aoristi in Lc 1,51-53” in *Theotokos* 5 (1997) 725-729, underlining that they are not eschatological. Theologians of liberation see the verbs as “prophetical Aorists”: the changes in the society are still to be fulfilled in the whole Israel of God, in future. Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 337. This would ascribe to Mary a certain (not admissible) aggressiveness.

<sup>1127</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 71, quoting TERTULLIAN *De carne Christi* 19,1-2, in *CCL* 2,907.

<sup>1128</sup> Cf. A. GILA, “Apocrifi”, p. 130.

<sup>1129</sup> The letters are aimed at strengthening the faith of the early Christians in the confusion caused by Jews (rejecting the godhead of Christ), docetism (rejecting the true manhood of Christ) and early gnosism (rejecting the permanent union of the divine “spirit” with the manhood of Christ). The letters have great doctrinal importance. Cf. G. GHARIB, *Introd. “Ignazio di Antiochia”*, in G. GHARIB et al. (ed.), *TMPM. Padri e altri autori greci*, Città Nuova, Roma 1988, vol. 1, p. 120.

<sup>1130</sup> Cf. F. BERGAMELLI, “La verginità di Maria in Ignazio di Antiochia”, in *Theotokos* 9 (2001) 312.

<sup>1131</sup> Cf. J. RIUS-CAMPS, *The four authentic letters of Ignatius, the martyr*, PIOS, Roma 1979, esp. p. 377: Ephesians is among. For the defence of the authenticity of all the letters cf. B. DEHANDSCHUTTER, “L’Authenticité des Épîtres d’Ignace d’Antioche”, in E. LIVINGSTONE (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, XVIII, 3, Cistercian, Kalamazoo 1989, p. 103-110, and F. R. PROSTMEIER, “Ignatios”, in *LThK* (1996), vol. 5, col. 407-408.

<sup>1132</sup> According to L. ROCCI, *Vocabulario greco-italiano*, p. 1105, the verb *kyophoreo* is composed of *kyos*= *kyema*= embryo, something borne, bud, and *phero*, to carry/bear. Cf. also F. BERGAMELLI, “La verginità di Maria”, p. 313-314: Ignatius points at the human reality of pregnancy undergone by this “our God Jesus”.

<sup>1133</sup> Cf. this explanation of “economy” in the comment of the editor to IGNAZIO DI ANTIOCHIA, “Lettera agli Efesini”, in G. GHARIB et al. (ed.), *TMPM*, vol. 1, p. 122, and F. BERGAMELLI, “La verginità di Maria”, p. 314.

baptized in order to purify the water with the passion.<sup>1135</sup> (19,1) And it remained hidden to the prince of this century the virginity of Mary and her delivery<sup>1136</sup>, in the same way also the death of the Lord: three mysteries<sup>1137</sup> to be shouted aloud, that were accomplished in the silence of God.»<sup>1138</sup>

The “virginity of Mary” in 19,1, as one of the three “mysteries” (salvific facts of the life of Christ) can be seen as the rhetorical figure of the synecdoche: talking of a “whole” (the “virginity of Mary”), it indicates and stresses a part of it (the virginal conception of her Son), while the whole (the personal, perpetual virginity of Mary) is reaffirmed generally.<sup>1139</sup> Giving the privilege to the first of the three “mysteries” by using a rhetorical figure on it, Ignatius uses the conception of Christ to profess his faith in the divine origin of Christ.<sup>1140</sup>

The Council of Capua (392), fighting against the bishop Bonosus for the acceptance of the perpetual Virginity of Mary, used Jn 19,26-27 (Jesus entrusting Mary to John) as the main argument for her not having marital relationship with Joseph, and not having other children: Jesus did not say “also this is your child”, and if she had had other children, the word of Jesus would have stolen the mother away from her natural family. B. Amata shows that before Capua, already Origen understood John 19 like that, as well as S. Hillary of Poitiers.<sup>1141</sup>

I. De La Potterie, quoting St. Augustine, distinguishes the “virginitas carnis”, the biological virginity, and the “virginitas fidei” or “virginitas cordis”, her spiritual virginity and faithfulness to God, her active desire to be part of God’s plan. De La Potterie says also that virginity (in Israel and in the heart of Mary) is the purity of the “spousal” relationship with God,<sup>1142</sup> a decision consequent to the call to Divine Motherhood.

Masciarelli continued in the footsteps of De La Potterie: to him, Jesus and Mary were united in a special way by their common virginity for the kingdom of God. The eternal dialogue of life and love between the Father and the Son excluded any other way of life for Jesus, who thus became the

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<sup>1134</sup> As a synthetic-antithetic couple of nouns, there are two opposed principles that are united in their working: a human principle, in BERGAMELLI clearly individuated in Mary, and a divine principle. The holy Spirit in Ignatius seems already a *personal* divine principle. The poetic language talks here of the conception of Christ. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 315-317.

<sup>1135</sup> Ignatius continues to stress the humanity of Christ: birth, baptism of penitence and death, while at the same time underlining the divine power working through him: purifying the water for the faithful.

<sup>1136</sup> Cf. the Italian translation *Ibidem*, p. 312-313.

<sup>1137</sup> “The mysteries”, used first by Ignatius (also in the later letter to the Magnesians 9,1) and *Didaskalia* 11,11, are in the first place the death and resurrection of Christ. BERGAMELLI sees Ignatius using it here in a wider sense of salvific events in the life of Christ, but does not permit an interpretation of seeing something personal of Mary included in the mysteries. Thus, the mystery “virginity of Mary” cannot be simply the incorruption of her body. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 319-320.

<sup>1138</sup> The Greek original of Eph 18,2-19,1: “(18,2) ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκυοφορήθη ὑπὸ Μαρίας κατ’ οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ ἐκ σπέρματος μὲν Δαυὶδ, πνεύματος δὲ ἁγίου ὃς ἐγεννήθη καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη ἵνα τῷ πάθει τὸ ὕδωρ καθάρῃ. (19,1) Καὶ ἔλαθεν τὸν ἄρχοντα τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἡ παρθενία Μαρίας καὶ ὁ τοκετὸς αὐτῆς, ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ θάνατος τοῦ κυρίου τρία μυστήρια κραυγῆς, ἅτινα ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ θεοῦ ἐπράχθη.” The text continues (19,2-3) to narrate how the three mysteries became manifest: by a star of unexplainable light and novelty, which other stars, sun and moon celebrate: God appeared in human form. In A. LINDEMANN – H. PAULSEN, (ed.), *Die apostolischen Väter*, Mohr, Tübingen 1992, p. 188. C. CORSATO sees in Eph 19,2-3 a first allusion to Rev 12, the pregnant woman clothed by the sun. Cf. “Ap 12,1-6: riletture patristiche”, in *Theotokos* 8 (2000) 74-75.

<sup>1139</sup> Cf. F. BERGAMELLI, “La verginità di Maria”, p. 320-321.

<sup>1140</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 323.

<sup>1141</sup> Cf. B. AMATA, “Giovanni 19, 26-27 come prova scritturistica della perpetua verginità di Maria: Origine e sviluppo di questa esegesi”, in G. LICCARDO – F. RUOTOLO – S. TANZARELLA (ed.), *XVI Centenario del Concilio di Capua 392-1992. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi mariologici*. Capua 19-24 Maggio 1992, Marianum, Roma 1993, p. 107-123, 166. He referred to ORIGEN, *Commentariorum in Evangelium Ioannis*, tomus 1, paraphrasis 6, in PG 14, 32A, to St. HILLARIUS, *Commentarius in Matthaeum*, 1,4, in PL 9, 922B, and as main source for the letter “De Bonoso” of Capua to ATHANASIUS, *Epistula ad virgines*, in CSCO 151, 77.

<sup>1142</sup> I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell’alleanza*, Marietti, Genova 2007, p. 163-165, 167-168.

source of consecrated, spiritually fruitful virginity. The Virgin participated in this corporal-spiritual virginity, becoming its living testimony. Her faithfulness to Christ was the essence of her “virginitas cordis”.<sup>1143</sup> Theology found many expressions to deepen the understanding of the virginity of the Mother of God. It is a historical miracle expressing the will of God to choose what is weak. It brings Jesus into parallel with Adam, formed out of “virginal ground”, thus showing him as the beginning of a new creation. It is a sign of the godhead of Christ and of the gratuity of God, a sign that all initiative comes from the Father.<sup>1144</sup> It is a sign of the mystery of the self-humiliation of God and of the future divinisation/glorification of man, in the gift of perfect self-control and inner freedom in concentration of all emotive energies, connoted with simplicity and truthfulness, and in the gift of incorruptibility. It is a sign of the humility of Mary and her exclusive service of Christ and his mission. It is a mystery that reveals the cooperation of the mother with the Father and the Spirit for the entrance of the Son into the world – then in the body and always in a spiritual way. It is a gift of oneself to God, affirming courageously the spousal relationship of mankind to God which on earth remains an “engagement”, as the wedding of the Lamb is celebrated in heaven.<sup>1145</sup>

The idea of considering virginity a necessity for the mere physical divine motherhood is to be contested. This doctrinal error, which could make people to see God as a biological father of Jesus, generating Christ in Mary, who would then be seen as half man, half God, made the young professor J. Ratzinger to write that the teaching of the godhead of Jesus would not be touched, if Jesus would have been the fruit of a normal human matrimony. For his being Son of God, of which the faith tells, is not a biological, but an ontological fact: God is always Father, Son and Spirit, and the Son, in the man Jesus, assumes the creature ‘human being’, so that he himself “is” a human being.<sup>1146</sup> Thus the mere biological motherhood for Christ has in Ratzinger as a necessity only chastity, which could be matrimonial, according to the Christian ideal of wedlock as generation of life in openness to God, the source of life. Evangelical Christians like D. Gustafson, member of an American Episcopal Church, says it would have been natural if Mary and Joseph would have consumed their matrimony after the virginal birth of Jesus.<sup>1147</sup> But here the mystery of the Incarnation is seen in its aspect of an event, void of its relational value.

<sup>1143</sup> Cf. M. G. MASCIARELLI, *Il cuore*, p. 201, 206-207, quoting I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero*, p. 164.

<sup>1144</sup> This sign is a help for the faithful to believe, not a necessity.

<sup>1145</sup> Cf. the whole paragraph: S. M. PERRELLA, *Maria, Vergine e Madre*, p. 243-246, I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero*, p. 154-160, C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 464. The last half-sentence cf. S. DE FIORES, “Vergine III-IV”, in *NDM*, p. 1321.

<sup>1146</sup> Die “Lehre vom Gottsein Jesu würde nicht angetastet, wenn Jesus aus einer normalen menschlichen Ehe hervorgegangen wäre. Denn die Gottessohnschaft, von der der Glaube spricht, ist kein biologisches, sondern ein ontologisches Faktum; [...] Gott ist immer Vater, Sohn und Geist; die Empfängnis Jesu bedeutet [...] dass Gott als Sohn in dem Menschen Jesus das Geschöpf Mensch an sich zieht, sodass er selber Mensch ,ist’.“ J. RATZINGER, *Einführung in das Christentum*, p. 258-259. It is well noteworthy that he did not just postulate the non-necessity of the virginity in general. His statement is in the context of refusing the neo-pagan idea of theogamy in the case of Mary, the sexual union of a god with a human woman. From there, the young professor must have reflected on the dignity of marriage and come to the conclusion that God could have chosen to be born out of a normal union of man and woman. It is also noteworthy that his book, in the editions after 1990, is rectified and explained better in this point.

<sup>1147</sup> Cf. D. LONGENECKER – D. GUSTAFSON, *Mary. A Catholic-Evangelical Debate*, Brazos, Grand Rapids 2003, p. 63-77, quoting on p. 77 an ancient homily attributed to St. BASIL THE GREAT, *Homelia in sanctam Christi generationem*, 5, in PG 31, 1467B: “Mary’s virginity was necessary until the service of the Incarnation, and what happened afterwards [...] does not] affect the doctrine of the mystery.” The ancient author of the homily, a little bit further, witnessed to the “history of Zacharias” attesting that Mary remained a virgin perpetually.



The dogma of the Perpetual Virginity has its earliest testimony (as dogma, after the testimonies of NT and Apostle's Creed of ca. 150 AD on the virgin birth of Jesus,<sup>1148</sup> and the comments of single Fathers on the perpetual virginity) in the Symbol of Epiphanius, 374 AD, cf. DS 44. It was constantly re-affirmed by Fathers and Magisterium (against contradicting opinions of single theologians),<sup>1149</sup> and is understood as virginity before she conceived Christ and in the conception – without a man; virginity after the childbirth – the matrimony with Joseph was not consumed, neither was there a sexual relationship with any other person;<sup>1150</sup> and (physical and moral) virginity in giving birth to Christ.<sup>1151</sup> (Cf. DS 1880)

Father Montfort takes the perpetual physical virginity of Mary for granted, often mentioning Mary as the Virgin, or talking of the “most pure and holy Heart of His Virginal Mother” (Art. 7).<sup>1152</sup> As after Pentecost, when it was a point of breaking both with the pagan culture and with Jewish mentality, the virginity “for the Kingdom”, of which Mary is the second model, is by the founder not relegated to women, but an ideal for all religious, priests, brothers and sisters. On the foundation of the importance of physical virginity/chastity, he develops the thought that the spiritual virginity – love of God and obedience to God – of Mary is necessary for her to be in perfect union with Christ. Her accepting the will of God to become a mother and her remaining in the state of love and obedience, (cf. Art. 13) i.e. in the spiritual virginity, without which the corporal virginity (received as a gift of grace from birth) makes no sense, is a matter of personal decision. As a spiritual director, the founder concentrates on this decision of Mary, which is imitable. He preached on 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2011: “Mary prepared herself, opened herself, was not distracted, but sought: What does God will? When will he come? This preparation was very very important. God has given her all the graces, but Mary also worked with all her strength.”<sup>1153</sup>

This research presents the perpetual virginity of Mary as an answer of the Theotokos to the gifts of the special presence of God in her life, attracting all her attention. Matrimonial chastity – in a more physical way than virginity for the kingdom – is equally a sign of the faithful love of God. The Holy Trinity shall be seen here as inspiring Mary (and Joseph) to choose complete continence in order to give them to the Church as highest and first models of virginity for the sake of Christ, and not out of fear of contaminating himself with the flesh of a non-virginal woman.

The virginity of Mary is not a marginal fact, as virginity brings autonomy and capacity to donate oneself in freedom, complete openness and love, for building an intimate, personal relationship.<sup>1154</sup> It shows the firm delicacy of a person who knows to respect and protect from selfish desires of others what God has created. It is a luminous revelation of the great value of the human body and its sexuality. It remains a secure part of the faith that God wanted this virginity for

<sup>1148</sup> Cf. J. G. MACHEN, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, Baker, Grand Rapids (Mi), 1965, p. 5.

<sup>1149</sup> Cf. B. AMATA, “Giovanni 19, 26-27”, p. 107-172, and other contributions in G. LICCARDO – F. RUOTOLO – S. TANZARELLA (ed.), *XVI Centenario del Concilio di Capua 392-1992*, e.g. I. DE LA POTTERIE, “La concezione verginale di Cristo. ‘Teologumeno’ o dato storico-salvifico rivelato?”, p. 173-204.

<sup>1150</sup> Cf. J. G. MACHEN, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, p. 5.

<sup>1151</sup> Cf. e.g. S. M. PERRELLA, “La ‘virginitas in partu’: status questionis”, in G. LICCARDO – F. RUOTOLO – S. TANZARELLA (ed.), *XVI Centenario del Concilio di Capua 392-1992*, p. 205-266.

<sup>1152</sup> Cf. appendix 4, Sermon at Vigil on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2011: “Mary – it is easier to believe that she conceived without destroying her virginity, than her giving birth without tearing the virginal membrane. But all theologians must believe it. It is a mystery that he came out as he went in: as the Word of God, only that he was then with the flesh.”

<sup>1153</sup> Vigil, appendix 4.

<sup>1154</sup> Cf. D. DEL GAUDIO, “Maria modello”, p. 281.

his earthly mother, as a preparation both for her diaconal ministry to the mystery of the Verbo caro factum est, and for her continuing ministry as sign and example to the people of God.

What God asked of Mary, he requests from the Church and from every man: to preserve the natural gift of virginity of the body in a chaste life, and to preserve the gift of baptism in a life of attention to God's word and guidance. The preservation of her virginity as a response to her preparation by grace since her conception is a call especially to religious to preserve the gift of religious profession, the highest possible renewal of the baptismal consecration to God in a celibate life.

### 3.3.2.2. The reception of the person of Christ in faith at the Annunciation

As the young Mary received Christ in Nazareth, she accepted him in the name of Israel, anticipating and beginning the faith of the Church.<sup>1155</sup> This conviction is based on the fact that the Bible has the concept of the individual as not isolated, but representing the community.<sup>1156</sup> As the proposal of God was accepted, a covenant was concluded. A. Serra observes in union with innumerable exegetes that in Lk 1,26-55 Mary has ecclesial valence, representing the "Daughter of Zion", the New Jerusalem, Israel/Church, in receiving Christ, in bringing him to people, in praising God.<sup>1157</sup> In her Yes to the project of God, she has already received the vocation to become mother of all men.<sup>1158</sup>

The Heart of Mary can be considered as the "space", in which the Divine Word met mankind and received a perfect welcome as the Incarnation happened.<sup>1159</sup> It follows the expressions of especially Greek Fathers of the Church, calling Mary the "dwelling place", the "cathedral", the "temple" completely dedicated to God, in which Christ is being consecrated High-priest by the Spirit.<sup>1160</sup> Mary was called to give herself in freedom, faith and love, and she did it. Luke exalted

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<sup>1155</sup> God, proposing the Incarnation, did not expect a creative additional proposal or suggestion from Mary in answer, as a man may plan his family with his wife, but only a humble and wholehearted "Yes" from the creature to the Lord. Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 405.

<sup>1156</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, "Maria 'Microstoria della salvezza'", in A. VALENTINI (ed.), *Stella parit solem. Maria nella Bibbia, dalle prefigurazioni alla realtà*, Tau, Todi 2008, p. 162. Cf. also J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 43-47 and 50-52, where he traced back to H. Wheeler Robinson (1925) the term "Corporate personality", explaining on p. 51: "The Israelites did not, and could not, think of an individual as a solitary being [...]. On the contrary, they regarded each individual as a living embodiment of the character and personality of his forefathers; he in turn would 'live on' in his children and descendants. And this bond which united the generations with their ancestors and descendants extended horizontally too: the individual was linked with his family, [...] with his tribe and with his nation." He concluded on p. 52 that Luke "must have seen that at the moment before the Incarnation, Mary held in her hands the destiny of Israel, and of the world". Cf. also A. VALENTINI, "Personalità corporativa e principio di totalità", in *Theotokos* 8 (2000) 485-497. As it was seen in sub-chapter 1.1.5., also the Africans see themselves in this way related with their family, mankind and the whole universe. However, a "corporate personality" as Mary has no automatic effect on the life of others. Each is called to recognize that this person has acted according to the will of God, and give his consent to this act, shown forth in the own life, in order to share in the union with God won by that person.

<sup>1157</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, *La donna dell'Alleanza*, p. 138-220; cf. also IDEM, "Bibbia", p. 224. Serra noted with other biblists the parallel between Lk 1,28-38 and Ex 19,8; 24,3.7: the ready acceptance of the first covenant at Sinai by the people. The text has the valence of the beginning of the New Covenant.

<sup>1158</sup> Cf. T. F. OSSANNA, "Madre nostra III-VI", p. 753.

<sup>1159</sup> Cf. I. M. CALABUIG, "Il Cuore di Maria", p. 139.

<sup>1160</sup> Cf. e.g. S. CYRILL OF ALEXANDRIA († 444) in *Homilia XI. Encomium in sanctam Mariam Deiparam* called her "templum in quo Deus suscipitur", in PG 77, 1031C. The priest and exegete HESYCHIUS OF JERUSALEM († after 450) (quoting other fathers without giving a reference) called Mary "Templum majus coelo", 'temple more ample than the heavens' in *Homily 5, in honour of Holy Mary Mother of God*, 1, in PG 93, 1461A. The Byzantine liturgy (of the 9<sup>th</sup> century) of the Feast of the Entrance of Mary in the Temple (21<sup>st</sup> November) calls Mary in Canon 1, Hymn 9, in one of

her decision by building a parallel with the same angel, with a similar good news, announcing the forerunner child to Zechariah. The old, experienced Hebrew priest, a just and law-abiding person, who had been praying seriously for a child (cf. Lk 1,13) at the moment of his turn to serve God in prayer in the holiest place in the world (in the OT), while all the people are praying, opposed the resistance of unbelief. The small girl in the village of the Nazareth “of the gentiles”, in her ordinary life, was able to welcome the message “χαῖρε”, “Rejoice!”, (cf. Zep 3,14) connecting Mary with the “Daughter of Zion”<sup>1161</sup>, Israel personified; she welcomed the message “ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ” “The Lord is in your midst!”, a word which recalls the will of God to enter into covenant with his people, cf. Zep 3,14,17; Jl 2,23,27, Zec 9,9.<sup>1162</sup> Her question “How can this be, since I do not know man?” shows her prudent reflection and the due reverence and openness; in antithesis to the fact that Zechariah has been praying for a child, this her comment humbly presents her situation as a virgin, not expecting any child;<sup>1163</sup> and it gives the opportunity to the angel to lift up the level of the message: the first part promises a Messiah as expected by Israel, a king from the line of David (cf. Lk 1,30-33); the second part of the angelic message promises the “Holy One” (the “Holy One of Israel” is a name of God), that will be called “Son of God”, who will be born through the intervention of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1,35). Finally, the angel informs Mary on the motherhood of Elisabeth, introduced with “καὶ ἰδοὺ” (and behold), indicating a sign, a revelation, as her own conception of a son is a sign (cf. Lk 1,31) and concluded with the statement that nothing is impossible to God, as Abraham was told in Gen 18,14. The answer of the young virgin, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord” shows her familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures. It brings her in line with the mother of the first great Consecrated to the Lord, Hannah, and her prayer: “O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death.” (1 Sam 1,11), and with Abigail, the wise woman and widow who prostrated and answered to the messengers sent to her by David with the proposal of marriage: “Behold, your servant is a slave to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” (1 Sam 25,41)<sup>1164</sup> Then Mary expresses her active wish and joyful acceptance that the will of God may be done in her, shown in the optative “γένοιτο” – “be it done to me” (Lk 1,38).<sup>1165</sup> The word of Mary remains the last word before the angel disappears, not as in Gen 16,9 (Hagar), in Jg 13,5.18 (parents of Samson) or in Lk

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the Tropes ‘Tabernacle, sacred vessel, wonderful Arc, Veil [of the temple], Rod, inviolable Temple and Gate of God’. Cf. G. GHARIB, “Il Magnificat nella liturgia Orientale”, p. 477-478. The Fathers and the liturgy present the Theotokos as the permanent dwelling place of Jesus, cf. G. MEAULO, “Dedicazione di S. Maria Maggiore”, in *NDM*, p. 416.

<sup>1161</sup> On the significance of this title, cf. E.G. MORI, “Figlia di Sion”, in *NDM*, p. 522-530.

<sup>1162</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Bibbia”, p. 205.

<sup>1163</sup> From the point of view of Spiritual Theology, one may presume that this question in this crucial moment was prompted by the temptation to think that she has to do something, e.g. sleep with Joseph, son of David, in order to conceive the child. Mary did not follow the temptation to do what any human being would accept to be right, but she asks confirmation on what she shall do, in perfect obedience. As shown in sub-chapter 3.3.2.1., this research tends to the exegetical opinion that the question is a sign of a previous decision for (or desire of) virginity.

<sup>1164</sup> Many exegetes, as e.g. J. MCHUGH, *The mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, p. 75, see Mary in parallel to Hannah, but mostly because of the Magnificat, which has three points of contact with the canticle of Hannah in 1 Sam 2. (For points of contact of the Magnificat with various psalms and other places in the OT, cf. L. DEISS, *Joseph, Mary, Jesus*, Liturgical, Collegeville (Mi) 1996, p. 38.) E. PERETTO, “Serva”, in *NDM*, p. 1156, after reminding of the answer of Mary to Gabriel, underlines that this evokes the availability of all those who declared themselves “servant” of God or the king in the OT, giving the example of Abigail in 1 Sam 25, 41.

<sup>1165</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Bibbia”, p. 206. Cf. also the understanding of St. BERNARD, in J. LECLERQ – H. ROCHAIS (ed.), *S. Bernardi Opera IV, Sermones I. In Laudibus Virginis Matris. Homilia IV*, Cistercienses, Roma 1966, 56-57.

1,20 (Zechariah), where the angel has the last word, announcing what will be. Here, the most important word is not the revelation made by Gabriel but the answer he received to God's proposal.<sup>1166</sup> Mary gives the answer without consulting any person (in opposition to the mother of Samson, and to the general expectation on the women of her time to depend on a man), taking up her full responsibility before God and the society/mankind.<sup>1167</sup> The first people of God began with the faith and inner freedom of Father Abraham, the new people of God began in the presentation of Luke with the faith and inner freedom of Mother Mary. P. Barigelli-Calcarì observed that the 'profound dialogical identity of the Virgin is a humanly perfect translation of correspondence to the mystery.'<sup>1168</sup> The Seattle-statement writes: "The birth of Mary's son is the fulfilment of God's will for Israel, and Mary's part in that fulfilment is that of free and unqualified consent in utter self-giving and trust"<sup>1169</sup>.

John Paul II took up the notion of Mary as covenant-partner for God in RM 1: "in the Incarnation she [the Church] encounters Christ and Mary indissolubly joined: He who is the Church's Lord and Head and she who, uttering the first fiat of the New Covenant, prefigures the Church's condition as spouse and mother". In oral interventions of the year 1985 of John Paul II (a homily, an Angelus Domini), there is mention of the definite covenant of the Hearts of Son and mother<sup>1170</sup>, of the two Hearts united by a most holy bond of Love.<sup>1171</sup> One can see this covenant, this special relationship of Christ with Mary, which starts with the Incarnation or even with the Immaculate Conception of Mary as the hidden beginning of the Church.<sup>1172</sup>

Father Montfort stresses in the Constitutions the aspect of Mary providing a place in the world for the Incarnation through her active agreeing (out of love and obedience) to become the mother:

«ART. 13

Mary is the place (and person) of the union of the divine and the human nature in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This union took place according to the eternal will of the Father through the action of the Holy Spirit.

The only begotten Son of the Father took flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and became man through the action of the Holy Spirit out of love (one and the same love of God and love of man in need of redemption) and in obedience to the Will of the Father. Mary, the young virgin, agreed to become His Mother, conceived Him through the action of the Holy Spirit also out of love (her love of God and her fellow mankind in need of divine redemption), and in obedience to the supreme will of

<sup>1166</sup> Cf. J. DUPONT, "L'annuncio a Maria (Lc 1,26-38)" in *Theotokos* 3 (1995) 327-332, esp. p. 33. The exegete compares the Annunciation with the other two messages of an angel in Lk 1-2, and concludes: "una risposta di questo genere supera il quadro normale di un annuncio di nascita, che dovrebbe terminare piuttosto con una nota di compimento. L'atteggiamento di Maria di fronte al messaggio dell'angelo mette piuttosto in evidenza l'accettazione di una missione, come potremmo trovarla in un racconto di vocazione." In Gen 3,1-6, the last thing is also the answer of the woman: not in words, but in the action of taking the fruit, eating and giving to Adam.

<sup>1167</sup> Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 399.

<sup>1168</sup> Cf. P. BARIGELLI-CALCARI, *L'ultimo desiderio nelle religioni*, p. 169.

<sup>1169</sup> ARCIC II (ed.), *Mary, grace and hope in Christ*, p. 19.

<sup>1170</sup> GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Angelus Domini *Nel Cuore di Gesù Cristo la pienezza della Divinità* (15/9/1985), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII, 2 (1985), LEV, Città del Vaticano 1985, p. 670. As the Pope chose the Angelus Domini to meditate on the Heart of Jesus, he brought it automatically into connection with Mary, who is mentioned in most of these interventions.

<sup>1171</sup> IDEM, Omelia *Nell'Amore misericordioso di Dio*, p. 661, 665: "due Cuori uniti da un santissimo legame d'Amore, di quell'Amore che ha in Dio Trino ed Uno la sua eterna ed inesauribile fonte [...]. Che nella mirabile unione di questi Cuori [...] si manifesti a voi sempre Dio, che è ricco di misericordia". In the year 1985, the Philippine association of the "Holy Family" was holding a congress on the theology of the union of the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which may have stimulated the Pontiff for this homily.

<sup>1172</sup> Cf. RM 1.

the Father. In this love and obedience she remained ever united with her Son, Jesus, in love and obedience to the same will of the Father.»<sup>1173</sup>

In this quotation is to be noted the parallelism of love and obedience towards the Father in the “kenosis” of the Son and the acceptance of Mary. It seems an allusion to a (spiritual) matrimony/covenant (cf. the next sub-chapter). The founder also states that the gift of the person of Christ to Mary was due to her personal effort of “hearing” and “keeping”, and that it was permanent, that she was completely filled by his person, e.g. in a sermon on 2/2/2008: “If you open the heart of Mary you see nothing there but Jesus”.<sup>1174</sup>

As Art. 13 combines the conception of Christ with the love and obedience of Jesus towards the will of God which has its peak at the cross, the active wish of Mary expressed in Lk 1,38 has a certain parallel in Lk 22,42, where Christ, in Gethsemane, uses the same verb to express his readiness to accept the will of the Father. Thus one can assert a connection between the acceptance of the will of God and of the person of Christ at the Annunciation with the Easter mystery.

Is it not possible to read Luke 1,39-56 in the perspective of Mary becoming a “paschal” bearer of the Good News?<sup>1175</sup> Luke attributes to Mary a “rising” (“Ἀναστᾶσα δὲ Μαρίᾱμ”) with the same word as used in Lk 24,7 to denote the resurrection of Christ. Her going “with hurry” could remind of Peter who ran in Lk 24,12 to the grave, or the two disciples in Lk 24,33, who “rise” and go back to Jerusalem ‘in exactly that hour’, immediately. The fact that the person she met (Elizabeth) is filled with the Holy Spirit at her greeting, the mentioning of the *three* months she stayed, after which there was great joy and praise of God (at the birth of John) parallel to the *three* days of Easter, all give the impression that Mary had begun to live the “resurrected” life, the life of the young Church going everywhere to proclaim Christ.<sup>1176</sup> Her rising and hurrying off is surely to be seen in contrast to the “entering into seclusion” of Elizabeth (Lk 1,24); the mystery of Easter enlightens fully the value of her action. Mary did first of all not speak the Word, but she allowed the Spirit to “incarnate” him in her: not only miraculously in her womb but also mystically in her own life.

What God asked of the Mother, he requests in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist from the Church and from every man: Wishing to be received with love (though in sacramental and not in human form), wishing to involve the body of the receiver to make it a member of the Body of Christ, wishing to use the faculties, the knowledge and the power of affection of the person to reach others. The “same” reward as Mary received in her motherhood, i.e. a first step of an intimate union with Christ, is offered to all.

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<sup>1173</sup> Art. 13, cf. also Art. 6, appendix 3.

<sup>1174</sup> Vigil, appendix 4.

<sup>1175</sup> L. Sebastiani and T. F. Ossanna believe that Mary went to Elisabeth (cf. Lk 1,39-44.56) not first of all to help the elder woman materially (the patristic exegesis), but to share with her the own experience and joy, to deepen the understanding of what has happened in dialogue, to confirm and to be confirmed in faith. Cf. L. SEBASTIANI, “Maria e le domande”, p. 498: “L’annuncio si impoverisce quando venga svuotato di questa dimensione relazionale e solidale.” SEBASTIANI notes on the same page, as Mary went “in haste”, it shows something of the eschatological urgency to proclaim the message of Christ, especially in Luke. And cf. T. F. OSSANNA, “Evangelizzazione”, in *NDM*, p. 489: Mary brings salvation and joy to the house of Zechariah.

<sup>1176</sup> Cf. G. GHARIB, “Il Magnificat nella liturgia Orientale specie Bizantina”, in *Theotokos* 5 (1997) 464, quoting EPHREM of Syria, *Comment to the Diatessaron*, in *TMPM*, vol. 4, p. 79, where he speaks of the Visitation: ‘Mary began already to preach the New Reign.’

### 3.3.2.3. The discipleship of Mary

The theme of discipleship is very important for the present work since it expresses in an eminent way a deeply involving personal relationship similar to the terms “mother” and “bride”, and more clearly than a title as “co-redemptrix” or “queen”. Because of the quite abundant material in this sub-chapter, it will be subdivided visibly into the treaty on theologians’ opinions, Magisterial quotations, the view of Father Montfort and comments.

#### a) The opinion of theologians on the discipleship of Mary

Discipleship means that the person has no particular message or vision of his own, no legitimisation or motivation to proclaim something of his own.<sup>1177</sup> It rather implies listening, accepting and acting according to the teaching of another.<sup>1178</sup> The discipleship of Mary is not a dogma, and the assignment of the title “disciple” to Mary is both traditional and new. The (implicit) idea of Mary as a model of faith is as old as the NT. (Her faith is the beginning of a Master-disciple-relationship from the side of the disciple.) In the MA, part of this theme was treated under the term “socio”, which was understood often as “bride” (of Christ),<sup>1179</sup> and also in this research a connection will be made between a woman’s discipleship and bridal love for Christ. The discipleship of Mary, and the idea of “Mary, our sister” is not only a Catholic, but also a Protestant theme,<sup>1180</sup> because it is based on the NT and on the Fathers of the Church. St. Augustine is the first to call Mary “disciple” of Christ.<sup>1181</sup> The “Vie de Marie”, attributed to Maximus Confessor, after referring at length to the finding of Jesus in the temple, states: “À partir de ce moment, la sainte mère devint le disciple de son doux fils, [...] elle le servait respectueusement comme Dieu et recevait ses paroles comme les paroles de Dieu. C’est pourquoi elle n’oubliait rien de ses paroles et de ses actions”.<sup>1182</sup> In the Catholic area of spirituality in the modern time, G. Alberione seems to be the first who wrote on Mary as ‘disciple and teacher’.<sup>1183</sup> The first Mariological article on the theme

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<sup>1177</sup> Cf. M. G. MASCIARELLI, *Il cuore*, p. 207.

<sup>1178</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Discepola”, in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 1, p. 525.

<sup>1179</sup> Cf. M. O’CARROLL, “Socio”, p. 337-357.

<sup>1180</sup> The theme of “Mary disciple” may have been used by Protestants formerly to limit the importance of Mary. The Protestant B. R. Gaventa now used it to approach a “Catholic” view. Cf. B. R. GAVENTA, “‘All generations will call me blessed’: Mary in Biblical and ecumenical perspective”, in A.-J. LEVINE (ed.), *A feminist companion to Mariology*, T&T, London 2005, p. 128-129: “if we can say that Mary is a disciple, then is it not a Protestant sort of thing to affirm that Mary is, symbolically speaking, the Mother of Disciples, even the Mother of Believers?”

<sup>1181</sup> S. AUGUSTINUS, *Sermo* 25, 7, in *PL* 46, 937: “Fecit, fecit plane voluntatem Patris sancta Maria, et ideo plus est Mariae discipulam fuisse Christi, quam matrem fuisse Christi; plus est felicius discipulam fuisse Christi, quam matrem fuisse Christi.” The sermon commented Mt 12, 41-50.

<sup>1182</sup> MAXIMUS CONFESSOR, *Vie de la Vierge*, in *CSCO* 479, p. 53. As stated above, large parts of the text may be ascribed to the translator Euthyme of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>1183</sup> Cf. G. ALBERIONE, “Maria: discepola e maestra” (1959), in IDEM, *Carissimi in san Paolo. Lettere-articoli-opuscoli-scritti inediti [...] a cura di R. F. Esposito*, Roma 1971, quoted by S. DE FIORES, “Discepola”, in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 1, p. 522-524. On p. 525 *Ibidem* presents the artistic composition of Silvio Amelio of 1982, depicting Mary kneeling before Christ, who calls her to follow him. Moral theologians as Bernhard HÄRING († 1998), in *Sünde im Zeitalter der Sekularisation*, Styria, Graz 1974 spoke of followership of Mary to Jesus.

seems to be the one of P. J. Bearsley, dating to as late as 1980.<sup>1184</sup> The CDWDS was fast in creating a votive Mass “Sancta Maria, discipula Domini” before 1987.<sup>1185</sup>

The Holy Scriptures show only little of a physical followership of Mary. Jn 2,12 notes that Jesus went from Cana to Capharnaum together with his mother and disciples. On this short way she followed him and she must have followed him also to Jerusalem on the last Passover, and to the cross (cf. Jn 19,25).

Concerning the spiritual followership, Lk 2,19; 51 can be interpreted as witnessing to the habit of Mary to pay great attention to every experience she had with Jesus.<sup>1186</sup> The wish of Mary to understand all can be seen according to Serra in Lk 2,50-51. While the other disciples avoid coming back to a theme they do not understand, the theme of what “is necessary” for Christ to do, (cf. Lk 9,22.45), “his mother treasured all these things in her heart”.<sup>1187</sup>

The Johannine theology sees the wedding at Cana as the moment of change of Mary from the mother-role to the disciple-role. The ARCIC-document observed:

«Mary’s response, to instruct the servants to ‘Do whatever he tells you’ (John 2:5), is unexpected; she is not in charge of the feast (cf. 2:8). Her initial role as the mother of Jesus has radically changed. She herself is now seen as a believer within the messianic community. From this moment on, she commits herself totally to the Messiah and his word. A new relationship results, [...] from now on, Mary is part of the ‘company of Jesus’, his disciple.»<sup>1188</sup>

The end of this passage takes up the exegesis of Jn 2,12, noting the importance of the sentence which mentions Mary after Jesus and before the other disciples, their going together and their staying together some days in the house of Jesus (cf. Mt 4,13) at Capharnaum: they form the pre-paschal Church.<sup>1189</sup> The exegete A. Serra is justly convinced that Mary in Jn 2,3 was preoccupied about the material wine, and only the rough answer of Jesus helped her to reach the higher level of understanding on what followed.<sup>1190</sup>

According to e.g. Masciarelli, the Virgin-Mother is presented in the NT in her faith (cf. Lk 1,45), in her general receptivity for God (cf. Lk 1,38), in her attention to the spiritual/material need

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<sup>1184</sup> P. J. BEARSLEY, “Mary the perfect disciple: a paradigm for Mariology”, in *Theological Studies* 41 (1980) 461-504. After 1985, the theme became assimilated in Mariology. Important is e.g. S. DE FIORES, “Discepola”, in *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 1, p. 487-543, and cf. his bibliography on p. 533.

<sup>1185</sup> Cf. D. THÖNNES, *Die Eucharistie der Collectio*, p. 146: the *Collectio Missarum* states on p. 41 that the title is derived from St. Augustine.

<sup>1186</sup> Cf. F. M. BRAUN, *La Mère des fidèles. Essai de théologie johannique*, Tournai - Paris 1954<sup>2</sup>, quoted by S. DE FIORES, “Discepola”, in IDEM (ed.), *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario*, vol. 1, p. 524-525. Cf. also ARCIC II (ed.), *Mary, grace and hope*, n.14, p. 21: “Mary is the one who in recollection looks beneath the surface of events ([Lk] 2:19, 51) and represents the inwardness of faith and suffering (2:35).” *Ibidem*, n. 37, p. 40: in the reflection of the Fathers of the Church on the “Ever-Virgin”, “virginity was understood not only as physical integrity, but as an interior disposition of openness, obedience, and single-hearted fidelity to Christ which models Christian discipleship and issues in spiritual fruitfulness.”

<sup>1187</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, “Bibbia”, p. 244. Cf. also A. AMATO, “Maria, la Theotókos, discepola ed educatrice di Cristo”, p. 170, seeing especially in Luke the image of Mary as disciple, because there she is painted as the one who believed, cf. Lk 1,38.45. *Ibidem*, p. 170-172 dwelled on the spiritual struggle (trusting while not understanding, and the mortification) Mary had to undergo in allowing herself to be educated by Jesus.

<sup>1188</sup> ARCIC II (ed.), *Mary, grace and hope*, n. 25, p. 29-30.

<sup>1189</sup> Cf. e.g. U. VANNI, “Il ‘segno’ di Cana e la presenza di Maria”, in A. VALENTINI (ed.), *Stella parit solem, Maria nella Bibbia, dalle prefigurazioni alla realtà*, Tau, Todi 2008, p. 43.

<sup>1190</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, *Le nozze di Cana*, p. 224-225, 292-298, and IDEM, “Bibbia”, p. 252. The author believes that as a woman, surely there were contemporarily many sentiments, inspirations and ideas in the heart of Mary, and the compassion for the wine-less spouses was probably one of them.

of others (cf. Lk 1,39-40; Jn 2,3), in her being associated with the son in his passion and cross (cf. Lk 2,34-35; Jn 19,25), in her prayerful desire for the coming of the Kingdom (cf. Acts 1,14).<sup>1191</sup>

Discipleship of Christ is necessarily painful,<sup>1192</sup> as a follower must have communion with the experiences of the Master.<sup>1193</sup> The pain was partly experienced physically, e.g. the poverty in which they lived, but in a major part it was experienced spiritually. Since God is “The Other”, transcendent and separated from all, who can never be possessed and taken for granted in this world, the enduring relationship with him is unavoidably a fight, ἀγών,<sup>1194</sup> struggling with oneself to accept the Other and his will as absolute, fighting with oneself to believe him and his promises.<sup>1195</sup> In the struggle with the experience of rejection from God which can be found more or less explicitly in the biography of many saints,<sup>1196</sup> the Virgin was able to overcome every temptation to leave her Son out of disappointment and discouragement (at feeling abandoned by him and God)<sup>1197</sup>, or to substitute herself for him (e.g. at the wedding of Cana). Mary walks the OT’s way of wisdom, especially in Lk 1 and 2: listening, accepting, remembering, reflecting in the heart, knowing that one understands only a small parcel of the mystery.<sup>1198</sup>

Theologians like M. G. Masciarelli state that the heart of Mary is a “pierced” heart, happily but painfully pierced by the decision of the Son to follow the will of the Father.<sup>1199</sup> Modern spiritual writers meditate on Mary who had to overcome disappointments, mortifying her emotions and

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<sup>1191</sup> For deepening of the theme, cf. M. G. MASCIARELLI, “Discepola”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 410-418.

<sup>1192</sup> L. SEBASTIANI, “Maria e le domande”, p. 503 says with female sensitivity: “Non dev’essere stato né facile né indolore il passaggio esistenziale da madre a discepola.”

<sup>1193</sup> According to D. FERNÁNDEZ, “El Corazón”, p. 139, it is a patristic saying that “What Jesus suffered in the body, Mary suffered in the heart”, showing their union in the plan of God. The struggle and pain on the way to union with Christ was already mentioned in sub-chapter 2.3.1. and 2.3.2.1.

<sup>1194</sup> In Heb 12,1 the word is usually translated with “race”, in 1 Tim 6,12 and in 2 Tim 4,7 with “fight”: a serious battle.

<sup>1195</sup> Cf. B. FORTE, *La parola della fede*, p. 74, and cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 415.

<sup>1196</sup> Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni*, p. 77-79: Here the theologian lists (with bibliographical reference) many male and even more female saints from East and West, from the ancient Church till the modern time who made the experience (or know about it as belonging to the way to sainthood) of feeling abandoned from God and condemned to hell: e.g. Gregory of Nissa, Evagrius, Isaac of Ninive, Maximus the Confessor, Angela of Foligno, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Suso, Tauler, Catherine of Siena, Rose of Lima, Francis of Sales. This research advances the thesis that women may feel such an experience more painfully. Marie des Vallées († 1656), a French mystic heard from Jesus that his heart and the heart of his mother are one. She was spiritually accompanied by St. John Eudes. In 1617 she felt dying and condemned to hell, cf. M. DEVOUCOUX, “Marie des Vallées”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dizionario delle “apparizioni”*, p. 495. Cf. e.g. also the story of Blessed MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA in the book *Come be my light*, p. 169-170, 172, and many other places where she expressed her continued feeling that God rejects her like those kept in hell; she felt no faith, no love, no zeal, heaven seemed empty to her: from the moment she began her own foundation of the Missionaries of Charity, for 10 years, and after a break coming back to her with even deeper darkness. F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 102-103, in presenting St. Mechthild of Magdeburg, calls the experience of rejection and the withdrawal of previous graces an experience immanent to the love of God; her way to God is an ascent and a descent. After she received great favours, then followed the experience of falling low and being far from God, incapable to do his will, leading to greater humility, bringing new comfort and the sweetness of seeing new signs of the love of God: one’s sufferings and incapacities are then understood as a beatifying com-passion in union with the passion of Christ.

<sup>1197</sup> The Gospels leaves room for the possibility of such temptations. Apart from the above discussed situations of “rejection” by Jesus, she was left alone at home during the public ministry of Jesus, and finally left alone on earth at his death.

<sup>1198</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, “Sapiente”, in *NDM*, p. 1145-1156. A. Serra finds in Luke fourteen different fitting reactions of Mary to the Word of God: feeling disturbed, inquiring, awe/fear, request of explanation/questioning, obedience, faith, praise, wonder/being astonished, feeling pain, acknowledging that she does not understand, listening, remembering/conserving in the heart, meditating on it, putting it into practise. Cf. IDEM, “E anche a te una spada trafiggerà l’anima’ (Lk 2,35a). Scrittura e tradizione a confronto”, in *SIM* 13(2001) 314-315.

<sup>1199</sup> Cf. *Il cuore*, p. 191-192, quoting J. RATZINGER, “Erwägungen”.



human wishes.<sup>1200</sup> She must have necessarily done that in dialogue with God, presenting her wounds, her question to him with humble trust.<sup>1201</sup> A mother, who discovers her own only and most beloved son to be “the Other”, transcending her, voluntarily separating himself from her in some physical aspects in order to face his mission and thus experiencing the full weight of human powerlessness in the face of his physical sufferings, has to go through a type of struggle which can hardly be imagined.<sup>1202</sup> The representation of the Church as disciple, receiver and bearer of Christ by Mary in the Incarnation is continued in the passion.<sup>1203</sup>

Discipleship means to conform one’s will to the will of the master adopting his aims as one’s aims. A medieval writer said that in Christ and in Mary there existed only one single will, so that two of them offered to God a single holocaust: she with the blood of her heart, he with the one of his flesh.<sup>1204</sup> Discipleship has some relation to bridal love: the “reception” of Jesus by Mary can be compared to a “marriage” covenant, both in the Annunciation and in the disciple-like followership throughout life and to the cross. Father Montfort rarely uses the image of “marriage”, “alliance” or “covenant” to describe the “union” of the Two Hearts of Love, but these Biblical and important terms are used in this research. The terms, when used for Mary, are connected with the idea of the representation of the whole Church by the individual, the Mother of Jesus, which can be seen in many Marian Bible-passages. De la Potterie<sup>1205</sup> calls it a fundamental idea of the Bible that God wants to establish a covenant with human beings, symbolized very often by the image of a matrimony and meaning a reciprocal belonging to each other. (p. 18) In this line is Jeremiah 31,21-22, according to the comment of the Jerusalem Bible: the Virgo Israel is called to come back to her original life. Then follows the promise of God creating “something new” on earth: “the woman will surround the man”. The Hebrew verb used means “surrounding”, “circling around” or “searching for”. It is the promise of a new faithfulness and love of the Bride, the people of God, towards the Lord. (p. 246-247) De la Potterie believes that when God created man and woman, they were to represent and prepare the final and archetypal couple of Christ and the Church. The mystery of the people of God (Israel)<sup>1206</sup> then became the mystery of Mary: being the “Bride” of JHWH, being Mother of mankind and being Virgin. (p. 20) While her word to the servants (διακόνους, “deacons”) “Do, whatever He tells you.” (Jn 2,5) is seen by ARCIC II (as seen above) as a sign of Mary being a disciple, a believer, I. De la Potterie understands it as a strong indication for Mary

<sup>1200</sup> E.g. J. RATZINGER in “Erwägungen”, as noted by A. STAGLIANÒ, *Madre di Dio*, p. 70, who equally calls Mary “educated” by Christ, suffering in her obedience.

<sup>1201</sup> Cf. N. DELL’AGLI, “Eucharistia e guarigione”, p. 56, 60-61.

<sup>1202</sup> Cf. B. ANTONINI, “Famiglia”, in *NDM*, p. 508, 511.

<sup>1203</sup> At the cross the Church is born in the attraction to himself by the up-lifted Christ, and Mary is the first attracted; born in the mysterious matrimony Christ celebrated by giving himself to the last, and Mary, the Daughter of Zion and “woman” (cf. Jn 19,26) representing the people, receiving him; born in the testament of Christ entrusting the disciple to the mother and the mother to the disciple; born in the piercing of the side and heart of Christ, in the water and blood (and Spirit) flowing from his side, which spiritually pierced also the Virgin, who stood to receive the gifts in her pierced heart. Cf. the Marian presentation of the various dimensions of the birth of the Church in the Easter mystery in M. G. MASCIARELLI, *Il cuore*, p. 107-108.

<sup>1204</sup> Cf. ARNOLD OF BONNEVAL († after 1156), Cistercian abbot, *De laudibus B.M.V.*, in *PL* 189, 1727A, quoted in L. GAMBERO, *Maria nel pensiero*, p. 180.

<sup>1205</sup> I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero*. In the following text, in which the author translated into English and summarized the Italian copy of the work available to the author, all page-numbers are to be understood as “confer”.

<sup>1206</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II emphasized the unity of the Church with the ancient Israel in the declaration *Nostra aetate*, n. 4: the faithful in Christ are included in the vocation of Abraham, they received the OT and a great common spiritual patrimony from them. It quotes Rom 9,4-5, reminds all Catholics of the fact that Christ, the apostles and many early disciples were Israelites, and recommends a mutual respect.

being “Bride” of God, being his partner for the covenant he wishes to conclude. He agrees with A. Serra in the conviction that this word echoes Ex 19,8; 24,3; Dt 5,27, Jos 24,24, Ezra 10,12 and Ne 5,12, when the people of God give their promise to do all God is telling them at the conclusion of the covenant at Mount Sinai and in the later renewals of the covenant with Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah. (p. 206-208) Mary is here in the place of Moses – Joshua – Ezra – Nehemiah, guiding the people to the spirit of the covenant by executing all that God orders to do. And Christ orders to (ful)fill the jugs (symbolizing the Jewish laws) for purification, changing the water into the “good wine”, symbolizing the Gospel, the grace and truth which is Christ himself who fulfilled the whole law. (p. 212-213) According to St. Augustine<sup>1207</sup> and other Fathers of the Church, Christ is the true Spouse in this wedding-passage. (p. 215) Mary is collaborating with him, his “helper” (cf. Gen 2,18), the Number One person to be bent on doing whatever He says. She is called “woman” by Christ because her function is no longer that of the mother (the bearer, the person who is nourishing him, the teacher, the protector) of Christ, but to be the mother of the messianic community, to be the bearer of the mystery of the new Zion, the “bride”. (p. 223-224) In this her quality she stands also under the cross where the Evangelist builds a parallel between the soldiers, who do not divide the tunic of Christ, symbol of the unity of the one Church of Christ and the “mother of Christ” with the “Beloved disciple” being established as an illustration of that undivided unity (to be εἰς ἓν, assembled in *one*, i.e. in Christ) among themselves and with God, as the Church, through and around the Crucified. (p. 232-233) Many biblists see in John 19,28 a concluding comment to the verses 25-27, calling the incident thus the fulfilment of “all” (the messianic mission of Jesus), in fulfilment of the Scripture: it is in the words of Christ from the cross to his mother and the disciple and in the acceptance of this order by these two, that Jesus was able to fulfil all and conclude the new and eternal covenant. (p. 233-234) The first word of Jesus reveals the spiritual motherhood of Mary, the second, according to the conclusion of De la Potterie, shows that the first duty of the disciples is to be “children of the mother of Jesus”, accepting both the person of Mary and what she symbolizes, the Church, as mother and guide. (p. 235-236; 240-241; 243, 247) Quoting other theologians, he rejects the moral interpretation of the passage (Jesus would have worried for the material needs of Mary) but sees attributed to the Virgin the supernatural motherhood predicted by the prophets for Zion. (p. 239)

Also other Catholic theologians present Mary as representative of the whole community of believers especially when speaking of her disciple role or “bridal” role. A. Serra sees in the person of Mary in Jn 2,1-12 and in Jn 19,25-28 an ecclesial aspect; Mary represents and constitutes the “Church” (community of those who do what Christ says) at Cana, recalling the Israel at Mount Sinai accepting the Law,<sup>1208</sup> and in Jn 19,26-27 Jesus reveals and institutes her as mother of all his beloved disciples, represented by the one. According to many biblists the woman in Rev 12 is the Church, but in the ideal form realized in Mary. That woman is the “mother” of the Messiah as he was born to imperishable life in the resurrection but also of all his brothers, who follow the commandment of Christ.<sup>1209</sup> Furthermore, Mt 2,11a has an allusion to the connection Church – Mary: “καὶ ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν εἶδον τὸ παιδίον μετὰ Μαρίας τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ, καὶ πεσόντες

<sup>1207</sup> Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Tract. IX*, 2, in *PL* 35, 1459. The quotation was taken from De La Potterie.

<sup>1208</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, *Le nozze di Cana (Gv 2,1-12). Incidenze cristologico-mariane del primo “segno” di Gesù*, Mesaggero, Padova 2009, especially p. 150-152, 207-209, 261.

προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ”. As they (the magi, alluding to the pagans in general) enter the house (alluding to the Church as institution), they see/know the child (the Lord), with/within Mary, his mother (alluding to the Church as community), and begin to worship Him.<sup>1210</sup>

The sacramental theologian Giorgio Mazzanti<sup>1211</sup> wrote that God, creating and re-creating in Christ, extended not only the eternal generation of the Son outside Himself but also the inter-Trinitarian life which are personal relationships of infinite love. He created a couple out of the earthly materials (Adam and Eve) and invited them to obedience, to union/”marriage” with God, which would have led them to an extraordinary union with each other but the couple fails. God created a new “couple”<sup>1212</sup> out of the fallen mankind, entrusting to Mary the generation of the Son and the whole inter-Trinitarian life. The new couple remained obedient and in union with God. At the cross, the mystical marriage was completed and a new son was generated: the “beloved disciple”. Here Mazzanti connects Jn 19 with Jn 6,53-55: the necessity to “eat” Christ.<sup>1213</sup> Mary and John stand under the cross to “eat” His flesh according to the will of God, accepting His death and uniting with his way of thinking. Thus they become “one flesh” with Jesus in a mystical marriage. In the Holy Eucharist Christ realizes what he intended (and gave already to Mary) with the Incarnation: becoming one flesh with humanity.

#### b) The voice of the Magisterium

The term of “discipleship” of Mary is not present in LG, but it presents Mary as totally devoted “to the person and work of her Son” (LG, 56). Mary “stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord who confidently hope for and receive salvation from him” (LG 55), and LG 57-58 narrate her itinerary of faith.

In the same way as Paul VI supplied to the “lack” of LG concerning the title of “Mother of the Church” which appeared in the conciliar discussions, he also brought in by an allocution the discipleship of Mary.<sup>1214</sup> MC 35 presents Mary as the “first and most perfect disciple of Christ”. St. John Paul II continued and embellished by new aspects the teaching of LG and Paul VI concerning the faith and followership of Mary. In his first apostolic exhortation (of the type which was what

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<sup>1209</sup> Cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero*, p. 218-251, 255-277. Cf. also A. SERRA, “Bibbia”, p. 253-254, 258-260, 270-271.

<sup>1210</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, *Maria secondo le Scritture*, EDB, Bologna 2007, p. 85, calling the “house” in Mt 2,11 ‘the Lord’s house’. The pages 79-87 are dedicated to Mary presented as mother of the messianic king in Mt 2, underlining that the king’s mother in the OT has a special status of honour. As the pagan magi come to adore the child, they find and honour it together with his mother. Thus, Valentini sees Mary here as the individual person. Does she not refer to the whole community of believers, who, after the Pentecost, display the Lord to the pagans?

<sup>1211</sup> I refer to his book *Teologia sponsale e sacramento delle nozze. Simbolo e simbolismo nuziale*, EDB, Bologna 2002, p. 25 and following pages, freely summarized.

<sup>1212</sup> Couple in the sense of a man and a woman cooperating in love for a purpose, not in the sense of a consumed marriage.

<sup>1213</sup> As Jn 6,53 uses the Aorist, i.e. talks in “eating the flesh” and in “drinking the blood” of a once-for-all happening, not of a ritual to be repeated, it should not first of all refer to the Holy Eucharist. Also, every report on the Last Supper does not use the term “flesh”, but “body”. Thus, it has to be accepted (as Protestant Christians are used to underline) that Christ speaks here of the crucifixion and faith in him. Having life in eating his flesh means to in a first step to witness to his being killed. This witness is then efficiently prolonged throughout history in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

<sup>1214</sup> PAUL VI, in the allocution of *closure of the third period of the Council* (21/11/1964), i.e. at the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium*, *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, and the decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio*, he underlined concerning Mary: “In hac mortali vita perfectam Christi discipuli formam expressit”. In *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, vol. 1, p. [186], n. 311\*. The proclamation of Mary as “Mother of the Church” is on p. [184], n. 306\*.

later was called “postsynodal”, since it took into consideration the “propositiones” of a Synod of bishops which was celebrated by Pope Montini) *Catechesi tradendae*,<sup>1215</sup> n. 73 says:

In his letter to religious, *Redemptionis Donum*, he contemplated Mary following her son “as her teacher of chastity, poverty and obedience”.<sup>1216</sup> In RM, he underlined the participation of Mary, in faith, in the Via Crucis, which begins for him already in the “extreme poverty” of Bethlehem,<sup>1217</sup> in the experience as refugee in Egypt,<sup>1218</sup> in the hard work of every day, all accepted as expression of the will of God,<sup>1219</sup> and ends with the profound suffering with Jesus in his passion and death.<sup>1220</sup> RM speaks of the “pilgrimage of faith”, the “new awareness of faith” of Mary, theme taken from LG 58, with roots probably in the theology of Romano Guardini.<sup>1221</sup> Recalling passages which in former time were seen as anti-Marian, as Mk 3,21-35, John Paul II used them to remind that Mary was in contact with the divinity of her son only by faith.<sup>1222</sup> Mary, in faith, allowed herself to be led by Jesus, the master, from the affective level to the level of obedience to the will of God, e.g. in Cana.<sup>1223</sup> It is through faith and the work of the Holy Spirit that Christ lives in the heart of the faithful (cf. Eph 3,17), and thus the disciple becomes assimilated by his Lord and to him configured.<sup>1224</sup> In RM, Mary is called the “first ‘disciple’” to follow Jesus.<sup>1225</sup> This being first is not only chronological but also qualitative: she finds herself ‘in the heart of the fullness of the revelation of Christ’<sup>1226</sup>. In “Veritatis splendor”, n. 19, he defined discipleship as ‘adhering to the very person of Christ, sharing his life and destiny and his obedience to the Father’, but he presented

<sup>1215</sup> JOHN PAUL II, apostolic exhortation on catechesis *Catechesi tradendae*, (16/10/1979), in *EV*, vol. 6, n. 1764-1939, p. 1173-1291.

<sup>1216</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptionis Donum*, n. 17.

<sup>1217</sup> RM 16.

<sup>1218</sup> Cf. *Ivi*, and even more in IDEM, *Salvifici doloris*, n. 25.

<sup>1219</sup> Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Omelia a Nairobi *L’Africa è il continente della famiglia* (19/9/1995), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII,2, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, p. 607.

<sup>1220</sup> Cf. RM 18, and cf. IDEM, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 10.

<sup>1221</sup> E.g. in RM 6, 14, 17; IDEM, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 20. The intuition of Romano Guardini was taken up by other theological/spiritual writers, so that the exact source of John Paul II is not clear. Cf. N. NÉGRIER - X. LÉON-DUFOUR “Madre”, and A. GEORGE, “Maria” in the *Dizionario di teologia biblica*, p. 625-626, 645-652, and J. GALOT, who stressed the faith of Mary, the fact that she discovered Christ, in his (not scientific) book *Das Herz Mariens*, Paulus, Freiburg (CH) 1964. In his work, the Jesuit tried to describe the Heart of Mary, i.e. her inner being, her character, her psychological health, which the author saw as a result of her Immaculate Conception, her resolute will to remain a virgin for God, her joyfulness and love, her growing faith (a long chapter), her responsible hope, her childlike love towards God, her bridal love towards the Holy Spirit, the caring love towards the Son and all men, the sorrows, the glory. Still, commentators see in the Encyclical an important novelty, to propose the faith as the “struttura profonda della personalità di Maria”. S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, p. 563, cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, «Kommentar», in JOHANNES PAUL II, *Maria – Gottes Ja zum Menschen*, p. 133.

<sup>1222</sup> Cf. RM 17.

<sup>1223</sup> Cf. RM 20.

<sup>1224</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Veritatis splendor* (6/8/1993), n. 21, in *AAS* 85 (1993) 1133-1228.

<sup>1225</sup> RM 20, prepared by RM 15, 17 and 18. In difference to MC 35, the term “disciple” is put here into inverted commas, because the NT presents Mary only as “servant/handmaid” of God. Keeping as close as possible to the Biblical wordings, e.g. rarely he used the term “imitatio”, but preferred the Biblical terms “to follow” (synoptics) and “to conform” (St. Paul), he did not apply the title “disciple” to Mary without underlining that a step of reasoning was taken. Maybe the inverted commas can be interpreted also as a sign that for John Paul II there is something special in the discipleship of Mary. John Paul II believed strongly in a “salvific” value of every pain (of any person) carried in union with Christ. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Salvifici doloris*. To him, her discipleship may be combined with a status of “co-redemptrix”. In RM 17 he defined the contents of discipleship: having faith, renouncing oneself, receiving the Word, serving one another, work for the Reign of God, sharing in the destiny of Jesus, experiencing the cross, vigilance in prayer and work.

<sup>1226</sup> Cf. RM 36: comment to the Magnificat.

Mary in n. 118, 120 as mother of mercy and model of all who hear the Word of God and keep it, avoiding to call her “disciple” of Jesus.

Benedict XVI continued to meditate on the idea of Mary learning from Jesus. Since Christ is not only a messenger of God, but the message Himself, a disciple of Christ receives from his master mainly the personal experience of him, his way of doing, his mission, message and self-giving.<sup>1227</sup> The theologian-pope evolved the image of Mary being “penetrated by God’s word. To the extent that she spoke with God’s words [the Magnificat], she thought with God’s words, her thoughts were God’s thoughts, her words, God’s words.”<sup>1228</sup> Benedict XVI located the beginning of an explicit followership of Mary towards Jesus in her journey to Elisabeth.<sup>1229</sup>

c) The presentation by the founder

In the Constitutions, Art. 7, Mary “follows” Christ. Art. 12 says: “Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, followed Him and cared for Him, having conceived and carried His Body in her virginal womb, received His pure martyred body brought down from the cross and pressed it to her heart.”<sup>1230</sup> Art. 12 demonstrates the continuity of the discipleship of Mary: from birth to death of Jesus and beyond, she was available and completely fixed on him and his mission. A (rare) comment during a sermon makes it clear that in the founder a *process* of understanding and a growing knowledge of faith can be seen in Mary: “In the Annunciation, Mary did not know what it means to be the mother of Jesus.”<sup>1231</sup>

As said above, a true followership involves the sharing of pains. Father Montfort speaks of her “sharing in his redemptive sufferings” (Art. 8), seemingly in the traditional sense of compassion which is not confined to the earthly existence: “every suffering of Christ, from the incarnation till today, Mary suffers it with Him!”<sup>1232</sup> The *Original Constitutions* stress in several articles that only Christ is the Redeemer, only from *his* “pierced side and Heart flowed blood and water”, which give life. They equally emphasize that this Bringer of Divine Love to the world was born of Mary (cf. Art. 11) and is united with her Heart to the extent that when his Heart was pierced by a lance her Heart was also pierced:

«Art. 8

Even as He hung on the cross he allowed the soldiers who crucified him to pierce His Heart with a

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<sup>1227</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Address to religious, seminarians and representatives of ecclesial movements in Poland* (26/5/2006): “Mary learned from Jesus! From her very first ‘*fiat*’ [...], as she brought up Jesus, [...] or when finally on Calvary, by the Cross, she looked on Jesus, she ‘learned’ him moment by moment.”

<sup>1228</sup> IDEM, *Sermon on the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (15/8/2005), in AAS 97 (2005) 875-878, cf. also IDEM, *Deus Caritas est*, n. 41.

<sup>1229</sup> IDEM, *Address at the Marian Vigil*, meditates on how Mary was urged in her actions by Christ from his very conception on: “Jesus had just begun to form himself in the womb of Mary, but his Spirit had already filled her heart so that the Mother was already beginning to follow her divine Son. On the way that leads from Galilee to Judea it was Jesus himself who ‘urged’ Mary on, instilling in her a generous desire to go to the aid of her neighbour in need [...]. It is Jesus who helped her to overcome everything, allowing her to be guided by faith that works through charity (cf Gal 5:6).” And again, in the Apostolic letter *Motu proprio datae Porta fidei, quibus annus fidei incohatur* (11/10/2011), in the middle of n. 13: “With the same faith [which Mary showed in the Annunciation], she followed the Lord in his preaching and remained with him all the way to Golgotha”. The document is in AAS 103 (2011) 723-734.

<sup>1230</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>1231</sup> 8/12/2000, Friday, Immaculate Conception (Orlu, Holy Mountain) 9am Morning Mass. Appendix 4. Cf. also the message of Our Lady which Father quoted on Saturday 29/5/2004, in Via Lagnasco, Rome, in the Vigil: “I never understood anything in the world.” Appendix 4.

<sup>1232</sup> Sermon of Father Montfort, 2/10/2004, at Morning Mass in Bois, France. Appendix 4.

lance as His Beloved Mother stood there at the foot of His cross, united with Him in a unique union and therefore sharing in his redemptive sufferings in a most special and intimate way, the Two Hearts remained so united that her motherly Heart was pierced together with His Divine Heart with a sword, as the aged and holy Simeon had prophesied. From His pierced side and Heart flowed blood and water - the sign of His absolutely self-sacrificing and redeeming infinite love, the sign of the sacraments which give life - from which flows the life of the Church, his mystical body in the whole world.»<sup>1233</sup>

#### d) Comment of the author

It is remarkable that the founder did not fall into the “trap” of deducing from the participation of Mary in the passion any direct salutary influence on the faithful. The “suffering with Christ” in this presentation seems rather a reward for her union with Christ than a merit on which to base e.g. her power to distribute the graces earned by Christ in the passion. The importance given to the “sharing” in his passion is exclusively in the view of fostering their relationship of love. To deepen this thought, one of the initial “visions” already narrated and partly interpreted in footnote 668 (sub-chapter 2.2.2.3.), shall be looked at again. In it, the Two Hearts are wounded with wounds of *different* types:

«The Lord showed me His Heart which, because it has lost so much blood has lost its real colour and appears pale white. Then He said to me; *“If you can make this Heart turn red again the world will be saved.”* I asked Him how I can make the Heart regain its blood and its colour. [...] He showed me His Heart again and the Immaculate Heart of His Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Immaculate Heart is covered with deep wounds, but the wounds were deep but not wide and the Immaculate Heart was also bleeding profusely. Then He said to me: *“The only solution is to unite to the wounded and bleeding Hearts of Love”.*»<sup>1234</sup>

In the “vision” as narrated, Jesus showed Montfort the pitiable condition of His bleeding Heart.<sup>1235</sup> His Heart is wounded by the sins of mankind, destroying their own relationship with God, and Jesus asks for urgent succour, for the sake of mankind. The “vision” claims this help directly from the receiver, the small boy Montfort, thus addressing every believer: “If you can make...”. The pale white colour indicates the problem. It is lack of blood – symbol of life and love. The receiver of the “vision” is thus introduced into the mystery of the Incarnation, in which the eternal Word made himself dependent on his fellow human beings in his need of love and relationship, and into the Paschal mystery, in which God allowed himself to be “killed” (in the earthly aspect of his incarnated existence) by free creatures. This “vision”, did not stress the passion and death which appear as concluded in the pierced Heart. It directs the mind to the regaining of blood which evokes the resurrection, connecting it with the salvation of the world.<sup>1236</sup> As God asked from Mary the human collaboration for the Incarnation of the Son, so this “vision” asks of the receiver and all believers the human collaboration for the resurrection which should be interpreted as image for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, where all receive the life of God and follow the will

<sup>1233</sup> Appendix 3; cf. also Art. 7, *Ivi*.

<sup>1234</sup> TWO HEARTS OF LOVE PUBLICATION (ed.), *The Reign of Love*, p. 12. There, the last sentence is printed in fat.

<sup>1235</sup> Father Montfort reported on 25.8.2003, Monday (Holy Mountain, Orlu), in the Vigil Mass, how Jesus once scolded him, as a priest with a special mission: “Your sin offends Me more than that of any other person.” Appendix 4. This means that Jesus “feels” in a special way the sins of those who officially consecrated themselves to his service.

<sup>1236</sup> It shall be emphasized again that in this research, subjective salvation is seen as union with Christ, a relationship of love with a living person. Thus, the resurrection is very important in the objective salvation. The passion and death are the necessary way to it, but if a historical resurrection and apparitions of Jesus would not have happened, faith and the possibility of salvation would have continued to be on the level of the Old Testament.

of God as Jesus and Mary did, i.e. in symbolical language: when all are united with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

There are two possible interpretations in the small, deep wounds<sup>1237</sup> of the Immaculate Heart. They may be seen as caused by the sins of mankind, i.e. as psychological wounds which demand that someone will say “Sorry!”,<sup>1238</sup> showing readiness to change. Every human suffering is directly or mysteriously caused by the sins of the “world”, the lack of love in people, but if it is answered and borne with love and in union with Christ, some sins are being eliminated and the Reign of God on earth is being advanced.<sup>1239</sup> Another interpretation could see the wounds as caused by the “arrows of Love”, mentioned in the prayer of the Hearts of Love. Here, the “vision” would show that the capacity of Mary to make the Heart of Jesus regain its blood and thus save the world, depends on her acceptance to be wounded *by the Love of God*. It means her victorious fight to stay in loving union with Christ, despite his being not understandable (because he is divine). Since Mary is a disciple she must be seen as having made herself completely spiritually dependent on Christ only as her formator and spiritual director, and *in this situation of complete openness to Christ, she then experienced disappointments from him in her human expectations, even rejection of her motherly care*, cf. Lk 2,48-49; Mt 12,46-50 par. and Jn 2,4.<sup>1240</sup> Accepting him as the Master she must have believed in his divine inspiration, if not in his divine nature,<sup>1241</sup> and his seemingly human

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<sup>1237</sup> In psychology, a “wound” can mean that a human need of love, esteem and respect was not satisfied in a more or less serious way. If a child is not cared for by the parents with affection or not cherished in his talents, or not respected in his genuine decisions, he develops such a wound which is very difficult to forgive. When someone is refused something out of justice or in order to protect or guide the person, it does not cause wounds, although it may be painful in that moment. The more a person depends spiritually-materially-emotionally on another person, as children on parents or religious in community, the more psychological “wounds” will injure. Opening oneself in love to others makes the person vulnerable, and yet, love cannot grow without that complete openness, which accepts to be wounded, bearing with misunderstandings, stress or erroneous conscience. The wounds must be healed through dialogue with the person who caused them, or with God in prayer, if not, they generate negative feelings as sorrow, fear, sadness, anger, pride and jealousy, which lead to destruction of self and/or others. Some suppress the negative feelings without overcoming them: they create a style of life in which they exclude certain aspects of relationship or responsibilities an adult is expected to be able to undertake, because of fear of receiving more wounds. Such decisions always lead to new problems, especially in communities and families. Christ allowed himself to be wounded and killed by ignorant men, he forgave and, thus, he overcame the spiral of violence and established true love, showing the only way leading to resurrection. Cf. N. DELL’AGLI, “Eucharistia e guarigione”, p. 36-39. Very different from a wound in the psychological sense is a mystical “wound” as described in sub-chapter 2.3.2.1., the piercing by the Love of God.

<sup>1238</sup> Such an interpretation would use the apparition of e.g. Fatima to explain the vision of Hearts of Love. It is generally not correct to interpret a mystical experience with the vision of a different receiver. On the other hand, since it is difficult to express heavenly visions and mystical experiences in human language, mystics often borrow the expressions of others. The heart pierced by thorns appeared to the three seers in Fatima on 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1917, and Sr. Lucy added to the description that they understood that this was the Immaculate Heart, wounded by the sins of men and desiring penitence. Cf. M. HAUKE, “Geschichtliche und systematische Grundlinien“, p. 31-32, quoting the fourth „remembrance“ of LUCIA in *Schwester Lucia spricht über Fatima. Erinnerungen der Schwester Lucia*, s.ed., Fatima 1977<sup>3</sup>, p. 151. In the vision of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1925 at Pontevedra to Sr. Lucy, Mary showed her heart surrounded by thorns and requested the five first Saturdays of the month as reparation for ingratitude and words of abuse of people against her. Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Fatima”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dictionnaire des “apparitions”*, p. 332-333. (It may be annotated here that Sr. Lucy wrote in a letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1930 that Mary requested ‘the consecration of Russia to the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary’. In other documents, Sr. Lucy speaks only of the Immaculate Heart, but the union of the Two Hearts appears clearly in the messages of Fatima. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 328.)

<sup>1239</sup> Cf. e.g. the sermon of Father Montfort on 15/9/2004 in Neunkirchen, at Morning Mass, appendix 4.

<sup>1240</sup> As Mary was led to stop seeking an *experience* of union with Christ, she grew in knowing him and in sustaining him to do the will of God.

<sup>1241</sup> Due to her unique experience of the incarnation, it is to be expected that she believed in his divine nature, in the way Christians believe today: without being able to express the mystery of the Holy Trinity and the incarnation adequately.

reactions must have disappointed her until it was given to her to understand the deeper meaning.<sup>1242</sup> Mary may have overcome all disappointments in dialogue with God as she presented her question to the angel (cf. Lk 1,34), arriving at the understanding that it is his will.<sup>1243</sup> In symbolic language: the blood gushing from the wounds of her heart, caused by the “arrows” of Christ, Mary let it flow into the heart of Christ wounded by the sins of mankind, to sustain him in doing the will of God. At the cross, Mary not only arrived at accepting the Will of God for the Son, she also made herself present to hear his last words and to accept to be given out to another son, a fellow disciple.<sup>1244</sup> The only way to overcome and to grow with psychological “wounds” is to embrace them as “arrows” of the Love of God.

It may be asserted that Mary “followed” Christ also in the issue of virginity: if she first stayed in complete continence to be at the service of the Incarnation, she later learned from his example a higher level of virginity, i.e. the “virginity for the Kingdom of God”, the not binding oneself to a particular person in order to embrace all.

It shall be emphasized again that in this research, both “Salvation” and “Grace” are understood as a divine person. The acts of Mary of *receiving* the Redeemer in every act of his, especially the love of Christ on the cross in the form of his last words, the Spirit he breathed out, his dead body and the poured out blood, *is her salvation*. To this salvation of Mary, the faithful are being associated.

The foundation of the Church can be presented justly in many ways (founded on the Word of God and in function of its proclamation, on the action of the Holy Spirit, on the union of the Holy Trinity, on Peter and the apostles and their successors, etc.). This research gives precedence to the presentation of the Church as founded on the communion of Jesus with Mary, the apostles and other disciples, a communion into which others are to be called. Christ and Mary represent the Church in a special way. In Christ, former, present and future generations are “concentrated” in his person to be the human Yes to God (apart from his being the fulfilment of the divine promises to mankind); the Holy Spirit incorporates in his person people as members and he is in them “the Church” in its aspects of “mystical Body” and assembly animated by the Holy Spirit. In Mary all are “concentrated” in her person to be the human Yes to Christ, in Christ to God: Mary represents the Church in its aspect of disciple and “Bride of Christ”.<sup>1245</sup>

What God asked of the Virgin he requests from the Church and from every man: to give attention to God’s word and guidance, to love him and the neighbour, to receive the formation and

<sup>1242</sup> E.g. understanding the disappearing and word of the young Jesus in Jerusalem (Lk 2, 48-49), and the “hour” of Cana (Jn 2,4) as a pointer to his death and resurrection.

<sup>1243</sup> These spiritual processes in prayer make it possible for a human being to not only agree passively to the will of God in painful happening, but to understand that it is necessary to pass many tribulations to enter the Kingdom of God, acquiring wisdom of life. Sapienza (wisdom) was acclaimed by mystics as “sapida scientia”, as a science that has to be tasted with delight, as it was seen as the gift of being one with God. Cf. F. MARXER, *Die mystische Erfahrung*, p. 126

<sup>1244</sup> It can be said that the word to Mary in Jn 19,26 is the invitation to accept the death of the Son and to continue his work, being the beginning of the Church with the disciple, her silent acceptance being the peak of her union with Christ, while the “Beloved disciple” also united here with the will and, thus, with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The theological opinion of I. De la Potterie that Christ fulfilled *all* his mission in establishing the Church in Mary and John who stayed with him till the end, lifts up the sight from the old theology of sacrifice: the passion of Christ is only a means, not the aim and fulfilment. Thus, also the accomplishment of the SHL rules and prayers is only the means; the establishment of a united community of those who wish to do the will of God in these rules is the aim.

<sup>1245</sup> The Biblical and African concept of “communitarian” or “corporate personality” in which one person represents the community as ancestor or king or even without mandate from the community (by divine election), is to be newly discovered in Europe.



direction of the Master, Jesus, to build up a personal relationship with him and to find one's identity in it.

### 3.3.3. Marian cooperation: what Jesus gained in his relationship with Mary

This sub-chapter examines the cooperation, the help which Christ, the servant of God (cf. Phil 2,7b; Heb 10,7-9) asked and accepted from Mary, the handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1,38.48), in order to fulfil his earthly mission. This sub-chapter will not treat the "cooperation" of Mary in the traditional way.<sup>1246</sup> After having analysed what God gave to Mary and how she responded, now shall be looked at what Jesus accepted from Mary as his "partner".<sup>1247</sup> This sub-chapter simply reverses the usual Mariology in which her dependence on Christ is stressed, to look at the relationship from the Christological point of view. Here, Jesus out of his own initiative and choice calls Mary (and all) to participate in his life. This participation is seen as enriching Jesus with a new relationship, and thus with a new facet in the gem of his identity, his conscience of self.

#### 3.3.3.1. Outline of a Trinitarian and Christological thesis

As was seen in sub-chapter 3.2.4., salvation is the work and initiative only of God, who permits man to come back and nearer to him in Christ. At the same time, it "affects" God. Because in

«love that is reciprocal as much as it is extreme [...], two] poles are defined, in a relation that polarizes not only the partners but their whole environment; at the extreme limit, the polarization would define a world where each term would be determined, not for and by itself, but by its relation to the two poles, and to the attraction that their mutual draw exercises on the world.»<sup>1248</sup>

As human communion with God is seen in the Magisterium as possible through the communion which the three divine persons have with each other, there is need to have a closer look at this divine communion. The Love between the three persons of the Most Holy Trinity is divine, it

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<sup>1246</sup> The question on the cooperation of Mary in the work of salvation (both the objective salvation, the work of Jesus, and the subjective salvation, the reception of the faithful of the grace of redemption) are traditionally treated under the disputed titles "Co-redemptrix" and "Mediatrice", as well as with the term "cooperation". The influence of Mary on the faithful will be discussed in the sub-chapter 3.3.4.3. For the discussion on the "Co-redemption" in the sense of a cooperation in the objective salvation, cf. A. AMATO, "Gesù, Salvatore unico, definitivo, universale, e la cooperazione di Maria alla salvezza. Problematiche nuove di una 'questio' antica", in E. PERETTO (ed.), *Maria nel mistero di Cristo. Pienezza del tempo e compimento del Regno*. Atti dell'XI Simposio Internazionale Mariologico (Roma, 7-10 ottobre 1997), Marianum, Roma 1999, p. 409-423. In the context of a "relational Mariology", the whole discussion becomes meaningless, since salvation is here defined as union with Christ. Everything which was traditionally called a "saving act" (as the death of Jesus) is here understood as an act which helps, calls, shows the way to union with the person of Christ, who alone is "the Salvation". Thus, a Marian title as "co-redemptrix" has not much meaning. Mary is helping the faithful in various ways to be united with Jesus, as will be seen in sub-chapter 3.3.4.3., and she is helping the person of Christ in his mission, as mother and disciple, as this sub-chapter will unfold. Also A. Amato concludes like this on p. 419: "più che l'una [corredenzione] o l'altra [mediazione] categoria, è importante sottolineare l'ampio arco di 'cooperazione' alla quale Maria è chiamata da Dio." And on p. 421: "I titoli mariani di riferimento cristologico, che implicano un coinvolgimento dinamico di Maria nel mistero dell'incarnazione e della redenzione [Pasqua], sono soprattutto quelli di Madre del Signore, Discepolo del Figlio, Socia del Redentore".

<sup>1247</sup> Cf. M. O'CARROLL, "Socia", p. 337-357: the modern theology - with roots in the theology of the MA - made the "partnership" of Mary in the mission of her son a major issue. In the MA, the word "socia" is often combined or understood as "sponsa". (Cf. p. 341).

<sup>1248</sup> J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, p. 135.

is creative and re-creative: it not only gives a subjective new definition to all that exists, but this new meaning is real and permanent. The divine Love, building a polarization between the divine persons, may be seen as giving existence and renewal to the created beings, by calling them to participate in the union of love. The Trinitarian salvific action and being can be sub-divided in the human mind in the Father revealing/representing the divine will, the Spirit giving/being the power of Love to follow it, the Son giving/being the example and instituting/being the Church. Or, to the Father can be ascribed the initiation of any divine action, to the Son the fulfilment and to the Spirit the completion.<sup>1249</sup> H. U. v. Balthasar says that, in order to understand the incarnation and the person of Jesus, there is need to connect the event of the “kenosis” with what happens eternally in the Holy Trinity, i.e. basing our understanding of the immanent Trinity on what was revealed by the human life of the Son, and understanding Jesus in his relationship with the Holy Trinity. Balthasar calls the “essence” of God (which he understands as Love) as always donated in the donation of self of the Father, in a “super-kenosis” in which the Father deprives himself of all he is and can do, in order to generate the Son. The same returns all in thanksgiving and the same essence is “represented” in its character of perfect Love by the Holy Spirit. For the Swiss theologian it belongs eternally to God to contain all modalities of Love, of compassion, even of “separation” motivated by Love. Like this, Balthasar is able to retain the idea of an “unchangeable” God, also in the face of the creation, the incarnation and the ascension. All these acts of Love are included in the eternal act of Love.<sup>1250</sup> In talking of the Eternal Father “depriving Himself of all He is”, Balthasar exaggerates the dynamics of the “perichoresis”, rendering them dramatic; while the role of the Holy Spirit (“representing the essence of God”) remains in a very dim light in his “Theology of the three days”.

Pope Francis seems to contemplate rather a change, something new in God, which happened with the incarnation, in his encyclical letter *Laudato si*, n. 238:

«The Father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists. The Son, his reflection, through whom all things were created, united himself to this earth when he was formed in the womb of Mary. The Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways. The world was created by the three Persons acting as a single divine principle, but each one of them performed this common work in accordance with his own personal property. »

As Pope Francis underlined, the three Persons act “as a single divine principle”. Even in the incarnation, the Father does all (in the sense of being involved in all), the Spirit does all, the Son does all, and none does anything alone: “Quia inseparabilia sunt opera Trinitatis”<sup>1251</sup>, and where one divine person makes himself present, the inner-Trinitarian unity necessitates the presence also of the other divine persons. On the other hand, the “sub-division” of the Trinitarian unity is not a human construct, because only the Son became man in Jesus Christ by the incarnation, becomes bread by consecration of the same, becomes a presence in man by spiritual union with every child that

<sup>1249</sup> Cf. T. MARSCHLER, “Das Herz Mariens”, p. 104.

<sup>1250</sup> Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni*, p. 22, i.e. in the rich preface of 2 pages which is not there in the German original. Cf. also IDEM, *Teologica II. Verità di Dio*, Jaca Book, Milano 1990, p. 118-119: “Non diventa allora l’essenza divina qualcosa di altrettanto ‘mosso’ come l’evento stesso delle processioni? [...] questa intimissima essenza [...] può essere in ultima analisi solo l’amore [...] L’essenza divina, così considerata, sarebbe non soltanto coestensiva all’evento delle eterne processioni, ma *co-determinata* ad esso mediante la partecipazione ogni volta speciale di Padre, Figlio e Spirito, non esisterebbe in altre parole non altrimenti che ogni volta *paternamente, filialmente e spiritualmente* [...] mediante cui esse *insieme formano* l’unico, libero, ‘personale’ volto di Dio.”

<sup>1251</sup> DS 535, Council of Toledo XI, 7/11/675.

becomes a new creation in Christ and that has a role to play in the divine plan of salvation.<sup>1252</sup> Only the Spirit is “poured in our hearts” and gives to men the voice of the Son, crying “Abba, Father!” (Gal 4,6). Taking inspiration from the “theology of the three days” of Balthasar,<sup>1253</sup> this research proposes the following verbs of action for describing the difference of the three divine persons: The Father can be seen as finding his best expression and glory in eternal raising/generating to eternal life and glory, the Son in eternal self-annihilation and prostration before the Father, and the Spirit in giving participation in the life and being of the Son. (To the Father in a perfect, eternal way, because from the Father the Spirit proceeds and is thus completely possessed by the Father; to creatures as much as they are able and ready to embrace this grace.)<sup>1254</sup>

The incarnate Son, in his self-annihilation in entering the history of the world, has two “natures”.<sup>1255</sup> He remains God, but he has a human body and soul, and he has two wills: the divine will and the human will. The human will is limited and guided by needs of body and soul, and as a human being Jesus had to learn to submit constantly to the divine will in a human process of growth in virtue. (Cf. Heb 5,8) As Jesus has a human soul and will, it seems to be possible to see in him a human conscience of self, in addition to the divine conscience of self. His divine conscience of self may have told him only that he comes from God and will go back to him after fulfilling his mission,

<sup>1252</sup> I.e. in every human being, especially those baptised, and most especially in every person who gives himself for prolonging the mission of Christ and to the extent that person gives himself to Christ, so that saintly priests can be called with good reason “another Christ”. Of course this presence has to be understood as a mere mystical presence, in great difference to the only Incarnation of the Son in Jesus.

<sup>1253</sup> This present research takes inspiration from H. U. v. Balthasar, especially the “Theology of the three days”, without however accepting all he said. Balthasar exaggerates some statements which, thus, become criticable. E.g. on p. 147 of the Italian edition used here, he takes it for granted that between the dead does not exist any vital communication, seeing them in complete solitude. In opposition to that, the author sees in all religions and outside religion, in all times and places, in extraordinary ways and in hardly perceivable ways, that men had experiences of communications from people who have died. (It may be the case here to remind that God prohibited in Lev 19,31 to consult the dead or to seek advice of diviners, as an action that renders man impure: only if the contact with those who have crossed over lies in the initiative of God, it will not deviate man into curiosity and occult practises.) Human communication on earth works usually with the body; but must communication be completely excluded for those who are in a body which is unable to make the slightest movement, or who are separated from their bodies? To exclude every communication categorically and without any argumentation seems arduous.

<sup>1254</sup> For the Father, cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni*, p. 181, quoting H. SCHLIER, *Über die Auferstehung Jesu Christi*, Einsiedeln 1968<sup>2</sup>, p. 17-18 who refers to Rm 8,11; 2 Cor 4,14; Gal 1,1; Eph 1,20; Col 2,12 and his colleague Schniewind, calls “the one who raised Jesus from the dead” as the title of honour of the Father. For the Son, *Ibidem*, p. 41 quotes Cyril of Alexandria: “felix culpa” not only for men, but also for the Son who, thus, had the opportunity to obtain a new glory in his abasement on the cross, which became necessary because of the sin of Adam. (*De SS. Trinitate, Dialogus 5*, in PG 75,968). The quotation is problematic, however, because Cyril says in section C/D of the page, that the Son would not have become man and would not have been raised to the glory to receive adoration from angels and men, if man would not have sinned. It shows that the understanding of the Holy Trinity and the economy of salvation in his days was far from developed. If the Father is the one who raises/generates to life also the creation (in the Son and for him, especially to give him the possibility to live the self-abasement in which he finds his joy), with the Spirit giving to creatures a share in the life of the Son (of self-abasement and being raised), the Son would have incarnated and died also if man would not have sinned. Simply the encounter with him would have been more similar to the reception of Mary. To the intertrinitarian dynamics v. Balthasar comments that every Christology has to take serious the fact that Jesus *becomes* what he is already, both before the world came to be and on the earth. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 184-185: “Dio è sufficientemente divino per divenire in un senso vero e non solo apparente [...] ciò che egli è già da sempre.” In p. 190 and p. 200-201 he underlines that the ascension is not a return of Jesus to his state before the incarnation, but a way of teaching the disciples to understand his new way of presence: in the disciples, who inherit the mission of Christ.

<sup>1255</sup> Cf. LEO MAGNO, letter *Lectis dilectionis (Tomus Flaviani)* (13/6/449), chap. 3, in *PL* 54,763 B: “In integra ergo veri hominis perfectaque natura verus natus est Deus, totus in suis, totus in nostris”. (In the complete and perfect nature of true man, therefore, was born the true God, complete in what is his, complete in what is ours.) The “Tomus Flaviani” belongs to the extraordinary universal Magisterium, explaining the dogma of faith of the two natures in Christ.

leaving it to his human conscience of self to discover this mission on earth in prayer, i.e. in a human spiritual search for understanding God and the mission he has given to “me”. Because one part of his mission was to be a model for men. His human conscience of self must be seen in evolution during his life, limited and conditioned by his age, the education he received and the human relationships he built with those around him, on a reciprocal basis.<sup>1256</sup> F. Murphy sees this idea already in von Balthasar: “The ‘dialogue principle’ according to which ‘a child is awakened to I-consciousness through the instrumentality of a Thou’ becomes part of his Christology. Mary is the ‘Thou’ who nudges Jesus’ eternal mission-consciousness into human awareness.”<sup>1257</sup>

### 3.3.3.2. Mariological application of the Christological thesis

As was seen above, the acceptance of Christ in faith in the Annunciation is much commented, and in this area there are first attempts to ascribe to Mary the capacity to “give” something to God, something he needed for his plan of salvation. It is generally acknowledged by many major Christian denominations that her free consent to God’s proposal in the angelic message was the first and basic cooperation in the work of salvation.<sup>1258</sup> As a consequence of it, the Son of God received a human mother and he received from her his human nature, involving her body.<sup>1259</sup> Modern theologians do not stop at the biological motherhood, but the educator-role of a mother in the socialization of a child in the proper culture has entered the view. Von Balthasar states in his Theo-drama: “in Mary, the (Abrahamic) faith that characterized this [Old] Covenant becomes a contributory element in the Incarnation.”<sup>1260</sup> Jesus, like every child, needed a mother (giver of “social generation”) to grow well, and according to L. Pinkus he received from her the emotive-affective energy necessary for the process of identification. To the process of identification belongs the aspect of becoming rooted in one’s culture and the development of an attitude towards life which is the foundation for a capacity for self-giving love. L. Pinkus sustains that Mary gave to Christ the emotive-affective energy not only in childhood but till under the cross.<sup>1261</sup> I. Calabuig and L. Deiss enumerated all Jesus received especially from Mary and Joseph: the (Middle) Aramaic language (of Galilean accent), Hebrew, as the sacred language of the Scriptures and prayers (being

<sup>1256</sup> E. g. S. DE LAET et al. showed in “Transactional links between teacher-child relationship quality and perceived versus sociometric popularity: a three-wave longitudinal study”, in *Child development* 85(2014)1647-1662, that more a teacher supports a pupil (of ca. 9 years), more his/her sociometric popularity (that fact that he/she is seen as a model to follow by his/her peers) is predictable to rise, and vice versa. (While the mere personal perception to be popular rather gives rise to aggressiveness and to teacher-child conflict.) Some readers may be feeling strange in thinking about a psychological influence of human beings on Jesus. P. De Benedetti, professor of OT, postulates in an article that even God, creating world and man, has “changed”, binding himself in an “irrevocable” relationship and becoming towards creation creator, father, mother, merciful, etc: “la creazione, comunque sia andata, è un progresso nell’identità di Dio, ‘se così si può dire’.” P. DE BENEDETTI, “A immagine di Dio”, p. 31. The Pauline word that Christ was born “under the law” (Gal 4,4) refers to the Jewish Law, but the laws of human nature should be seen as rather included than excluded.

<sup>1257</sup> F. MURPHY, “Immaculate Mary: the ecclesial Mariology of Hans Urs von Balthasar”, in S. J. BOSS (ed.), *Mary. The complete resource*, Continuum, New York 2007, p. 301.

<sup>1258</sup> Cf. T. F. OSSANNA, “Evangelizzazione”, in *NDM*, p. 489.

<sup>1259</sup> St. IRENEUS underlined this fact in his argumentation against the Gnostics: Jesus has taken the heritage of the human flesh, and a similitude from the mother, cf. *Adversus Heereses* III, 21, 9.

<sup>1260</sup> H. U. v. BALTHASAR, *Theo-drama: theological dramatic theory. III. The dramatis personae: the person in Christ*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1992, p. 177.

<sup>1261</sup> Cf. L. PINKUS, “Alma Redemptoris Mater”, p. 113-115, and IDEM, “Psicologia”, in *NDM*, p. 1061. It may be generally accepted that care and compassion, expressed in prayer, physical nearness and deeds, is far from a fruitless sentimentality in the human experience.

able at least to *read* it, cf. Lk 4,16-18), and some basic Koiné, the “common Greek” (which he might have known only in word, not in writing); the love of the Law and the tradition and faith of the Fathers. He acquired the conscience of belonging to the People of God, he learned to pray according to the rhythms and the spirituality of a pious Israelite, and he learned to work. L. Deiss lists also many parables and words of Jesus which, according to him, must go back to childhood memories as acts and teaching words of Mary and Joseph.<sup>1262</sup>

P. Barigelli-Calcarì advances the thesis that Mary oriented Jesus e.g. at the wedding of Cana (Jn 2,1-12) to help the needy.<sup>1263</sup> The scene at Cana is explained by A. Serra as Mary inspiring or ushering Christ into his messianic mission. The challenge given to Christ with the word on the lacking wine<sup>1264</sup> is a recall to the prophetic promise of abundant good wine in the messianic time (cf. Gn 27,28-29; 49,10-12; Is 25,6; 55,1; Jer 31,12; Am 9,13; Hos 14,8; Joel 2,19; 2,24; Zac 9,17). It can be understood as the challenge not to hide any longer but to begin his public preaching and ministry.<sup>1265</sup> And Jesus “revealed his glory” (Jn 2,11), after the servants did as he said, encouraged by the same mother.

According to CCC, n. 2599, Jesus learned the vocal prayer (with formulas) from his mother, underlining that his prayer of filial love springs from a “secret source”. The view of Jesus in what he may have received in his relationship with Mary is rarely taken in the modern Magisterium.<sup>1266</sup> John Paul II contemplated more the Marian aspect of the relationship of cooperation.

The Constitutions mention the physical-material-psychological aspects of what Christ received from Mary, e.g. in Art. 14: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity received His human nature (everything human) from Mary.”<sup>1267</sup> The union of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary is called in SHL a “union of love”;<sup>1268</sup> it is obvious to the founder that this union is wrought by the *Holy Spirit* of Love.<sup>1269</sup> He said e.g.: “We need especially the Holy Spirit: Without

<sup>1262</sup> Cf. I. CALABUIG, “Introduzione”, in E. PERETTO (ed.), *L'immagine teologica di Maria*, p. V, and L. DEISS, *Joseph, Mary, Jesus*, p. 8-13, 38-41, 46-50, 81-90. Cf. also M. MARCHI, sustaining the opinion that motherhood is never only biological, but always includes the aspect of education of the child. Cf. “Il senso e le motivazioni del nostro interrogarci sulla presenza di Maria nel processo educativo. Il punto di vista pedagogico”, in M. FARINA – M. MARCHI (ed), *Maria nell'educazione di Gesù Cristo e del cristiano*, vol. 1, p. 33-34. Cf. also S. DE FIORES, “Maria educatrice di Cristo e del cristiano nel cammino mariologico del XX secolo”, in M. FARINA – M. MARCHI (ed), *Maria nell'educazione di Gesù Cristo e del cristiano*, vol. 1, p. 62-66, and A. AMATO, “Maria, la Theotókos, discepola ed educatrice di Cristo”, p. 162-166.

<sup>1263</sup> Cf. P. BARIGELLI-CALCARI, *L'ultimo desiderio nelle religioni*, p. 183.

<sup>1264</sup> According to U. VANNI, it cannot be translated “they have no more wine”, but only with a blunt “they don't have wine”. Cf. “Il ‘segno’ di Cana”, p. 34. The wine given by Christ was between 480 and 720 litres (cf. *Ibidem*, p. 39).

<sup>1265</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, *Le nozze di Cana*, p. 249-254; cf. also IDEM, “Bibbia”, p. 250-251.

<sup>1266</sup> E.g. cf. RM 38. In this point, the Encyclical only repeats the content of LG. Apart from that, there is only RM 46, which does not specify whether the “ministry” of the mother means only the biological motherhood, or whether the social motherhood of teaching the culture and socializing the child in the community can be included: “God, in the sublime event of the incarnation of his Son, entrusted himself to the ministry, the free and active ministry of a woman.”

<sup>1267</sup> Appendix 3. Cf. Art. 6-7 and 12, as quoted above.

<sup>1268</sup> The union of love between Jesus and Mary is specified by the founder as different from the union in the Holy Trinity, which is union in love and nature. The union of the Two Hearts is only “in Love, in perfect accord with the eternal will of God”. For the sake of underlining the inequality of the two, Father Montfort likens their union to the hypostatic union of divine nature and human nature in the one person of Christ. Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 80. (Appendix 6). Obviously, the parallelism is not straight, for the union of two persons cannot be likened to the union of two natures in one person.

<sup>1269</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 6, appendix 3, which talks of the Annunciation, when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, and after, “the Two Hearts of Love [...] remained ever united in Love.” The union also has a Trinitarian aspect. Cf. M. OKAA, *SHL*, p. 87 (appendix 6): “An essential part of this sacred revelation and precious deposit of faith is the great mystery of the Incarnation, the union of divine and human nature in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the

him we can do nothing. All: the Immaculate Conception, the Incarnation, the preaching... all was done in the power of the Holy Spirit. And our service cannot be done without his help and power.”<sup>1270</sup> In Art. 9, quoted in sub-chapter 3.3.4.1., the founder speaks of “the Holy Spirit, by whose overshadowing power she had conceived, born and nursed Jesus.” From this statement, though it is focused on the childhood of Jesus, one can deduce that in the founder, all Mary did for the Son was inspired and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

The thesis that Christ, especially as a child, asked and received human affection, care in his material needs and his human knowledge from his mother may be generally acceptable. But this research named three aspects of response of Mary to the gifts of God: the perpetual Virginity, the reception of Christ in faith in the Annunciation, and the discipleship of Mary. What may be the effect of point 1 and 3 in the life of Christ?

As a consequence of the response to grace by Mary in conserving her virginity also after the birth of Christ, she gave to Jesus the possibility for a very intimate relationship, a first experience of living his mission in communion with another who shared his feelings and wishes. The fact that Mary allowed herself to be attracted by and united to Jesus, forgetting herself in humility and love, is presented in this research as an important part of redemption. In the ἀγών, the battle won by Mary, sustained by the grace and love of Christ, Mary faithfully provided the first possibility for Christ to be in a positive intimate human relationship. *This research advances the thesis that in this relationship Christ found his identity as “bridegroom” of mankind,<sup>1271</sup> person permanently bound to humanity out of love.* Also in this case, the help given by Mary to Jesus should be seen as a mere psychological encouragement to accept the divine call to live his earthly life as child and brother of man.

As mentioned in sub-chapter 3.3.2.3., Mary is called the “first disciple”. As the first disciple, one may conclude that Mary marks the beginning of the mastership of Jesus, for where there is not even a first disciple receiving the teaching one cannot talk of a master. Concerning Mary of Bethany, A. Martinelli evidenced that she *realized* the mission of the Saviour who came to serve and to fill with life the “empty hearts” and that Mary of Bethany was preceded by Mary of Nazareth.<sup>1272</sup> *This research advances the thesis that through the attention of the mother to his words, Jesus discovered himself as an authority, as the teacher of mankind.* This should be seen as a mere human confirmation of the divine call to teach, which Christ supposedly received in prayer.

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womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the special role of the Blessed Virgin in God's redemptive plan, the unique relationship of union in Love of Jesus and Mary, the union of the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary, the Two Hearts ever united in Love, by the action of the Holy Spirit according to the eternal will of God the Father.” Mary cooperated with the action of the Holy Spirit with “her love of God and her fellow mankind in need of divine redemption”, and, thus, united herself with Jesus to the will of God the Father. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 13, appendix 3.

<sup>1270</sup> Sermon on 29/11/2000, Wednesday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Morning Mass, appendix 4.

<sup>1271</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, *Le nozze di Cana*, p. 425-429; p. 428: “Gesù [...] è l'autentico Sposo della Nuova Alleanza di Dio con l'umanità. IDEM returns to the idea in *Maria presso la Croce. Solo L'Addolorata? Verso una rilettura dei contenuti di Giovanni 19,25-27*, Messaggero, Padova 2011, p. 265-271, under the heading “La teologia giovannea sul Cristo-Sposo”, recalling Cana, the words of John the Baptist in Jn 3,29, and the encounter of Christ with Mary Magdalen in Jn 20, 11-18 with its parallels to the Song of Songs: the seeking (3,1-2), the theme of the (closed) garden (4,12), the double turning round of Mary Magdalene and the insistent call to the Shulammite woman to turn, to dance. (6,13) St. Hyppolite of Rome is referred to by Serra as earliest testimony of a line of Fathers who saw this reference to Songs in John, and the exegete reminds on p. 269 of the fact that in the Synagogue Easter was celebrated with texts of the Song of Songs. There the “garden” referred to Eden and the Temple in Jerusalem.

<sup>1272</sup> Cf. A. MARTINELLI, *Il mistero della Donna consacrata*, Nigrizia, Bologna 1969, p. 79-80.

Apart from a mere psychological help, the presence of Mary in the New Testament is needed for forming with Christ the symbol and beginning of a spousal covenant between God and man, the New Covenant. At the cross, under the aspect of revelation, the presence of Mary and John confirm that Jesus was not a false prophet who eventually isolated himself and run into death. Instead, their presence and receptive relationship with Christ reveal the salvific value of sufferings as source of new vitality and life.<sup>1273</sup>

As both became “Victims of Love”, persons who sacrifice themselves for the will of God to be done on earth, this research presents the thesis that the two wounded and bleeding Hearts are the image of those who found together their identity as Centre of communion of the Church, finding their identity in their union with each other, after a spiritual struggle with God, with each other and with themselves.

What God asked of Mary: to cooperate with Christ, seeking his needs today and how to respond to them, he requests it from the Church and from every person, as he is always in need of someone through whom he could reach people with his love, offering the same reward as Mary received: becoming part of the identity of God.

### **3.3.4. The fulfilment of the union of the Two Hearts**

The union of Mary with her Son is presented here as growing during lifetime as every human virtue can be called perfected only in death. After the death and resurrection of Christ one may speak of a fulfilment of their union as a new relationship of Mary with the faithful is drawn up in the NT. The fulfilment of union is here divided into three successive steps: her activity in the early Church, her becoming a sign of sure hope by her assumption, and her influence from heaven.

#### **3.3.4.1. Mother of the faithful in the early Church**

Exegetes as A. Serra are convinced that Mary began especially with Pentecost to teach the members of the Church the treasures of her meditations on Christ, remembering that she proclaimed the works of God already in the Magnificat.<sup>1274</sup> Seeing Mary as the spiritual centre of the early Church is in line with the general “Marianity” of the early Church (especially in communities of Johannine and Lukan influence), testified in key-passages as Jn 2,1-12; 19,25-28,<sup>1275</sup> in Luke 1-2 and in Acts 1,13-14, where only the Eleven and Mary are presented with name, whereby the author presented her as “the mother of Jesus” to avoid confusion with the other Marys (cf. Lk 24,10). Mary

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<sup>1273</sup> This is expressed clearly in the joyful testimony on what he saw in Jn 19, 35-37.

<sup>1274</sup> Cf. A. SERRA, “Bibbia”, p. 245-246.

<sup>1275</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Bibbia”, p. 210-214. The exegete observes that Mary is present in the fourth Gospel in the beginning (cf. Jn 2,11: in the ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων) and in the end. At Cana he stresses the indication of the “third day”, pre-announcing the day of resurrection and recalling the day of the theophany and the gift of the law on Mount Sinai, accepted by the people in full adherence to the covenant, cf. Ex 19,10-11; 16; 24,7; he stresses the sign of the marriage-feast and of the good, new wine: signs of the messianic age and new Law, new covenant, new joy. He points out the importance of the figure of Mary in the passage, and the revelation of her true identity and new function as the “woman”, who manifests the glory of the Son in order to arouse the faith of the disciples. When the “hour” has come, on Golgotha, there is again Jesus, mother and disciple, and the acceptance and possession of the “mother” becomes a characteristic sign of the “beloved disciple”.

being the first disciple of Christ cannot be separated from her being mistress to other disciples: as disciple, she teaches to be attentive and to obey Jesus. (Cf. Jn 2,3-5)

In the teaching of Benedict XVI, the maternal mission for all the followers of Christ of all times received under the cross,<sup>1276</sup> she began to exercise it after the Ascension: “Treasuring every memory in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19, 51), she passed them on to the Twelve assembled with her in the Upper Room to receive the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14; 2:1-4).”<sup>1277</sup>

Father Montfort is equally convinced that Mary did both prolong and continue the prayer and teaching of Christ as he presents her as the spiritual centre of the young Church in Art. 9-10:

«ART. 9

With the same Heart, the same love with which the Mother loved, nurturing and attending to her Divine Son she loves and cares and attends to all His followers, as members of His mystical body the Church. After His resurrection from the dead and ascension to the right hand of the Father, the disciples were together in a room, Mary was there with them and united with them in prayerful expectation of the coming of the Holy Spirit, by whose overshadowing power she had conceived, born and nursed Jesus. She was there praying with them, contemplating [...] the person and mission of Christ and narrating some of the events in his life which she alone knew and retained in her tender motherly Heart. Thus opening the treasures of her Heart she cared for the followers of her Divine Son, and the disciples were reciprocally comforting, caring, and attending to their Mother.

ART. 10

After [...] the birth of the Church, the same motherly heart so uniquely united to that of her Son, the head, remained united with the apostles, disciples and all followers as members of the mystical body of her Son. Her motherly heart followed them with love wherever they went, sharing in their works, sufferings and successes. With the same motherly heart with which she loved Her divine Son, the head, she also loved all the members of her Son's mystical body - the Church.»<sup>1278</sup>

Father Montfort thus sees love as a great power, sustaining those who perform actions as charity, preaching and suffering for the sake of Christ because love is not only a positive human relationship, uniting human beings and their spiritual forces together but love is also prayer and thus brings in the power of God, without whom no apostolate or martyrdom can be accomplished.

The union with the Heart of Jesus, for Mary and for the faithful, consists of doing the will of God out of Love. The work and mission of Christ is the will of God par excellence. First the *worship* Christ as a human being gave to the Father in the Spirit, from his little prayers during preaching (cf. Mt 11,25-26; Jn 12,28) over the prayers through the whole night (cf. Lk 6,12) to the sacrifice of his life. Secondly the *teaching* of purity, love and zeal for God, charity and union he proclaimed, lived and testified in the communion with his mother and his disciples until death. *Union with Christ is realized in joining him in these two main aspects of his work, prayer and preaching*, continuing his prayer in time and space and repeating and applying his teaching in one's life and before other people.

### 3.3.4.2. Encouraging sign of hope for the faithful in the bodily Assumption into heaven

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<sup>1276</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI, General audience *Women at the service of the Gospel* (14/2/2007), in *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI*, III, 1 (2007), LEV, Città del Vaticano, 2008, p. 214-218.

<sup>1277</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Porta fidei*, middle of n. 13.

<sup>1278</sup> Appendix 3.



As the assumption of Mary has no narration in the Bible and in the very early Fathers of the Church,<sup>1279</sup> here only the significance of the fact shall be discussed, to show its harmony with the Biblical message.

The Assumption of Mary is her union with the risen Christ<sup>1280</sup> in harmony with Rom 6,5 and Phil 3,10-11. In fact, like the resurrection, the assumption is an event that happened within history while being not verifiable due to its being a singular case and transcending history. Within history, only the empty tomb can be verified and the testimony of the witnesses, which is a psychological phenomenon.<sup>1281</sup> Serra noted that the “woman” in Rev 12,1 is a vision that is to give encouragement to those “brothers” who are called to give witness to Christ until death (cf. Rev 12,10-11.17). It is the community of the early, little, still unstable Church, experiencing the pain of giving birth to new Christians and new communities, experiencing the fear of seeing the dragon (devil, using men in positions of governmental power shown by the horns and crowns) trying to destroy all her efforts (cf. Rev 12,2-4). The vision of Rev 12,1.5 shows that this threatened, weak “woman”-Church, in her true being, is a marvellous “sign”, clothed with the “sun” of the glory/presence of God, standing on the “moon” of passing time, being crowned with the “stars” of all the saints and foundation stones (patriarchs, prophets, apostles) of the people of God. It is the encouragement to the Church: although you feel pain, you are already glorified; although you are persecuted, you have already given birth to the Messiah of God and he will reign. In a second step, the Johannine community (as later generations also did) must have thought of the historical mother of Christ, seeing in the vision also a divine assurance of the glorification of that particular woman.<sup>1282</sup>

Concerning the history of the dogma, it was shown in sub-chapter 2.1.1.1. that an invocation of Mary began in some places latest in the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century, proving that people believed her in heaven. In other places one has to wait till the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century to see the step from talking well about Mary (e.g. to defend indirectly the true manhood and divinity of Christ) to the conviction that she can hear it.<sup>1283</sup> Narrations about death, translation and disappearing/Assumption of the body of

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<sup>1279</sup> The apocryphal writings on her “transitus”, however, were proved to have their origin in the Judeo-Christian culture of Palestine, and the original Greek one’s may have been written in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, or even the first century. In the “Apocalypse of Paul”, written before the year 250, Paul journeys to heaven, and in n. 46 he sees the “tree of life”, and there he sees “a virgin” coming, and 200 angels who sing in her honour. She is presented to him as “Mary, the Virgin, the Mother of the Lord”, and she tells him that she goes to meet those who do the will of her son, not abandoning them until they meet the Lord in the peace of heaven. Thus, the ancient text witnesses to a faith believing Mary in heaven and active for the good of the Church on earth. The first Father of the Church that alludes to an assumption (without mentioning the body) is Ephrem of Syria in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, addressing to Christ the praise “you have introduced her in heaven”, in a text *on the birth of Christ*, 4; ed. ASSEMANI, V, p. 415, quoted in Italian by A. GILA, *Le più antiche testimonianze letterarie*, p. 55. For the datation of “transiti” and the “Apocalypse of Paul”, cf. *ibidem*, p. 32, 42-44.

<sup>1280</sup> Cf. S. MEO, “Assunta II”, in *NDM*, p. 155.

<sup>1281</sup> Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, *Teologia dei tre giorni*, p. 202-204.

<sup>1282</sup> According to A. SERRA, “Bibbia”, p. 270-271, Mary is indirectly included in the image of the “woman” (the Church), the great sign in heaven of Rev 12,1. Cf. also G. BIGUZZI, “La donna, il drago e il messia in Ap 12”, in *Theotokos* 8 (2000) 17-66. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 46, says that the first person who (in writing) identified the “woman” of Rev 12 with the Virgin Mary, was a certain Ecumenio in the 6<sup>th</sup> century (without giving the reference).

<sup>1283</sup> Cf. E. TONIOLO, “Padri della Chiesa”, p. 957-958. St. Justina, who died as a martyr in 305 in Carthage: St. Gregory Nazianzen said that she invoked Mary for help to preserve her virginity. Cf. St. GREGORIUS NAZIANZEN, *Oratio* 24,11, in *PG* 35, col. 1181 A. Severian, bishop of Gabala, which is under the jurisdiction of Antioch, and who died after 408, comments the “all generations will call me blessed” with “surely she hears it”. SEVERIAN, *Homilia in mundi creationem*, 10, in *PG* 56, 498. In Egypt and Carthage in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, but generally in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, also the cult of saints who were no martyrs began. Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 138-139, 144.

Mary began to proliferate only in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1284</sup> After the council of Ephesus (431), the Marian cult received everywhere new vigour; with it grew the awareness of her status in heaven. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the feast of the “Dormitio” of Mary began to be celebrated liturgically in the East.<sup>1285</sup>

According to Ratzinger, the world is already saved because in the Virgin, all the effects of redemption are already present in the world.<sup>1286</sup> The union with God realized in Mary expresses the final destination of every man and of the whole creation (cf. Rm 8,22-23).<sup>1287</sup> De Fiores ascribes to the glorified body (of Mary), according to 1 Cor 15,42-44 the qualities of incorruption; glory, which indicates both splendour and presence and salvific action on earth; power (of the Spirit, capable to communicate the new life and to do miracles); and the “spiritual body”, the body being completely under the sovereignty of the Spirit of God.<sup>1288</sup> The Western Church usually talks of “glorification” of the saints in heaven. Glory, *δοξα*/Kabod in the Bible is an attribute of God: sublimity, moral weight, or the expression used to designate the appearance of the divine Majesty, (e.g. Ex 16,10) showing what he is and what he can do (cf. Jn 2,11). The “glorification” of a saint is in the Catholic understanding of heaven an entering into an intimate communion with the Holy Trinity.<sup>1289</sup> It is the equivalent to the Orthodox term “divinisation” which means the participation in the Divine Life. Her glorification in Christ is her definite union with the Holy Trinity,<sup>1290</sup> her definitively being part of the mystical “Body” of Christ,<sup>1291</sup> into which she brings in her own body.<sup>1292</sup> From the assurance of her glorification everybody can draw the hope of their own salvation.

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<sup>1284</sup> Cf. E. TONIOLO, “Padri della Chiesa”, p. 970, ed E. PERETTO, “Apocrifi”, in *NDM*, p. 101: the eldest “dormitio” may have parts dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, but was finished by John the Theologian in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century. The “translatio” of the relics of a saint, done by a bishop, meant (at least in Rome and Milan) since the 4<sup>th</sup> century (St. Damasus, † 384, and St. Ambrose) the canonization of the person. Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 147. In the case of Mary, the “translatio” (transferring the body from the house where she died to a worthy sepulchre) was done in the apocryphal narration in solemn procession by all the twelve apostles and the people of God in Jerusalem: obviously, the text had the aim to celebrate the holiness of the Mother of Jesus, and not the historical truth.

<sup>1285</sup> Cf. L. GAMBERO, “La Dormizione di Maria: Testimonianze di antichi Padri Orientali e celebrazione liturgica”, in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *L’Assunzione di Maria Madre di Dio*, p. 184, 187: the first sermon on the Assumption (most probably on the occasion on a feast in honour of this event) was held by patriarch Theodosius of Alexandria in 567; the Byzantine emperor Maurizius decreed the feast in the year 600. In the West, Pope Sergius introduced it at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>1286</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, “Hinführung”, p. 126: the then Cardinal commented the intention of the then Pope to close the Marian year with the feast of Assumption, directing the gaze of people towards “das grosse Zeichen der Hoffnung – auf die in Maria schon gerettete Menschheit, in der zugleich der Ort der Rettung, aller Rettung sichtbar wird”: mankind is already saved “in Mary”.

<sup>1287</sup> Cf. P. BARIGELLI - CALCARI, *L’ultimo desiderio nelle religioni*, p. 43.

<sup>1288</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, “L’autorivelazione di Maria a Lourdes e a Siracusa”, in *Madonna delle Lacrime* 57/7-8 (2010) 7.

<sup>1289</sup> Cf. M. G. MASCIARELLI, “Laici”, in *NDM*, p. 654.

<sup>1290</sup> Cf. B. FORTE, *Teologia della storia. Saggio sulla rivelazione, l’inizio e il compimento*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1991, p. 322-327.

<sup>1291</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 83, footnote 1: “l’appartenenza al Corpo di Cristo è [...] modulata, in tal modo che, in maniera assoluta e definitiva, ne fanno parte solo i beati in cielo”.

<sup>1292</sup> Cf. PIUS XII, Dogmatic bull *Munificentissimus Deus* (1/11/1950), DS 3903. This union which in the case of Jesus and Mary already now includes the body, is absolutely not to be understood in a sexual way. As every experience in heaven, it must be thought of as a perfectly joyous and exalting union, and immensely more holistic than a matrimonial union: a reciprocal indwelling. Concerning the question whether of all saints only Mary is in heaven with a glorified body, or whether her “singular” status concerns only the degree of glory and union, cf. S. M. PERRELLA, “L’Assunzione di Maria nella teologia post-conciliare. Contesto – fatto – “nexus mysteriorum” – significato”, in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *L’Assunzione di Maria Madre di Dio*, p. 119-129, 158: some theologians postulate for every human being a resurrection of a “spiritual” body right at the moment of death, refusing the idea of a “soul” separated from the body, which is a rather Greek pagan idea and not a Biblical one. This idea seems to come from the Protestant view of a non-temporal or eternized “Escaton”, and from the wish to see Mary not too distant from other Christians. The present author could

The Assumption of Mary with body and soul into heaven is the youngest Marian dogma based on Catholic and (partly) Orthodox tradition. It was proclaimed by Pius XII on the day of Allsaints<sup>1293</sup>, thus giving it an Ecclesiological frame,<sup>1294</sup> opening it to the mystery beyond definition. The proclamation was prompted by reasons as: affirmation of the reality of heaven, of the dignity of man, body and soul, of the importance of human life from conception till death and each act of love, hope and faith, as all these become immortal and of the faith in the final triumph of God.<sup>1295</sup> LG 68 presents her as “the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected” and “a sign of certain hope and comfort to the pilgrim People of God”. Pope Paul VI in his “Creed of the People of God” expresses the conviction that the heavenly Church is “gathered round Jesus and Mary in Paradise”<sup>1296</sup>. Concerning the death of the Virgin, John Paul II said in a General Audience that it is reasonable according to the testimonies from the early Church and according to the knowledge the Church has on how God used to act, to believe that Mary underwent death (as a personally enriching experience).<sup>1297</sup> The new relationship of Mary with all creatures is expressed in RM 41 by her often quoted patristic title “Queen of the Universe”<sup>1298</sup> and in explaining: “in her Assumption into heaven, Mary is as it were clothed by the whole reality of the Communion of Saints, and her very union with the Son in glory is wholly orientated towards the definite fullness of

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imagine a participation of all the saints in the glorified bodies of Jesus and Mary. The resurrection and assumption to heaven of any other body should be thought of at the Second Coming of Christ.

<sup>1293</sup> PIUS XII, Apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1/11/1950, in Latin and Italian in *Enchiridion delle Encicliche*, vol. 6, p. 1485-1521, n. 1931-1976; only in Latin in AAS 42 (1950) 753-771.

<sup>1294</sup> The dogma was proclaimed as a hope for all, and Pius XII prepared it by some encyclicals, first of all *Mystici corporis* (29/6/1943) on the Church, cf. A. AMATO, “Come la Chiesa cattolica è giunta alla definizione dogmatica dell’Assunzione di Maria”, in S. CECCHIN (ed.), *L’Assunzione di Maria Madre di Dio*, p. 57. Thus, the ecclesiological interpretation of the dogma seems very appropriate. Cf. also S. M. PERRELLA, “L’Assunzione di Maria nella teologia post-conciliare”, p. 78: “il Papa fissò [...] la definizione solenne del dogma al 1 novembre 1950, solennità di tutti i Santi, per evidenziare che questi sono chiamati a raggiungere la beata Vergine nella sua glorificazione nel Cristo Risorto.” Cf. also BENEDICT XVI, *Africae munus*, n. 97: “One can never be a Christian alone. The gifts given by the Lord to each – bishops, priests, deacons and religious, catechists and lay people – must all contribute to harmony, communion and peace in the Church herself and in society.”

<sup>1295</sup> The proclamation fell in a time of militant atheism/communism and rampant secularism/liberalism, time of public (partly justified or tolerated) prostitution, exploitation of the poor, use of drugs and violent criminality, child-abuse and socially abandoned children, torture and the destruction and poisoning of ecological systems, both in the nature and in the human body. Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 505 (-516). Through the increased knowledge of ecological systems, through the mass-media and phones, all these problems are today lively in the awareness of people. The dogma was not actually proclaimed to affirm a truth about Mary, for that was not contested. Pius XII hoped, however, that the dogma will induce an increase of love and devotion to Mary, which will bring about the Reign of Christ in the world. Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, “L’Assunzione di Maria nella teologia post-conciliare”, p. 78-79. It rather brought about a decline in the interest in the glorious Queen of Heaven, because the dogma was not explained in its anthropological importance. Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Pétitions internationales pour une définition dogmatique de la médiation et la corédemption”, in *Marianum* 58 (1996) 444-445: when the assumption was a disputed question, it was studied and preached on a lot. After the papal definition, editors were not interested in it again.

<sup>1296</sup> Sollemnis professio fidei, *Sollemni hac liturgia* (30/6/1968), second to last paragraph, in AAS 60 (1968) 433-446, in English in A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican Council II. More postconciliar documents*, St. Pauls, Mumbai 2000 (Vatican collection, vol. II), p. 394-395. This Creed was pronounced in a moment of great difficulty of the Church, to re-confirm the focal points of the Catholic faith. It has great doctrinal value; some theologians call it ‘almost extraordinary Magisterium’. Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 116-119.

<sup>1297</sup> Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienza generale *La dormizione della Madre di Dio* (25/6/1997), n. 2-5, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XX, 2 (1997), LEV, Città del Vaticano 1999, p. 1608-1610.

<sup>1298</sup> RM 41, quoting LG 59, quoting PIUS XII, Encyclical letter *Ad Caeli Reginam* (11/10/1954), which quotes S. John Damascene. J. G. ROTEN, “The theological and cultural image of Mary”, in E. PERETTO (ed.), *L’immagine teologica di Maria*, p. 116 quoted W. BEINERT et al., *Maria – eine ökumenische Herausforderung*, Pustet, Regensburg 1984, p. 75ff, who sustained in a very schematic and generalizing manner that Mary was “queen of heaven” from Trent to Vatican II, “archetype of the Church” from Vatican II till the 80’s, and “new woman” in the present.

the Kingdom when ‘God will be all in all.’” In the light of Mary as a sign of salvation for others also her privileges of grace are more clearly given to her for the sake of all.<sup>1299</sup>

Pope Francis uses the title of Mary “Queen of all creation” in his encyclical *Laudato si*, n. 241, to say with few words many things:

«Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power. Completely transfigured, she now lives with Jesus, and all creatures sing of her fairness. She is the Woman, “clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev 12:1). Carried up into heaven, she is the Mother and Queen of all creation. In her glorified body, together with the Risen Christ, part of creation has reached the fullness of its beauty. She treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19,51), and now understands the meaning of all things. Hence, we can ask her to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom.»

The present Magisterium stresses here that Mary, through her body glorified in heaven, has a special connection to the earth; that Mary in heaven experiences a certain “pain” in seeing human beings and the whole of creation suffering on earth; that the treasure of her heart is the life of Jesus; that she is able to help the faithful from heaven to acquire wisdom.

In the Original Constitutions, the Assumpta is not only the type of the Church, but the “prototype of the new creation in grace”. Her “crown of eternal glory” is also the crown of “union with God” and every child of God “hopes to share” in it, taking up the traditional view that she is a sign of hope for the faithful:

«ART. 15

On her death and assumption into heaven, she who is the prototype of the new creation in grace was taken into the heavenly union and given the crown of eternal glory and union with God, in which every true child of God and follower of Christ hopes to share. The Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary remained united in life and in death and then beyond death into eternity.»<sup>1300</sup>

The fact that Mary was assumed with her body is not underlined, but it is important. The human body is an instrument of communication and of relationship. As such it was involved in the union Mary built up with Christ and as such it was assumed into heaven. Mary, as the woman in Rev 12, has become a revelation of the greatness of what seems weak while being united with God. With that, her life has become a model of behaviour, an illustration of the teachings of Christ. The fact that Mary was “assumable”, gave to God the possibility to express in a visible way the greatness of his Love for man – not only the soul but also the human flesh. She has become the proof that the human vocation and desire to be image of God, to be like God (cf. Gen 1,26-27; 3,5), can be realized through loving obedience to the will of God. She has become the “Bride, the wife of the Lamb” (cf. Rev 21,9), displayed as the great City of God, place of eternal happiness in her “possession” of the Son who lives in her, her light and source of living water. (cf. Rev 21,10-22,5). The *causa finalis* of the union of the two Hearts of Jesus and Mary, i.e. the perfect redemption of

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<sup>1299</sup> Cf. also GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienza generale *Maria in prospettiva trinitaria* (10/1/1996), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIX,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, p. 48-49: “il significato autentico dei privilegi di Maria e dei suoi rapporti eccezionali con la Trinità: essi hanno lo scopo di renderla idonea a cooperare alla salvezza del genere umano. La grandezza incommensurabile della Madre del Signore rimane, pertanto, un dono dell’amore di Dio a tutti gli uomini... ‘grandi cose’... l’Onnipotente ha fatto in lei per l’umanità”. This ‘authentic significance’ of her privileges was always in the sub-conscience of the Church, e.g. when the dogma of Assumption was proclaimed on the day of Allsaints, but nowadays it became more stressed.

the Virgin, is to prepare a “place” for others, providing a perfect community of Love which offers its communion to all mankind. To enter into the union of Jesus and Mary is thus to enter into the Reign of God. Together they form the centre of union of all blessed souls and angels, being glorified in each other. The reward for union with Him given to the Assumpta, God wants to give it to the Church and to every man.

### 3.3.4.3. Vital influence on the faithful from heaven

#### a) The opinion of theologians on the vital influence of Mary on the faithful

The theological foundation for beginning a case of canonization in the Catholic Church is, apart from the conviction that there was heroic exercise of virtues or martyrdom, the “fama signorum”, the experience of many of receiving answer to their prayers, which then gives rise to the spontaneous recourse to the person in prayer, inspiration to imitate him and to venerate him.<sup>1301</sup> Mary has her own fame of capacity to help.

Mary as mother of all men or all Christians in a spiritual (and not just metaphorical or moral) motherhood, generating men actively to the supernatural life can be found in very early Fathers, as Justin († 165) and Ireneus († 202).<sup>1302</sup> It was the intuition of St. Justin, in the *Dialogue with Triphone*, and more explicit St. Ireneus in *Adversus Haereses*, that what was tied a knot by Adam with the “help” of a disobedient woman and a disobedient angel (serpent), *consequently* had to be untied by the new Adam with the help of an obedient woman and an obedient angel (Gabriel). According to R. Laurentin it is probable that the thought of Jesus being a new Adam, renewing all creation and maybe also the idea that Mary is the new Eve (which St. Paul saw in the Church, cf. 2 Cor 11,2-3), is already present in St. Luke, who follows the genealogy of Jesus back to “Adam, son of God” (cf. Lk 3,23-38), and who presents the faith and obedience of Mary in such a long narration. For St. Justin, the fact shows that it was in the plan of God to be so; for Ireneus the presence of Mary in the plan of salvation was necessary, and thus he does not refrain from calling Mary “cause of salvation for mankind”,<sup>1303</sup> taken up e.g. by the Byzantine and Ethiopian Church with the liturgical prayer “Most holy Mother of God, save us!”<sup>1304</sup> Already in the 6<sup>th</sup> century the title “Mediatrice” can be found for Mary in sermons of Fathers of the Church. Since the year 1921

<sup>1300</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>1301</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Le cause dei santi*, p. 389: norm 10, 1 of the *Normae servandae*.

<sup>1302</sup> Cf. T. F. OSSANNA, “Madre nostra III-VI” in *NDM*, p. 751, 753. On p. 751 Ossanna refers to IRENEUS, *Adversus haereses*, 4,33,11, in *PG* 7, 1080, and to JUSTIN, *Dialogue with Triphone*, in *PG* 6, 800.

<sup>1303</sup> IRENEUS, *Adversus haereses*, 5,19,1, in *PG* 7, 1775 A-1776 A. In the Fathers (Ireneus, Leo the Great), Mary is cause of salvation only based on her contribution for the Incarnation, i.e. by her acceptance in faith of the one who brings salvation. Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria sintesi di valori*, p. 52. For the parallel Mary-Eve, cf. IRENEUS, *Adversus haereses*, 3,22, in *PG* 7, 958-960. A thousand years later the theme was further developed to the understanding of Mary also as “helper similar to the man”. Cf. R. LAURENTIN, “Nuova Eva I”, in *NDM*, 916-918. The theologian noted on the last page that in the tradition, not only Mary was opposed to Eve, but every Christian soul, and especially holy women. And the observation that the coming of Christ has also reversed the first story of Eve being created by God out of the body of the man; the new Adam was created by God out of the body of the woman. Not only the obedience of Mary restored the man-equal-dignity of women, but also God’s way of acting. May one expect in the second coming of Christ a foundation of a new relationship of complementary union of man and woman in God, after all the destruction different ideologies have caused in the last century?

<sup>1304</sup> Cf. G. GHARIB, “Oriente cristiano”, in *NDM*, p. 934, 937. It shall be repeated here – “ad nauseam” – that it is only Christ/God who brings salvation to mankind. Only relatively speaking, as bearer of Christ, also the Church and Mary realize salvation in those who are in relationship with them. Their union with Christ is the foundation of their cooperation with Christ – without him, they could not do anything (cf. Jn 15,4-5).

the popular acclamation as “Mediatrice of all graces” has become a topic of systematic research.<sup>1305</sup> How to express her influence? Many people are still confused in their concept of “graces”, thinking first of all of miracles. Consequently, the “mediation” of Mary would concern the decision on who shall receive a miracle. For more enlightened theologians, the “mediation” is equivalent to her spiritual motherhood.<sup>1306</sup> T. Ossanna underlines that the relationship with Mary is marked not by her Lordship, as in the case of Christ, but by her motherhood with which she encourages the children to be responsible and mature in the use of their freedom and their vocation; she accepts to give life and to take care of this new life as a gift entrusted to her.<sup>1307</sup> But like “heart”, also the “motherhood” is a rather homiletic term borrowed from the biblical or mystical language, not from the biological/physical level of language: Mary did never bear all the faithful physically in her womb. With respect to the biological motherhood, the metaphysical understanding of motherhood has operated a new interpretation of the term (adopting the sociological-psychological understanding of motherhood combined with actions as accepting, caring, communicating, educating, however bound to the experience of feeling the growth of the child for several months in the womb, and to the happy-painful experience of childbirth), which should be clearly defined in dogmatics, and not taken for granted.

An interesting attempt to express the decisive influence of Mary in the life of the members of the Church can be seen in H.-U. von Balthasar and in H. Mühlen<sup>1308</sup>. Von Balthasar wrote in his comment to RM (n. 45): based on the words of the dying Christ, the ‘personal and interior holiness (Mary) and the hierarchic, visible form of the Church (the apostles) are merged into one another at the cross’.<sup>1309</sup> H. Mühlen concluded from the fact that Mary was created in view of Christ as the beginning of a new creation that Mary transmits the “Gliedschaftscharakter”, the character of being member of Christ to those baptised which would cancel the “original sin”, the mark transmitted by Eve.<sup>1310</sup> The thesis of Mühlen that assigned to Mary the function of determining the membership in the Church of Christ was not taken up, but theologians rather talked of her motherhood in the sense

<sup>1305</sup> The proclamation of Mary Mediatrice as dogma was so far rejected. R. LAURENTIN mentions that the Blessed Virgin has millions of titles and underlines the ambiguity of the term “Mediatrice”, its many meanings, of which only some apply to Mary. Cf. “Pétitions internationales”, p. 429-443. I. Calabuig expressed the opinion that the three titles Co-redemptrix, Mediatrice, Advocate, promoted by the American movement of Marc Miravalle, are spiritual titles which need no dogmatisation. The proclamation of a dogma should not have the intention to honour a saint, but dogmas are proclaimed in order to give answer to an actual heresy. He concluded his speech with the observation that the movement of Miravalle seems to be based on alleged visions of the Canadian “Marie-Paule”. Quoting M. BOSQUART, *Le Rédempteur et la Co-Rédemptrice. Éléments pour servir à la contemplation d'un mystère*, Famille des fils et filles de Marie, Québec 1986, he proves that “Marie-Paule” is seen by the followers as an exclusive type of “incarnation” of the Mother of God. Cf. I. CALABUIG, “Riflessione sulla richiesta della definizione dogmatica di ‘Maria corredentrice, mediatrice, avvocatrice’”, in *Marianum* 61 (1999) esp. p. 149-150, and 174-175.

<sup>1306</sup> Cf. S. MEO, “Mediatrice”, p. 828.

<sup>1307</sup> Cf. T. F. OSSANNA, “Madre nostra III-VI” in *NDM*, p. 753-755.

<sup>1308</sup> Professor of systematic theology in Paderborn in the 70’s. After the publication of “Una mystica persona” in 1964, H.-U. von Balthasar criticised the lack of Mary in the work; in a second edition, H. Mühlen added an ample chapter on Mary and the mediation of the Spirit. Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, p. 269-274.

<sup>1309</sup> Cf. H.-U. v. BALTHASAR, „Kommentar“, p. 140: „innere personale Heiligkeit (Maria) und sichtbare Amtsgestalt der Kirche (die Apostel) werden am Kreuz ineinandergefügt“. The correlation and interdependence of Peter (as personification of the ministry) and Mary (incarnating the whole church in her receptivity and sponsality towards God) is an old idea of Balthasar: cf. p. 51-52 in *Abbatere i bastioni*, Borla, Torino 1966, translation of *Schleifung der Bastionen: Von der Kirche in dieser Zeit*, Johannes, Einsiedeln 1952. There he sees John, personification of the saints of all times, holding on to Peter with one hand and to Mary with the other, as uniting the two (Petrine and Marian) aspects in the Church: it shows his rather spiritual than dogmatic view.

<sup>1310</sup> Cf. H. MÜHLEN, *Una mystica persona: eine Person in vielen Personen*, Oldenbourg, München 1968<sup>3</sup>, 492-493.

of a sustaining function. E.g. ARCIC II presented Mary's motherhood as a personal gift of Christ to every man.<sup>1311</sup> F. Franzi wrote of priests witnessing to her help in their pastoral work.<sup>1312</sup> With Christ the King, Mary the Queen, is leading the People of God as the (ideal) OT-kings, as point of reference, as persons fixed on God and instituted by God to incarnate values, inspiring and drawing people (together) to good actions, calling the people to the worship of God.<sup>1313</sup> In the same line, Barigelli-Calcarì sees the glorified Woman participating in a special way in the Second Coming, working for all her children to accept to be "in" Christ and to be like him.<sup>1314</sup>

Concerning the relationship of Mary with the Holy Eucharist, St. Ephrem of Syria brought Mary into parallelism with the Church who gives to the faithful the living Bread: 'Mary has given us the comforting bread instead of the bread of sweat given us by Eve.'<sup>1315</sup> Other modern theologians, e.g. Perrella also follow in this direction.<sup>1316</sup>

The former Cardinal J. Ratzinger, in the year 1980, published a reflection on the function of Mariology for ecclesiology, showing that Mary gives to the faithful a deeper understanding of the Body of Christ. The Church is more than the people of God, in it lives the mystery of motherhood and spousal love. The Church is that "Body of Christ", that "flesh", which stands in the spiritual tension of love, in the dynamism of a oneness, which does not annihilate the standing before each other. This means: especially the Eucharistic, Christological mystery of the Church, expressed in the word of the "Body of Christ", remains in its just measure only if it contains the Marian mystery: the handmaid who listens, who – freed in grace – pronounces her Fiat and thus becomes bride and body,<sup>1317</sup> giving a personal face to the Church Virgin-Mother-Bride.<sup>1318</sup>

<sup>1311</sup> Cf. ARCIC II (ed.), *Mary, grace and hope*, n. 26-27, p. 31: "Jesus' dying words give Mary a motherly role in the Church and encourage the community of disciples to embrace her as a spiritual mother. [...] Just] as the first 'woman' was taken from Adam's 'rib' (Genesis 2:22, *pleura* LXX) and became the mother of all the living (Genesis 3:20), so the 'woman' Mary is, on a spiritual level, the mother of all who gain true life from the water and blood that flow from the side (Greek *pleura*, literally 'rib') of Christ (19:34) and from the Spirit that is breathed out". Despite the agreement on the spiritual motherhood of Mary, the document notes that Anglicans tend to see Mary more just as a model and example, while Roman Catholics give more prominence to the "ongoing ministry of Mary in the economy of grace and the communion of saints." Very carefully, the document formulates: "We together agree [...] to join with her as one indeed not dead, but truly alive in Christ. In doing so we walk together as pilgrims in communion with Mary, Christ's foremost disciple". *Ibidem*, n. 65, p. 70-71. After a long introduction on intercessory prayer being made always "in Christ", and quoting James 5, 13-15 (inviting the believers to ask others to pray for them), the document gives the rule that "liturgical forms of prayer are addressed to God: they do not address prayer [in the sense of worship: 'you are great, you are holy!'] 'to' the saints, but rather ask them to 'pray for us'." *Ibidem*, n. 70, p. 76. Maybe this admission to see Mary as a fellow pilgrim on the way to God, and the possibility to request intercession from saints in liturgy, shows an evangelical openness to accept a positive and helpful relationship of believers with the saints in heaven.

<sup>1312</sup> Because of her deep union with Christ, many theologians and popes emphasized the special relationship Mary has with the male clergy. Many aspired to a mystic-spousal relationship with her, consecrating/entrusting to her all their spiritual children, their parishes, their apostolic and sacramental actions, and are witnessing to her help. This does not mean that Mary has part in the ministerial priesthood, but it underlines the reciprocal help, respect and cooperation that should exist between the ministerial priesthood and the People of God, detainers of the universal or common priesthood, kingship and ministry of prophecy, and represented by Mother Mary. Cf. F. FRANZI, "Sacerdoti I-IV", in *NDM*, p. 1105-1112.

<sup>1313</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, "Maria regina: significato teologico attualizzato", in *Maria presenza viva nel popolo di Dio*, Monfortane, Roma 1980, p. 61-62. It is to be noted that this is also the ideal for the Igbo "king".

<sup>1314</sup> Cf. P. BARIGELLI-CALCARI, *L'ultimo desiderio nelle religioni*, p. 174.

<sup>1315</sup> Cf. P. YOUSIF, "La Vierge Marie et l'Eucharistie chez S. Ephrem de Nisibe et dans la patristique syriaque antérieure", in *Études Mariales* 36-37 (1979-1980) 58. Translation into English by the author.

<sup>1316</sup> Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 431-433 treating the Marian dimension of the Holy Eucharist, emphasizes the aspects that Mary is the ontological (immanent) origin of that human body of Christ which is present in the Eucharist, and that she is a model of the humility which is proper before the Eucharistic mystery.

<sup>1317</sup> Cf. J. RATZINGER, "Erwägungen", p. 23-25: "Kirche ist mehr als 'Volk', mehr als Struktur und Aktion: In ihr lebt das Geheimnis der Mutterschaft und der bräutlichen Liebe". "Die Kirche ist der Leib, das Fleisch Christi in der

Post-Vatican II theologians try to counter weigh the former Marian maximalism, mariologies in which Mary appeared occupying the role of the Holy Spirit (or Christ).<sup>1319</sup> Thus they frequently emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit in dynamics involving Mary.<sup>1320</sup> The Spirit worked in Mary the Incarnation, presented by Matthew evoking the Genesis when the Spirit hovered over the waters, and presented by Luke evoking the cloud of the Exodus, overshadowing the tent of the ark (cf. Ex 40,35, Nm 9,18.22), and presenting the Annunciation as a proto-Pentecostal event.<sup>1321</sup> According to Perrella, Mary can be called the human memory (sustained by “the Memory”, the Holy Spirit) of the Church, as she conserves all about Christ in her heart.<sup>1322</sup> Theologians as J. C. R. García Paredes point out that the Holy Spirit continues to work in and through the Virgin, urging her to care for the brothers of her Son.<sup>1323</sup>

Mary exercises her influence, similar to Christ, often through living persons. Already St. Ambrose wished that the soul of Mary may be in every person, to magnify the Lord; the spirit of Mary be in each, to rejoice in God.<sup>1324</sup> The medieval theologian and Cistercian monk Alan de Lille († ca. 1203) was convinced of the necessary support she gives to the faith of Christians, “amending” it with her own faith.<sup>1325</sup> St. Teresa of Ávila reports a vision of God the Father, in which the same told her that he gave her as a gift his own Son, the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.<sup>1326</sup> Because of

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geistlichen Spannung der Liebe [...] also in der Dynamik einer Einheit, die das Gegenübersein nicht aufhebt. Das bedeutet: Gerade das eucharistisch-christologische Mysterium der Kirche, das sich in dem Wort vom ‘Leib Christi’ ansagt, bleibt nur dann in seinem rechten Mass, wenn es das Marianische Geheimnis einschliesst: die hörende Magd, die – in der Gnade frei geworden – ihr Fiat spricht und darin Braut und so Leib wird”. The then cardinal refers at the end to K. WOITYŁA, *Zeichen des Widerspruchs*, Herder, Freiburg 1979, p. 50.

<sup>1318</sup> Cf. P. MARTUCELLI, *Origine e natura della chiesa. La prospettiva storico-donnistica di Joseph Ratzinger*, Lang, Frankfurt 2001, 50-51. J. GALOT, “Maria”, in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia*, p. 840, col. 1 discusses only the typology of the simple motherhood: The “tipologia Maria-chiesa [...] sono] due realtà implicate l’una nell’altra. Nel battesimo la chiesa genera il cristiano, tuttavia Maria è la prima, in seno alla chiesa, a generarlo. Qui si può anche dire che la maternità di Maria apporta alla maternità della chiesa un volto personale [...] essa rende la chiesa più completamente madre”. The document of the ARCIC also mentions it: “Mary is seen as the personification of Israel, now giving birth to the Christian community [...] It] is difficult to speak of the Church without thinking of Mary, the Mother of the Lord, as its archetype and first realisation.” ARCIC II (ed.), *Mary, grace and hope*, n. 27, p. 32.

<sup>1319</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, p. 261-265.

<sup>1320</sup> As the three divine persons are one, the “consecration” of Mary to the mission and person of the Son is at the same time a dedication to God the Father and his will, and a consecration to the Holy Spirit, such that one may speak of Mary being “possessed” or indwelt by the Holy Spirit in the most intense possible way for a mere creature; in her the divine Spirit manifests his power. She is inhabited by the Spirit, immersed in the Spirit, inspired, animated and sustained by the Spirit in all her virtues. It is the Holy Spirit who unites Mary to Jesus. This idea is developed in the Catholic groups of Renewal in the Holy Spirit, cf. A. FAVALE, “Movimenti ecclesiali”, in *NDM*, p. 873-874, or in H. MÜHLEN, *Una Mystica Persona*, p. 586 in the Italian edition, Città Nuova, Roma 1968. Also De Fiores argues: the Bible presents the Spirit as the Bond of Love between Christ and the Church, thus, the Spirit is also the Bond of Love uniting Jesus with Mary. Cf. S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia contemporanea*, p. 281.

<sup>1321</sup> Cf. A. LANGELLA, “Spirito Santo”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 1137.

<sup>1322</sup> Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 95.

<sup>1323</sup> Cf. J. C. R. GARCÍA PAREDES, “Vita Consacrata”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 1278.

<sup>1324</sup> Cf. AMBROSIUS, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*, 2,26, in *PL* 15, 1561. Cf. also E. GIANNARELLI, “Maria ‘exemplum mulieris’ nell’epoca patristica”, in M. FARINA – M. MARCHI (ed.), *Maria nell’educazione di Gesù Cristo e del cristiano*, vol. 1, p. 205-218, of which p. 205-207 are comments to the quoted comment of St. Ambrose to Luke.

<sup>1325</sup> ALAN DE LILLE, “Without the faith of the glorious Virgin, the one who seeks Christ could only err, not progress.” (“senza la fede della gloriosa Vergine, colui che cerca Cristo potrebbe solo errare, non progredire.”) in *PL* 210, 91 A; In Italian quoted by L. GAMBERO, *Maria nel pensiero*, p. 228.

<sup>1326</sup> Cf. A. ÁLVAREZ-SUÁREZ, “Santa Teresa d’Ávila: una vita all’insegna della Vergine Maria”, in L. BORIELLO – L. GAETANI (ed.), *Per una mariologia Carmelitana*, p. 178, referring to “Relazioni 25”, the first writing of the saint. God the Father requested of Teresa something in exchange for these gifts.



her union with Christ and relationship with all human beings, Mary became for Edith Stein the “core” of the Church.<sup>1327</sup> Generally, the Carmelitan spirituality includes the wish to “be” Mary: both to “be” Mary for Jesus and to “be” Mary in the relationship with humanity. J. Castellano Cervera sees this as valid for the whole Church.<sup>1328</sup> St. Louis M. Grignion sought to make Mary “revive” in the thoughts and actions of people.<sup>1329</sup> The effective involvement of Mary (directly or through persons who experience her guidance) in the missionary action of the Church is very obvious, especially in the case of the Christianisation of Latin America and in times of crisis and war in Europe.<sup>1330</sup> F. Asti sees especially some women (who in their femininity have an additional aspect of union) mystically united with Mary.<sup>1331</sup>

#### b) Magisterial confirmation

Mary has from heaven a “salutary influence on men” (LG 60). Pope Paul VI solemnly proclaimed the title of “Mother of the Church” for Mary,<sup>1332</sup> a title which intended to explain her relationship with the single members of the Church. Why only the single members? LG 8-9 presents the Church as the people of God, a community in which the life of the Risen Lord circulates. The “people of God” in the Catholic understanding, are those who, united, profess their faith in Christ according to the Christian doctrine, participate in the sacraments and obey the sacred ministers (in their teaching of morality and dogma)<sup>1333</sup>. Mary as mother of the Church, understood as a communion of people, is a fitting and meaningful title, making her singularity a sign and showing her relationship of love and guidance of the faithful (cf. LG 62). However, LG 1-4 says that the Church is an instrumental mystery of the grace of God, LG 6-7 contemplates the mystical union of the Church with Christ. The Church is “in Christ, a sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of

<sup>1327</sup> Edith Stein defined Mary the “origin and heart of the Church”. Cf. D. DEL GAUDIO, “Maria modello”, p. 283. Obviously, this is an expression of spirituality, not a dogmatic one, trying to express the intimate relationship of Mary with the Church.

<sup>1328</sup> Cf. A. ATTARD, “Devozione e riflessione Mariana nel secolo XX. I Carmelitani Scalzi”, in L. BORIello – L. GAETANI (ed.), *Per una mariologia Carmelitana*, p. 391, referring to the Blessed Mother Maria Candida dell’Eucharistia († 1949) for the wish to give to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament the attention which Mary gave to him on earth, representing the Mother for him, and for the necessity to “be” Mary for mankind in p. 394 to J. CASTELLANO CERVERA, “Le grandi linee della spiritualità mariana della Chiesa alla luce dell’enciclica ‘Redemptoris Mater’”, in (s. ed.) *La spiritualità mariana della Chiesa alla luce dell’enciclica “Redemptoris Mater”*, Teresianum, Roma 1988, p. 193: “Una Chiesa [...] che sia Maria per l’umanità d’oggi. Una Chiesa che renda trasparente Cristo e lo doni agli uomini del nostro tempo.” Attard writes further in p. 396: “Siffatto rapporto Maria-cristiano è dovuto al fatto che ella è presente a noi e in noi. Ora, il tema della “presenza” di Maria divenne una caratteristica dominante nel post-concilio e riveste, tuttora, una particolare attualità ed importanza indiscusse, sia perché chiarisce il ruolo della Vergine nella storia della salvezza, sia per il contenuto antropologico recepito nella cultura personalistica. [...] La relazionalità, dunque, è vista quale costitutiva dell’essere della Vergine. Infatti, la Madre del Signore vive nella mutua inclusione con Dio, fino a far della sua vita un vivere pericoreticamente.” On p. 398 he quotes the Manual of Formation, *Ratio institutionis OCD*, 1992: “Con l’intima unione all’azione dello Spirito Santo, la Vergine Maria [...] si coinvolge ed evolve nella vita spirituale di ognuno di noi”.

<sup>1329</sup> Cf. L. M. DE MONTFORT, *The secret of Mary*, TAN Books, Rockford (IL)1998, n. 55. Cf. also T. F. OSSANNA, “Modello evangelico”, in *NDM*, p. 865: “far vivere Maria nei nostri pensieri e nelle nostre azioni”.

<sup>1330</sup> Cf. the ample examples in C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 551, 577-578.

<sup>1331</sup> Cf. F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 312, on the Medieval female monachism: “Le monache vivono intensamente la loro comunione con la Vergine Maria, perché essa è esperta del sentire femminile sotto ogni punto di vista. Maria infatti vive l’amore di Dio come figlia, vergine, sposa e madre. [...] Dal aspetto erotico a quello della carità perfetta [nella relazione con Cristo], le monache medievali individuano la presenza di Maria come necessaria per la loro crescita umana e spirituale.”

<sup>1332</sup> Cf. PAUL VI, *Allocutio ad Conciliares Patres, Post duos menses* (21/11/1964), in *AAS* 56 (1964) 1015-1016, cf. LG 53, 61.

<sup>1333</sup> Cf. the definition of Church in the Catechism of Pius X.

communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race [...]. Established by Christ as a communion of life, love and truth, it is taken up by him also as the instrument for the salvation of all” (LG, 1; 9, cf. SC, 26) Where the Church is seen as instrument of salvation in mystical union with Christ, Mary becomes the icon/image of the Church; she can no longer be called Mother of the Church but *she represents Mother Church*.<sup>1334</sup>

St. John Paul II took up the Eve-Mary-parallel, calling her intimately associated to the “new Adam”.<sup>1335</sup> In almost all the comments of John Paul II to Jn 19,25-27, passage on which he founded his motto “Totus tuus”, he illustrated the will and testament of Jesus in giving a special responsibility for man to Mary, given by Christ to all as mother.<sup>1336</sup> The spiritual mother is a gift of Christ to man in the Church and in the Eucharist in which the faithful live the memorial of the death of the Crucified.<sup>1337</sup> In John Paul II, the faithful “receive” Mary, i.e. they should give attention to her.<sup>1338</sup> In receiving Mary, the faithful receive also the one whom she brings with her: Christ is offered by Mary to man in the Church as a gift, as he entrusted himself to Mary to be given out.<sup>1339</sup> The Holy Eucharist is at the heart of the life of the Church and as John Paul II saw Mary at the foundation of the Church in general, in an *Angelus Domini* at the Feast of Corpus Christi, he proclaimed her virginal and maternal life as being at the root of the Eucharist, as the Holy Spirit made her flesh a temple, her heart an altar, because of her faith and love. He concludes: ‘Every Mass brings us into an intimate communion with her’.<sup>1340</sup> That is why the Church constantly encourages her members and especially priests, to seek and build up a personal relationship with the Mother of God: in order to share her faith, to learn from her to say a perfect Yes to God, to learn

<sup>1334</sup> Cf. B. GHERARDINI, “Chiesa”, in *NDM*, p. 318.

<sup>1335</sup> RM 24. This parallel is recalled and explained amply in IDEM, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 11, but it is mainly geared to explaining the essential importance of Mary, and not her practical influence on the faithful. Christ is the new Adam, having assumed the nature of the first Adam; Mary assumes the mystery of the woman, which has its beginning in Eve. The Incarnation of Christ is the essence of the New Covenant, the redemption. Mary is the first redeemed, the New Covenant had its beginning in her. She is a receiver of the Covenant from God, similar to Abraham and Moses: she has the first place in the covenant she received.

<sup>1336</sup> Cf. RM 23, and cf. RM 45, and cf. IDEM, *Salvifici doloris*, n. 26, and cf. IDEM, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n.57; cf. LG 58-59.

<sup>1337</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n. 57.

<sup>1338</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 55: the faithful “receive” Mary, who has anticipated the Eucharistic faith of the Church.

<sup>1339</sup> Cf. IDEM, Apostolic letter “sub plumbo datae” *Incarnationis mysterium* (29/11/1998), n. 11, in AAS 91 (1999) 129-143. (The letter has a special dignity, as it grants the indulgences for the Jubilee-year 2000.)

<sup>1340</sup> IDEM, *Angelus Domini La vita verginale e materna di Maria è alla radice dell'Eucaristia* (5/6/1983), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VI,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1983, p. 1446-1447: “Alla radice dell'eucaristia c'è dunque la vita verginale e materna di Maria [...] il suo cammino di fede e di amore, che fece, per opera dello Spirito Santo, della sua carne un tempio, del suo cuore un altare [...] ogni Messa ci pone in comunione intima con lei, la Madre”. The pronouncement belongs to a series of 39 *Angelus Domini* dedicated particularly to Mary, from 1<sup>st</sup> January till mid December of the special year of redemption, 1983. Cf. also BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the 16<sup>th</sup> world day of the sick* (11/1/2008): “One cannot contemplate Mary without being attracted by Christ and one cannot look at Christ without immediately perceiving the presence of Mary. There is an indissoluble link between the Mother and the Son generated in her womb by the work of the Holy Spirit, and this link we perceive in a mysterious way in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as the Fathers of the Church and theologians have pointed out from the early centuries onwards.” Cf. IDEM, *Angelus Domini* (11/9/2005): “When we receive Holy Communion, like Mary and united to her, we too clasp the wood that Jesus with his love transformed into an instrument of salvation”. Concerning the “presence” of Mary in the Holy Eucharist, it may be said that Christ is *substantially and ontologically* present in the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Spirit and the heavenly Father are also *substantially* present, without “being” the bread, Mary is *in a special way mystically* present. Her presence and the fact that the Holy Eucharist brings people into communion with her is essentially different from the mystical presence and communion of all the saints in heaven with the people of God on earth, as this Body was created in her and by her acceptance, and because she is present with her own body like Christ. The question of the presence of Mary in the Holy Eucharist is very interesting but also complicated. This consequence of the union of the Two Hearts, which belongs to the sacramental theology, shall here be only mentioned.

how to pray and adore Christ in the school of Mary<sup>1341</sup> and to form one's apostolic action according to her perfect model. She, on her side, continuously cares for all the "brothers and sisters of her Son".<sup>1342</sup>

Mary has not received directly the *apostolic* mission, as John Paul II stresses, and the Church is built by Christ on the apostles.<sup>1343</sup> Apostles and their successors are the official representatives of Christ. Where Christ is present in person, the representative is not needed in his function as representative. But even if present and not in need of representatives, Jesus alone, the "head" of the Church, cannot be called the beginning of whole Church which is also "people", "assembly" of God, founded in order to assemble the children of God together. Christ and Mary the first disciple, are together a complete seed of the Church, a successful beginning of the new humanity which responds to the project of God.<sup>1344</sup>

As spiritual mother of the holiness of the children of God, Mary has to care for them in spiritual and also material needs.<sup>1345</sup> As God gives her this responsibility he also gives her the grace to accomplish from heaven her task to help, encourage, correct and counsel, and thus to cooperate "by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Saviour's work of restoring supernatural life to souls [...] until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect".<sup>1346</sup> Mary supports and protects the fraternal love among the Christians by giving them that motherly love which human beings need to

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<sup>1341</sup> Cf. innumerable interventions of Popes, bishops and saints throughout history, e.g. Pío X, Enciclica *Ad diem illum* (2 febbraio 1904), in *Enchiridion delle Encicliche*, Pio X, Benedetto XV, IV, EDB, Bologna 1998, n. 19, p. 21-22, JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor hominis*, n. 2, 6, 22, 42; IDEM, Udiienza generale *Maria e il valore della donna* (29/11/1995), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVII,2, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1998, p. 1279, IDEM, Messaggio all'Ordine del Carmelo *Il ricco patrimonio del Carmelo divenuto nel tempo un tesoro per tutta la Chiesa* (25/3/2001), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XXIV,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2003, p. 600; IDEM, Udiienza generale *Presenza di Maria all'origine della Chiesa* (6/11/1995), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVII,2, p. 307, IDEM, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n.53; BENEDICT XVI, Address at the Lenten meeting, first answer: "Therefore, let us learn from Mary and speak personally with the Lord [...] Mary guides us at a school of prayer in personal and profound contact with God." IDEM, *Homily in the pastoral visit to Loreto on the occasion of the Agorà of Italian youths* (2/9/2007): "Let us look above all at Mary. At her school, we too, like her, can experience that 'yes' of God to humanity". IDEM, Address at the recitation of the Holy Rosary and meeting with priests, religious, deacons and seminarians in Brazil (12/5/2007), n. 1: "Mary Most Holy [...] is for us a school of faith destined to guide us and give us strength on the path that leads us to the Creator of Heaven and Earth. The Pope has come to Aparecida [an apparition place of Mary] with great joy so as to say to you first of all: 'Remain in the school of Mary.' Take inspirations from her teachings, seek to welcome and to preserve in your hearts the enlightenment that she, by divine mandate, sends from on high." IDEM, *Angelus Domini* (26/8/2007): "We must work to be little, that is, humble of heart like Jesus, like Mary [...]. She was the first, following her Son, to take the way of the Cross and she was taken up to Heaven in glory [...]. Let us ask her to guide us in our daily decisions".

<sup>1342</sup> Cf. RM 38. It is to be noted that John Paul II introduced into the relationship Christ-Mary-Church usually the person and the work of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>1343</sup> Cf. e.g. RM 26.

<sup>1344</sup> Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udiienza Generale *Maria nell'esperienza spirituale della Chiesa* (15 November 1995) in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII,2, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1983, p. 1123. Cf. also BENEDICT XVI, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22/2/2007), n. 33, in AAS 99 (2007) 104-180, recalling the "just" Proposal 4 of the Synodal Fathers, which sees Mary inaugurating the participation of the Church in the sacrifice of the Saviour.

<sup>1345</sup> GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udiienza Generale *Influsso di Maria nella vita della Chiesa* (22/11/1995), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII,2, p. 1183: the Mother "prova per le sofferenze dell'umanità una viva compassione. Tale compassione [...] si traduce in un aiuto efficace e concreto di fronte alle miserie materiali e morali dell'umanità".

<sup>1346</sup> RM 22, quoting LG 61 and 62. Cf. IDEM, Udiienza generale *Influsso di Maria*, p. 1181: talking of the "immensa ricchezza spirituale che Maria comunica alla Chiesa con il suo esempio e la sua intercessione", hence also by her being. Someone may oppose that Mary in heaven has no more hope and faith, as she has the beatific vision of God. However, even if her faith and hope are already fulfilled, it does not mean that she cannot strengthen someone who is still on the pilgrimage of faith on earth. Rather, seeing her faith and hope fulfilled, she is the more to be trusted when encouraging her children on earth to imitate the faith and hope she had during her life.

become mature, in self-confidence and capacity to love others in turn.<sup>1347</sup> With her faith and motherhood serving the members of the Body of Christ, Mary is a person inserted in the mission of the Church. According to RM, Mary

«belongs also to the mystery of the Church from the beginning, from the day of the Church's birth. At the basis of what the Church has been from the beginning, and of what she must continually become from generation to generation, [...] we find the one 'who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord' (Lk. 1:45). It is precisely Mary's faith which marks the beginning of the new and eternal Covenant of God with man in Jesus Christ; this heroic faith of hers 'precedes' the apostolic witness of the Church, and ever remains in the Church's heart hidden like a special heritage of God's revelation. All those who [...] accept the apostolic witness of the Church share in that mysterious inheritance, and in a sense share in Mary's faith.»<sup>1348</sup>

The Church wishes to unite all in Christ, in "the faith which Mary professed at the Annunciation".<sup>1349</sup> John Paul II believed in a special presence of the faith of Mary in the ordained ministers.<sup>1350</sup> The Balthasarian idea of Mary, icon of holiness (not only of faith as in the Marian Encyclical), as a complementary element to the apostolic-petrine element of the Church, appeared in "Mulieris dignitatem".<sup>1351</sup>

In the Apostolic letter *Salvifici doloris*, n. 26, John Paul II expressed his faith on how Christ works with Mary:

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<sup>1347</sup> Cf. the first part of the half sentence: IDEM, Udienza generale *Presenza di Maria all'origine*, p. 305, and the second part cf. RM 45. Of course she does it also by intercession, cf. RM 44.

<sup>1348</sup> RM 27. In RM, the Church is born at Pentecost.

<sup>1349</sup> RM 28. In letters to religious congregations which are dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the former Pope individuated the place for the assembly of all in the Heart of Jesus. Cf. IDEM, Lettera ai Missionari del Sacro Cuore (1 settembre 2004), in OR 144 (11/11/2004) 8: original in French, the Italian translation of the OR reads: "Padre Chevalier considerava il Sacro Cuore di Gesù come il luogo di incontro di Dio con l'uomo. In effetti [...] è nel cuore di Gesù che l'umanità si riconcilia con Dio". Cf. IDEM, Lettera alla Congregazione di Gesù e Maria (27 febbraio 1993), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVI,1, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1995, 405, on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, "'il quale contiene il cuore della sua Madre santa e di tutti i santi'". The quoted work of St. Jean Eudes is *Coeur admirable*, III,2.

<sup>1350</sup> Cf. e.g. PATRUM CONCILIARIUM *Orbis Nuntium. Acta Synodalia*, I,1, 254, quoted by GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienza generale *Presenza di Maria nel Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II* (13/12/1995), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII,2, 1367: the Fathers of the Vatican II Council, as "apostolic body", felt united with Mary in prayer. Cf. RM 26: Mary is "present" with those who received the apostolic mission, as the one who believed. IDEM did not underline that the Church was founded on the faith of Peter, but on the faith of Mary, a faith "far more enlightened" than "the faith of the disciples who fled", RM 18, cf. also n. 28. Cf. also IDEM, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, n.58: the Church unites with Christ in the Eucharist, making the spirit of Mary her own. The imitation of Mary by the Church is most visible in her attitudes of prayer, which are eagerly copied by the faithful: listening to the Word and keeping it; praising and thanking God; manifesting Christ to others; generating-nourishing-loving attention to Christ (in the souls of others); interceding for those in need; offering Christ to the Father and uniting herself to the offering; imploring the coming of the Lord (Jesus or the Spirit), watching and waiting. Cf. CDWDS, *Orientations and proposals*, n. 9.

<sup>1351</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 27. It refers to LG 65 and 63, where Mary is called model of virtues and type of the Church. The document actually surpassed the Council, talking of a "hierarchy of holiness", where both the apostles and Mary are involved. In footnote 55 JOHN PAUL II quoted himself concerning this topic: Allocuzione ai Cardinali e ai Prelati della Curia Romana *Annunciata la pubblicazione di un'Enciclica nel XX anniversario della "Populorum Progressio"* (22/12/1987), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, X,3, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1988, p. 1483: "Questo profilo Mariano è altrettanto – se non lo è di più – fondamentale e caratterizzante per la Chiesa quanto il profilo apostolico e petrino, al quale è profondamente unito [...]. La dimensione Mariana della Chiesa antecede quella petrina, pur essendole strettamente unita e complementare." DE FIORES, in his comment to "Mulieris dignitatem", sees in the "hierarchy of holiness" a type of alternative for women to the ministerial priesthood reserved for men. S. DE FIORES, *Maria nella teologia*, p. 576. A female ministry of "bearer of faith and holiness" cannot be *instituted* on earth, since the Church does not proclaim any person as a saint unless the person has already died. However, the Pope recognized the important part many women have been playing in the past in the transmission of faith. Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 27. The Balthasarian 'Marian – Petrine principle' is criticised by M. PERRONI in "Principio Mariano – principio Petrino", p. 547-553.

«The Divine Redeemer wishes to penetrate the soul of every sufferer through the heart of his holy Mother, the first and the most exalted of all the redeemed. [He conferred on her a new motherhood from the Cross, ...] so that every individual, during the pilgrimage of faith, might remain, together with her, closely united to him unto the Cross.»

The “heart” of Mary entering the soul of the faithful, means her will, her virtues, and her love of God forming that soul. Her motherhood can be called a sharing of her personal graces with all the members of the Body of Christ of whom she is the first member. In “her new motherhood in the Spirit, Mary embraces each and every one in the Church and embraces each and every one *through* the Church.”<sup>1352</sup> According to the new post-conciliar attention to the Holy Spirit, the author of RM stresses that the “saving influence” of the Virgin on the faithful “is sustained by the Holy Spirit”.<sup>1353</sup> Mary, by her virginal<sup>1354</sup> love of God and mankind remains an ‘instrument of Jesus’<sup>1355</sup> (and his Spirit), who continues to draw every soul to himself, into salvation;<sup>1356</sup> she fosters “the immediate union of the faithful with Christ”<sup>1357</sup>.

Pope Benedict XVI in his first consistent homily on the Mother of God on 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2005, said it explicitly that she “participates in the power of the Son and in his goodness”.<sup>1358</sup> He repeated the idea in his first Encyclical letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, 42, talking of

«the gift of her goodness and the unfailing love which she pours out from the depth of her heart. [...] such love is possible [...] as a result of the most intimate union with God, through which the soul is totally pervaded by him – a condition which enables those who have drunk from the fountain of God’s love to become in their turn a fountain».

In another occasion, he painted in few words the image of Mary inserted in the dynamism of Trinitarian actions revealing God’s love:

«We see that the heart of Mary is visited by the grace of the Father, is permeated by the power of the Spirit and interiorly compelled by the Son; that is, we see a perfectly human heart inserted into the dynamism of the Most Holy Trinity. This movement is charity, which is perfect in Mary and becomes the model of the Church’s charity, a manifestation of Trinitarian love (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 19).»<sup>1359</sup>

In a homily he proclaimed the mediation of Mary the necessary instrument of all graces that were ever attained.<sup>1360</sup>

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<sup>1352</sup> RM 47.

<sup>1353</sup> RM 38.

<sup>1354</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 21: in consecrated virginity, fraternal love (charity) is open towards all men, who are embraced by the love of Christ, the bridegroom.

<sup>1355</sup> Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Discorso a un Simposio *Attraverso il Cuore della Madre scopriamo l’amore del Salvatore* (22/9/1986), in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX,2, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1986, p. 700: “through love of her Son and of all of humanity she exercises a unique instrumentality in bringing us to him”.

<sup>1356</sup> Cf. IDEM, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 20, quoting Eph 1,10: the Father’s plan to unite all things in Christ.

<sup>1357</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 15, quoting LG 60.

<sup>1358</sup> BENEDICT XVI, homily *on the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (15/8/2005), which belongs to the universal ordinary Magisterium. The homily ends with: “Being in God, who is close to us, actually, ‘within’ all of us, Mary shares in this closeness of God. Being in God and with God, she is close to each one of us, knows our hearts, can hear our prayers, can help us with her motherly kindness”.

<sup>1359</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Address *at the Marian Vigil*. In the same address, he emphasized the action of the Holy Spirit in Mary: “The Holy Spirit, who makes the Son of God present in Mary’s flesh, enlarged her heart to God’s dimensions and urged her along the way of charity.”

<sup>1360</sup> Cf. IDEM, homily *for the canonization of Frei Antônio de Sant’Ana Galvão, OFM* (11/5/2007), n. 5, in Brazil, in Portuguese in AAS 99 (2007) 419-423: “She [...] wishes to be the definitive seal of our encounter with God our Saviour. There is no fruit of grace in the history of salvation that does not have as its necessary instrument the mediation of Our

c) The voice of the founder on the influence of Mary on the faithful

The Original Constitutions follow the traditional view that Jesus gave a special charge over the whole Church to Mary at the cross, stressing the great love shown in this particular scene in Art. 7:

«Before he breathed His last in an unspeakable act of Love he tenderly gave His Mother as Mother to His followers, to His Church (represented by the beloved disciple, John) and in the same act of indescribable tenderness and Love He gave His followers as children to the same indescribable tender Love and care of the most pure and holy Heart of His Virginal Mother whose love He personally experienced throughout His earthly life.»<sup>1361</sup>

As already seen and discussed in sub-chapter 2.4.6., Art. 9 says generally and in present tense that she “loves and cares and attends to all His followers as members of His mystical body, the Church”. Concerning the life of Mary in eternity, Articles 14-15 repeat that she remained in union with Christ. The formula of the Religious Profession generally invokes the “help of the Blessed Virgin Mary”. All the prescriptions in the Constitutions on honouring and loving Mary would not make sense if the possibility of a real relationship would not be expected. The experience of the presence of the Virgin seems to be so constant and intimate to the founder that he seems to have simply seen it as superfluous to make it a broad theme in the Constitutions.<sup>1362</sup> In his sermons, the intimacy of Mary with her children is marked by and shown in her suffering with them:

«If you are ready [to be like Mary], bring your will today and burn it on the altar. Offer it as a holocaust and destroy it for God. Then God will give you all the sufferings of the world. Because a mother suffers all what her children suffer. If there is someone who is restless on earth and in heaven, it is Mary: she appears, she preaches, she cries... And every suffering of Christ, from the incarnation till today, Mary suffers it with Him! And every suffering of a Christian in the Church, Mary shares it.»<sup>1363</sup>

In the sermon on 2.2.2008, during the Vigil, the founder pointed out the work of Mary in bringing people to Jesus in the following words:

«The way Mary presents us to God is not foreign, she doesn't take us to God like a foreign object, she takes us into her heart and presents her heart to God. We are inside the heart of Mary. So, in the way God accepts Mary he will accept us, if we give ourselves to Mary. The same thing happens with Jesus in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, because it is God worshipping God. *“He who eats me will live in me and I in him.”* This is the highest of prayers, the Holy Eucharist and the prayer of the Two Hearts of Love. [I.e. a Prayer with which one gives oneself completely to Jesus and Mary. ...] The Lord said to me, “My son, I have been looking for the person in whom My Love will reign, My Love will live, My Love will shine more than the sunshine. I found this person in my blessed mother Mary.

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Lady. [...] In our day, Our Lady has been given to us as the best defence against the evils that afflict modern life, Marian devotion is the sure guarantee of her maternal protection and safeguard in the hour of temptation.” The homily for a canonization owns a special dignity; it belongs to the ordinary universal Magisterium.

<sup>1361</sup> Appendix 3.

<sup>1362</sup> Visionaries often believe that their experience is available to all, forgetting that special experiences are always connected with special missions and that not all have the same mission. Hence, God does not give to all such experiences.

<sup>1363</sup> Sermon of Father Montfort, 2/10/2004, at Morning Mass in Blois, France. Appendix 4. The mysterious “suffering” of God or Mary in heaven is a topic of dogmatic dispute. Cf. J. GALOT, *Il mistero della sofferenza di Dio*, Cittadella, Assisi 1975, and G. CANOBBIO, *Dio può soffrire?* Morcelliana, Brescia 2005, quoted in S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 140. This research simply states that Father Montfort believes in a certain suffering of Jesus and Mary in heaven. To enter into the theological opinions on this topic, e.g. whether these sufferings are temporal or eternal, would go above the limits of this research.

She gave Me all she is and has and I gave her all I have and I am. We are one, I am one with her. The clearest representation of this our oneness is the oneness in Love, oneness in the Heart, union in the Heart.” Mary remained a human being by nature [...]. The two became one united in Love not minding the disparity of divinity and humanity, creator and creature, God and man, they became one in Love, fully united in Love, perfectly united in Love. One can say the Two Hearts are one.»

At the end of the same sermon he addressed a prayer to Mary, asking her to make the sisters aware of their responsibility and vocation to be like Mary.<sup>1364</sup>

Father Montfort said in 2000 in a sermon:

«Can we remain sinless? If you say No, then you are no Christians! For not only we can, we must! “Be you holy – for I am holy!” In the Church, all were born immaculate. You are all born immaculate, as Mary! The difficult thing is only to remain immaculate. This is possible only on the way of Mary: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord...”»<sup>1365</sup>

Similarly, at the end of the sermon on 22/8/2006 or 2007 he says that all God has done for Mary, He has done it also for the faithful; she does not keep any grace she received personally only for herself, she distributes all, sharing out all the Love and graces she herself received from God.<sup>1366</sup> Thus there is both the idea of the graces of Mary being available for all in the Church, and the idea of the need of the help of Mary to be faithful to these graces.

Father Montfort uses the title of Mary “Mediatrice of all graces” very rarely but decisively, e.g. in the sermon in the vigil of 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011: “Mary is Mediatrice of all graces: all graces pass through her, because she brought us Christ, who is the source of all graces. No grace without Him.”<sup>1367</sup> Thus in the founder, Mary is “Mediatrice” by making the only Mediator present through her union with him. His preferred title for Mary is however “Heart of Love”. As “Love” is a name or title of God himself (1Gv 4,8), “Heart of Love” can be translated as “Heart of God”, which could be seen as a greater Marian title than “Mother of God”<sup>1368</sup>.

#### d) Comments by the author

Some aspects of the above treated themes shall be emphasised here. In the founder can be seen some reminiscence of the spirituality of the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, where the sinlessness of Mary was a necessary “cover” for approaching the all-holy God. But the “giving ourselves to Mary” and the following “the way of Mary” is a clear indicator for the seeking of a mystical union with her, not just her protection. The relationship with Mary that makes someone to enter her heart is an exchange, a reciprocal entrustment of the heart, i.e., of all one has and is. One’s personality, sins and weaknesses are neither “covered” in the sight of God nor swallowed up, but the union with Jesus and Mary is supposed to lead to a transformation. The person will experience the pardon of

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<sup>1364</sup> Appendix 4. The sacraments are always underlined as the way to unite with Jesus and Mary. According to *Original Constitutions*, Art. 124 “the Union of the Hearts of Love [is] made visible at the incarnation and tangible at every Holy Mass”. Appendix 3.

<sup>1365</sup> 8/12/2000, in Orlu (Holy Mountain), at 9am Morning Mass, appendix 4.

<sup>1366</sup> Cf. appendix 4.

<sup>1367</sup> Appendix 4.

<sup>1368</sup> Cf. 18.11.2004, in the beginning of the sermon of Fr. Montfort at mass in the evening in Neunkirchen (appendix 4), he says that the title ‘Immaculata’ is less than ‘Mother of God’, but the Marian title ‘Heart of Love’ is greater than ‘Mother of God’. She is the heart of God without being God, and she shares this title with Jesus. The greatest gift she received is her union with him. The highest revelation of God is the revelation that God is Love. The greatest Marian title is ‘Heart of Love’, because it is greater to do the will of God than to be the biological mother of God.

God because of his union with Christ which was achieved through the union with Mary and the communion of saints.

The reciprocal entrustment between a faithful on earth and a saint in heaven is based on the reciprocal entrustment and indwelling of the saint and God. Those living in God must be thought of not only following the will of God with their knowledge and will but also with their action, in which they are using the spiritual power a God of Love must be thought of transmitting to his saints. A real communion with God implies the participation in the divine omniscience and omnipotent power of love, of touching the hearts of people, of working miracles (if it is in His will). The interaction of Mary with the faithful is not exhausted in her being an intercessor, venerated sign of hope and a model. Our Lady has a vital, particular, but not individual influence on the faithful in the communion of saints: she can offer a mystical union with herself to the faithful. Her being donated by Christ as mother to the disciples is part of her participation in the divine life, which is a life in complete self-donation. It means the possibility of a personal relationship with Mary, as it is possible for the faithful to have such with Christ. A human relationship is built up with communication – communication of words and of sentiments which can strengthen the will power and encourage to live virtues as faith, hope and love, thus leading nearer to God and thus to salvation.<sup>1369</sup>

The union of Mother and Son has a pneumatological foundation, both in its beginning (Incarnation), in its growth (during the earthly life of Jesus) and in its present state of her activity in heaven. The Holy Spirit sanctifies and guides the faithful to Christ. It shall be stressed here that he does it in a way which creates communion: nobody is directed alone and always directly by him, but often he directs through another person. The more a creature is united with Christ, the more he is an effective instrument of the Holy Spirit to guide others. Mary must be seen as such an instrument used by the Holy Spirit to lead others.

Fathers and theologians were quoted above who considered Mary “present” in the faithful, especially in those who strive actively for sanctity. The Father Founder is calling all baptised “conceived immaculate”, telling all Christians but in a special way the sisters, not only to “be like” Mary, but to represent her, to be united with her, to “incarnate” her. As Christ had the apostles as his official representatives, and these have official successors who are called “alter Christus”, it may be possible to think also of “successors” of Mary in the Church, especially among women. Subchapter 2.3.3. discussed the experience of St. Veronica Giuliani and the teaching of Father Montfort concerning a mystical union with Mary. Maybe saints as St. Gertrud of Helfta, St. Marguerite d’Oingt, St. Juliana of Norwich,<sup>1370</sup> St. Brigitte of Sweden, St. Teresa of Ávila, St. Therese of Lisieux and many other saints could be seen as such: women in special mystical union with the Mother of God, the Virgin “re-living” in them *her* virtues and *her* special union with Jesus, while the saintly women know themselves in union with Mary and guided by her. The Mother of God

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<sup>1369</sup> The Lutheran Bishop Ulrich WILCKENS made many positive comments on the Virgin, e.g. accepting the veneration of Mary as something good, while refusing to admit the power of Mary to transmit salvation, and the title “mediatrix of graces”. (E.g. in “Maria, la Madre del Signore, nella visione evangelica”, in M. KIEBIG, (ed.), *Maria, la Madre di nostro Signore. Un contributo della Chiesa evangelico-luterana tedesca*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1996, p. 121, 127, 132). In fact, as salvation is union with Christ, it cannot be “transmitted”, it can only be encouraged.

<sup>1370</sup> Marguerite was a Certosian nun who died in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. She sought to unite with Mary in her agony under the cross (in mystical experiences, noted down as “meditations”). Juliana of Norwich (†1416) had the desire to enter into the heart of the Virgin to experience there the love of Jesus and Mary, and to feel in her own body the sufferings of Christ. Cf. F. ASTI, “Maria nell’esperienza mistica”, p. 313-316.



being present on earth in these women, without annihilating their persons. Such a mystical union could be explained in Nigeria as similar to the Igbo “ino uwa”, the “coming back to the world” of the ancestors (cf. sub-chapter 1.1.2.). Certainly, all men and women are called to holiness. A feminine expression of holiness has its utmost human model in Mary. Here the thesis of “*Mulieris dignitatem*”, that especially women are called to follow the example of Mary, shall be re-proposed in the sense of their call to be in a mystical union with Mary, in a dynamic relationship in which Mary lives out “her” virtues in those who unite with her. The faith of Mary which in the view of John Paul II has come to the faithful through the tradition of the Church and in which all Christians share, cannot be seen as something impersonal as a well where one can draw water without any interior relationship with the well. Mary is a person, and to share in her faith means entering into a personal relationship with her, entrusting oneself to her and listening to her counsels. The founder, in presenting Mary as “*Mediatrix*”, who shares her graces with the faithful, can be interpreted in this way: Our Lady continues her work of helping the faithful to a deeper access to God by uniting with them and gradually leading them to the exercise of her own virtues, just as Jesus is the Mediator by uniting with human beings and infusing into them his own divine love and worship of God, his own obedience unto death. Virtues are both “infused”, a gift from God, i.e. graces, and also “acquired”, fruit of the effort of man. It is a general experience that it is easier to acquire virtues in the company of virtuous people. Mary’s virtues in someone’s heart attract the presence of Jesus, who is “All Graces” in person. In Father Montfort the idea of “*Mediatrix of all graces*” includes all which is given to the faithful in Christ, especially the sacraments. This research tries to direct the attention to the dynamics of relationships: Mary is in union with Christ. It can be deduced that wherever Christ goes, he allows himself to be carried or brought by Mary, including when he comes to transform the Eucharistic species into himself or when he gives his grace/himself in any other sacrament. The idea follows LG 60, 62 and 63: Mary mediates in her union with Christ and under Christ as a bearer of Christ, cooperating in the generation and formation of the faithful.

One may object e.g. that Mary is not the mediatrix of her own Immaculate Conception. It should be obvious that the title “*Mediatrix of all graces*” speaks only of the graces given to the faithful, excluding Mary: No mediator should give what he mediates to oneself.

As salvation is union with God in Christ, the only Saviour, “mediation of salvation” is not a “transmission” of salvation, but simply the help to human beings to build up their own personal relationship of love with God. The Church mediates salvation (i.e. makes present the person of Jesus) through the sacraments, the witness to the truth and the mutual service of charity. This research advances the thesis that the Church is involved in the divine action of saving *with and in Mary*. All people are to join the Church and Mary in mediating salvation,<sup>1371</sup> i.e. all are to make

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<sup>1371</sup> So far, e.g. in LG 52, the Church assigns the function of continuing the mystery of salvation (being the Body of Christ, continuing *his* life) exclusively to herself. Mary is only to be venerated (cf. LG 52), contemplated (cf. LG 64), looked at as model (cf. LG 65). Vatican II did not affirm that the Church *joins* Mary in mediating salvation, though SC 8 states that venerating the saints, the Church hopes to have some part and fellowship with them. Also, the Church is fully aware that e.g. in the liturgy she joins the “heavenly army” and takes part in the heavenly liturgy (SC 8, cf. LG 50), which means to be in relationship with God. LG 49 emphasizes the union of the Church on earth with the members who slept in the peace of Christ, a union with is “reinforced by an exchange of spiritual goods.” Probably, the Magisterium has not yet reached to such a statement, because “salvation” is still seen largely as the gifts of divine grace, exemption from suffering and death,... As this research defines “salvation” with LG 14 and 50, and with theologians as G. Müller, as the personal positive relationship with Jesus Christ, and insists with LG 60 and many papal documents on

present Christ and all are to give their testimony in words and acts of charity, no one is to be only a receiver. The whole universe can be contemplated as being before God “summarised” in Mary, reached by God’s grace in Mary and like enclosed in the Fiat of Mary towards the will of God. Mary gave herself completely to the disposition of God and God made her a necessary help for union of a soul with himself, like the Church. Both are necessary, because associated to Christ in a way that he identifies with them: Jesus must be loved in his union with the Church and Mary. This research proposes that Mary received Christ as a gift from God, which changed her and made her to become permanently the qualitative first bearer and bringer of Christ.

### **3.4. The Two Hearts of Love as centre of union for all men of good will**

After the presentation of the dynamic union of Jesus and Mary, this sub-chapter will present suggestions on possible consequences in sacred arts adorning sanctuaries and churches, and discuss the importance of the devotion of the Hearts of Love as part of popular piety. Conveniently, there will be an investigation on the Marian cult in the Church, on value and mistakes of devotional prayers, and on the liturgical and the devotional “consecration” to God.

#### **3.4.1. Images of the Two Hearts: the iconographic aspect**

Sacred images have the function to help human beings to build up a relationship with God and his saints. They can be studied in theology as expression of doctrine and piety (of the time).<sup>1372</sup> It has happened in history (of art and literature) that “images” of Mary appeared that did not serve this function. She was presented as “Feminine dimension of God”, or the “Unattainable Ideal”, severing her away from Christ and Church and thus actually destroying her true image.<sup>1373</sup> J. Roten observed that contemporary “arts point out that artists are not naturally inclined to create a new beautiful Madonna.<sup>1374</sup> Much of contemporary Marian art opts for minimal and or somewhat chaotic representations. This may be an indication that the person these images present is not well known or has become the screen for too many projections.”<sup>1375</sup>

In Mary, two “opposites” are reconciled:<sup>1376</sup> she is both unreachable and imitable. Her status as the physical-spiritual Mother of the incarnate God, and his qualitatively-historically first disciple is unreachable by all; at the same time, she is sharing all she has and is with the faithful, thus

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the capacity of Mary to help the faithful to be in union with Christ, the dogmatic foundation for such a statement seems to be solid in the Magisterium.

<sup>1372</sup> Cf. PAMI, *La Madre del Signore*, n. 33, p. 42.

<sup>1373</sup> Cf. J. G. ROTEN, “Mary and the multicultural challenges”, p. 372.

<sup>1374</sup> This is only true for Western artists, however. Artists in the younger Churches are creating beautiful Asian, Southamerican or African Our Ladies, showing great filial devotion.

<sup>1375</sup> IDEM, “The theological and cultural image of Mary”, in E. PERETTO (ed.), *L'immagine teologica di Maria*, p. 123, referring to the exposition STADT ALTÖTTING UND KÜNSTLERGRUPPE “DIE BURG”, *Marienbild – heute: Altötting. Ausstellung vom 10. Mai bis 28. Juni 1992*, s.ed., Altötting 1992.

<sup>1376</sup> The German scholar and later Cardinal Nicolaus Cusanus († 1464) coined the term “coincidentia oppositorum” for the mystery of God and his being e.g. both three and only one, by meditating on geometry as the line of a circle: if the circle is thought infinitely big, the line appears as a straight line, while in geometry, the line of the circle is an opposite thing to the straight line. Thus, he was convinced that in the world, opposites are ‘folded out’, while in the infinity of God they are ‘folded in’. Cf. The work of 1440, NIKOLAUS VON KUES, *De docta ignorantia*, chap. 1, n. 11, in IDEM, *Philosophisch-theologische Werke*, Meiner, Hamburg 2002, vol. 1, p. 17-19, quoted in A. FUCHS, *Mariologie und “Wunderglaube”*, p. 56.

becoming imitable in every aspect of her life. Throughout the Christian history, one or the other aspect of her image was more stressed;<sup>1377</sup> after Vatican II, she was more venerated than before as the fellow pilgrim on the way of faith and icon of Christian life, inviting all to be in an intimate union with her, sharing in her faith and grace. Generally, the special graces of Mary are no longer interpreted as exceptions, but as fullness of grace.<sup>1378</sup>

Pictures or statues of a divine person or divine mystery (e.g. the mystery of the presence of God in a saint) can be an icon, signifying the divine, making something of it visible, demanding veneration, moving man to devotion and stimulating him to enter contemplation.<sup>1379</sup> The same can be treated correctly as a mere sign, or it can be venerated wrongly as an idol, exchanging the “signum” for the reality.<sup>1380</sup>

An image for a devotion to the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary has first of all the challenge of how to present in picture the heart, which is to represent the whole person. The iconographic representation of the heart of Jesus and Mary began in the MA. St. J. Eudes, according to his theology, always drew only a single heart, showing with cross and flowers, or with the pictures of Jesus and Mary inside the heart, that both are meant in their unity.<sup>1381</sup> Though the most known attributes for the “Sacred Heart” is the cross, the crown of thorns and flames of love, and for the Heart of Mary the sword of sorrow, flames of love and sometimes a crown of roses, variations are very many.<sup>1382</sup> These pictures were used for meditation, sometimes as part of greater (symbolic) compositions, as the triangle is used to evoke the three Divine Persons.

As the devotion to the Immaculate Heart and to the Sacred Heart were not always combined with the idea of their union of heart, also many traditional sacred pictures showed either one or the other person with the heart. The union of Jesus and Mary was expressed in manifold paintings and sculptures throughout the centuries, in nativities, crucifixions and pietas, assumptions and

<sup>1377</sup> S. M. Maggiani observed that the image of Mary was always influenced by the unchanging contents of faith and by the changing theological elaboration and culturally based particular views on what is important. Cf. S. M. MAGGIANI, “Introduzione generale”, in E. BOAGA – L. GAMBERO (ed.), *Storia della Mariologia*, p. 12. Today, there can be observed also a difference among continents. J. ROTEN ascribes to Africa an image of Mary as mother and guardian of life received, celebrated in community and passed on. In Asia/India he sees Mary venerated more as a highly spiritual figure, pointing to unity beyond diversity. Latin America would see her as symbol of sacrificial love, embodying change and social justice. In the North Atlantic culture he sees Mary loved as the sister figure, the companion on the pilgrimage. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 373-374. Obviously, these are generalisations, as no continent has a homogenous culture. In Igboiland, for example, she is venerated as the Virgin, model of purity, as the Mother, caring for the spiritual needs of the faithful, maybe one can even see her venerated (wrongly) as “the European”, assuring health, good living and the legitimation or invitation to emigrate to overseas. PAMI, *La Madre del Signore*, n. 33, p. 41 underlines that the beauty of Mary must express her special nearness to God, the fountain of beauty.

<sup>1378</sup> Cf. e.g. F. X. DURRWELL, *Maria: meditazione davanti all'icona*, Cittadella, Assisi 1992, p. 8, quoted in S. M. PERRELLA, *Ecco tua Madre*, p. 101.

<sup>1379</sup> Cf. CONSIGLIO DELL'ASSOCIAZIONE PROFESSORI E CULTORI DI LITURGIA (ed.), *Celebrare in Spirito e verità. Sussidio teologico-pastorale per la formazione liturgica*, Edizioni Liturgiche, Roma 1992, n. 107, p. 87.

<sup>1380</sup> Cf. J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, p. 7-9. The pagan/wrong veneration of an image manifests especially in the pretence to be able to bend the Divinity to the will of man, through actions performed with or before the idol.

<sup>1381</sup> Cf. J. M. CANAL, “Herz Mariä IV. Ikonographie”, in *Marienlexikon* (1991) vol. 3, p. 169-170: since the 14<sup>th</sup> century there are images (miniatures) of Jesus with his heart evidenced or in his hand, and in one such image from the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century there is also Mary with the heart in her left hand, pressed to her chest: Codex “Miracles de Notre Dame”, with verses of Gautier de Coincy, Paris, Bibliothèque National, nouvelles acquisitions françaises, n. 24541, fol. 234<sup>r</sup>. The belonging text begins with “Ave gratia plena”, thus, it must be deduced that it is really Mary with the Child.

<sup>1382</sup> For examples of images of last centuries and modern ones, only the heart and person with heart evidenced, images “kitsch” and artistic ones, cf. <<http://www.pinterest.com/clownloach64/images-of-the-sacred-and-the-immaculate-hearts-of->>, or E. GULLI GRIGIONI, *I cuori della Madonna. Il simbolo del cuore in oggetti e immagini della devozione mariana dal Seicento alla prima metà del Novecento*, Essegi, Ravenna 1997.

crownings of Mary in heaven, but usually without evidencing their hearts. Early efforts to bring Cardiomarian devotion and Sacred Heart-devotion together in a picture, are e.g. the paintings and statues of “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart”, promoted e.g. by the “Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus” (founded in 1854). In these art works a Queen Mother holds the Divine Child, a maybe 5 years old boy; both point his little heart, brought in evidence. It is a copy of a picture painted by Pompeo Batoni († 1787), and inspired by the Jesuits.<sup>1383</sup> Congregations of the Two Hearts as the Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, founded in 1833, also commissioned artists to paint Jesus and Mary together, each with the heart visible, but these pictures seem to have very little diffusion in the houses of people.

In modern times, there are compositions in which a picture of Jesus with the Sacred Heart and Mary with the Immaculate Heart were brought together. They appear mostly in relationship with an unapproved vision, which received great echo among Catholics, as San Damiano or Kérezinen. E.g. in Germany: between the years 1940 and 1943, Mrs. Jutta Stottrop of Neunkirchen (archdiocese of Cologne) took two pictures that were in the same sweetish “Nazarene” style, and composed them together, fixing a cross bearing the Holy Eucharist in the middle between the two figures who were thus shown as united in the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacrifice on the cross. The same woman, between the years 1970 and 1974, visited Mrs. Rosa Quattrini, the unapproved visionary of San Damiano (Piacenza, Italy, active from 1961-1981), who commissioned her “in the name of Our Lady” to propagate this picture and to build a chapel in her home. The picture was printed in large number and, after request, sent into all the world.<sup>1384</sup> But as the Two were painted originally separately, they stand side by side without any visible relationship.

At Kérezinen, diocese of Quimper, France, where the family mother Jeanne-Louise Ramonet (1910-1995) reports 71 (unapproved) visions (from 1938-1965), there is (since few years) a statue of Jesus and Mary standing side by side, both in the act of opening the mantles; a golden heart is evidenced on their chests. A ray unites these two hearts, following the “message” of 1<sup>st</sup> June 1956, in which the Virgin requests that the world shall be consecrated to their “Two Hearts united in the Holy Spirit”.<sup>1385</sup> Here the aspect of union is more visible, but the aspect of submission of Mary to God, and the aspect of invitation of all the faithful to unite with these two Hearts are lacking in the sacred representation.

A nice image can be found in the parish “Sacri Cuori di Gesù e Maria” in Rome, Via Magliano Sabina: Mary, in the gesture of submission, with dark blue mantle, looks half to the person watching the picture, half to Jesus, who stands by her side in white and red garments, a little bit more in front, as his right elbow covers the left arm of Mary. Jesus looks straight to the person watching the picture, with a majestic-loving expression, his right hand lifted in blessing, his left

<sup>1383</sup> Cf. J. M. CANAL, “Herz Mariä IV. Ikonographie”, p. 170. For a spiritual presentation of the picture, cf. J. CHEVALIER, *Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur*, Retaux-Bray, Paris 1886.

<sup>1384</sup> The story of the picture is recorded according to the testimony of the little educated Miss Clothilde, a close friend of Mrs. Stottrop, who lived in Neunkirchen and took care of the chapel until, in 2001, the SHL was given charge of the house and the chapel. In 2001 Miss Clothilde was above 80 years old, but spiritually still agile. The author received the report on the testimony through Mrs. Barbara Rodary, one of the SHL lay members who lived in Neunkirchen since 2001. Places as San Damiani are named here not to bring polemics against the decisions of the Church which is ever guided by the Holy Spirit, but simply because even unapproved apparitions are important in the history of popular devotions and its artistic expressions.

<sup>1385</sup> Concerning the visionary and the message, cf. R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO, “Kérezinen”, in R. LAURENTIN – P. SBALCHIERO (ed.), *Dizionario delle “apparizioni”*, p. 407-409.

hand touching gently his chest in an invitation to contemplate his heart. On the chest of both figures there is a prominent golden heart, surrounded by flames; both have the same aureoles around the head. The prominence of the importance of Jesus is clearly visible, also their unity in holiness and love. One may criticise only the light impression of passivity Mary is giving here.

As it was seen in sub-chapter 3.1., the heart is a symbol of the whole person; therefore the picture of a material heart is not of a very great importance in the devotion of the Two Hearts. In fact, the Image of the Hearts of Love pertaining to this devotion shows only a white, bleeding cross and two circles, as described above (sub-chapter 2.4.3.). The heart is seen as the symbol of the love and will of the person, and as a centre of relationships. In the case of Jesus and Mary the hearts are the Throne of God in their body and soul and the assembly place for all the peoples who seek God, and this should be seen in a picture or statue for the devotion of the Two Hearts.

In summary, the trial to find an expressive image for sanctuaries of the Two Hearts is still in the beginning. This research wishes to trigger a profound renewal of sacred arts concerning the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The representations should further the relationship of the faithful with Christ and Mary. They should show the loving submission of Mary, the special love Christ has in turn for her, entrusting himself and all to her, the power of Mary to bring all nearer to Christ, and the Holy Spirit working the union of heart of Mother and Son, making them the centre of the Kingdom of God. It should express the loving call for all to come and join in doing the will of God the Father, in preserving purity, in praying, in preaching, in carrying one's cross every day. Since the Holy Eucharist is the realisation of what God intended in the Incarnation and Passion, the possibility to become "one flesh" and one spirit with mankind, the Eucharistic mystery should be referred to in an image of the Two Hearts. For bringing all these aspects into a single picture, surely symbols are needed.<sup>1386</sup>

### **3.4.2. The devotion of the Hearts of Love in the framework of popular piety**

This sub-chapter does not intend to investigate the long history of the Marian cult in the Church, on the profound Biblical-theological foundation of the same or its radication in the liturgy. Rather, it seeks to set the prayer of the Hearts of Love (as a devotional consecration prayer to Jesus and Mary) within its frame of Marian popular piety. As catholic devotions are to be in harmony with the liturgy, it seems appropriate to have a brief look at what liturgy is, especially when it involves Mary. The popular piety will be evaluated generally, mentioning possible deviations. Finally, the concept of devotional consecration will be analysed.

#### **3.4.2.1. Liturgy and liturgical prayer directed to Mary**

The fact that the aim of every Christian worship is always the Triune God does not exclude prayers addressed to Mary. As the Church believes in her capacity to be in relationship with the faithful, and as a relationship must not be one-sided, the Church urges her veneration (cf. SC, 103; LG, 66-67). Mary cares with love for the brethren of her Son, the children respond with the Marian cult in the Church, by this accepting her as the mother and permitting her to act in one's heart and

life, educating and forming the faithful with her love.<sup>1387</sup> The Church prolongs and echoes the angelic greeting to the Virgin.<sup>1388</sup> According to what was said in the sub-chapters 3.2. and 3.3., the faithful can expect and seek from the Mother the experience of being loved, help (implored from God) in psychological and material needs, encouragement to do good to others out of love of God and seeing God's presence in them, counsel to act justly and well in the confusing situations men usually find themselves in, fortification in faith, personal knowledge of Jesus, help to listen to God and to say Yes to His will, help to love God, to accept Him as He is, to adore Him; and the formation of one's will according to the will of Mary which is formed perfectly in the will of God, thus acquiring all her virtues. The cult given to the Mother of God, which is called "hyperdulía" in western theology, has two branches: liturgy and popular piety/devotions<sup>1389</sup>.

Liturgy must follow the ancient structure of the various liturgical celebrations and the content has to express and actualize the economy of salvation as revealed in the Sacred Scriptures;<sup>1390</sup> the reference to the Easter mystery must be found in them.<sup>1391</sup> It is built on four pillars that must be equilibrated: the proclamation of the Gospel (of salvation in Christ), the sacramental rites according to the approved *rituale* (the essential rite, as the washing in baptism and the meal in the Holy Mass should be brought into evidence), the fraternal communion (cf. Acts 2,42; 4,32) and meditation (through songs and moments of silence for the personal prayer and contemplation).<sup>1392</sup> It must be stressed here that only God himself can "speak God" in the fitting manner, or formulate a prayer that can be pleasing to God: God is unspeakable to human tongues and unthinkable to human minds; only the Word can say "God" and give himself to be pronounced by creatures, without them being able to "speak" him as he "speaks" himself. The words of men can speak God only if the Word decides to incarnate in them, as in the words of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>1393</sup> Liturgy (and every authentic prayer) opens the possibility for man to enter into relationship with God, giving experience of a dialogue with him.<sup>1394</sup>

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<sup>1386</sup> Maybe the Image of the Hearts of Love can provide such symbols. Artists are, thus, invited to make use of them to compose pictures of Jesus and Mary in their unity.

<sup>1387</sup> Cf. T. F. OSSANNA, "Madre nostra III-VI", p. 755.

<sup>1388</sup> La "lode angelica alla Vergine trova eco e prolungamento nella Chiesa orante." C. MAGGIONI, "Annunciazione e liturgia. Approccio ermeneutico alle liturgie occidentali", in *Theotokos* 4 (1996) 415.

<sup>1389</sup> Liturgists usually distinguish "devotion", "devotions", "popular piety" and "popular religiosity": "devotion" is a disposition of heart needed in all types of prayer, it is the *personal* piety. "Devotions" are non-liturgical prayers, they can be specified as e.g. "devotion to the Immaculate Heart". "Popular piety" is the disposition of the faithful when reciting the prayers of devotions. "Popular religiosity" is the immature disposition of the faithful which does not exclude magic thinking.

<sup>1390</sup> Cf. Cf. A. G. MARTIMORT (ed.), *The Church at Prayer*, p. 14.

<sup>1391</sup> E.g. concerning the Divine Office of ordinary time, "la Chiesa celebra il mistero pasquale di Cristo nel ritrarsi delle ore e dei diversi tempi del giorno e della notte." – remembering at Midday Prayer the time of the crucifixion of Christ, at Vespers the time of his death on the cross and of the Last Supper, at Compline the time of the burial of Christ, at Office of Readings (in the night) the resurrection, at Lauds the Easter morning. "Essa infatti è preghiera nella quale si attua l'*historia salutis*". P. A. MURONI, "La Liturgia delle Ore: Opus Dei – Locus Dei – Opus Ecclesiae", in *Rivista Liturgica* 98/2 (2011) 287-288, 293.

<sup>1392</sup> Cf. CENTRO NAZIONALE DI PASTORALE LITURGICA, *Exultet. Enciclopedia pratica della liturgia*, Queriniana, Brescia 2002, p. 22. The CNPL appeals for a dialogue between liturgy and devotions, allowing devotional acts to prepare the liturgy, or to prolongate the prayer after the liturgy, in order to enter deeper into its spirit. This is also expressed clearly in the p. 299-303.

<sup>1393</sup> Cf. J.-L. MARION, *God without being*, , p. 139-141.

<sup>1394</sup> Cf. "La celebrazione liturgica è fonte di spiritualità perché in essa si fa esperienza, ossia il soggetto è coinvolto nella reciprocità con l'oggetto." G. BONACCORSO, "La forza simbolizzante della liturgia", in *Rivista Liturgica* 98/2 (2011) 248. A response of love and personal self-offering to God does not belong to liturgy, but is an act of personal piety, always expected to be lived and exercised before, during and after the liturgy. (Cf. the "Introduction" in CEI, *Messe*

Paul VI gave the famous “Trinitarian definition”: liturgy as the public prayer that the Church directs to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.<sup>1395</sup> The “specific liturgical prayer” must have the element of *remembering* (an aspect of) the mystery of Christ, *making present* the Holy Spirit (by invocation and by doing the will of God in the ritual, in human-divine synergy) and making men to *participate* in the mystery of Christ.<sup>1396</sup>

The definitions of liturgy help to understand why prayers recognized by the Church as “pious exercises” are called “in harmony with liturgy”. E.g. a rosary of the sorrowful mysteries, “celebrates” Christ in the mystery of his passion, remembers it and helps people to participate in the Easter mystery in their lives; it is for the sanctification of the faithful, the Holy Spirit is invoked and it can be said to “be prayed with the whole Church”.<sup>1397</sup>

MC 56 states that piety towards Mary is an element which simply belongs to the Christian cult (cf. also SC 103). The law of faith demands that the Mother of Christ be honoured and invoked. The ultimate reason for the cult to the Blessed Virgin lies in the will of God.<sup>1398</sup> A. Valentini commented that in Lk 1,42-48 the veneration of Mary is inspired by the Holy Spirit, she is called “Blessed among all women”, “Mother of the Lord”, “blessed/happy”, “person who believed” God, and she responds: “all generations will call me blessed.”<sup>1399</sup>

Mary is a member and the prototype of that Church which is actualising the official prayer directed to God. As the Church on earth joins the liturgy in heaven, it joins “in primis” the prayers of the Virgin Mother of God, to honour her (Eucharistic Prayer I), and to be made worthy to share her inheritance or company in heaven (Eucharistic Prayer II-IV). The model-character and efficiency of her prayer is well acknowledged by the Magisterium. All are called to imitate the prayer of Mary, i.e. to unite with her in her prayer to God the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

Apart from the Missale Romanum 1970/2002 with its proper prayers of various Marian solemnities, feasts and memorias, and the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially for the use of Marian Sanctuaries and communities, the Church issued in the Marian year 1987 the *Collectio Missarum B.V.M.* Sometimes saints, and among them, Mary are even addressed directly in the lyric parts of liturgy (responsories, antiphons, hymns – not in prayers),<sup>1400</sup> in praise of their

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della Beata Vergine Maria, n. 13: “la Chiesa [...] con lei [Maria] desidera partecipare al mistero pasquale di Cristo ed essere associata all’opera della redenzione”: this *desire* is love. The “Introduction” quoted two liturgical prayers in the statement.)

<sup>1395</sup> E.g. in MC 25. Cf. also the definition of liturgy in the “Introduction” in CEI, *Messe della Beata Vergine Maria*, n. 4: “La liturgia per mezzo dei santi celebra l’opera della salvezza compiuta da Dio Padre per Cristo nello Spirito Santo”. It celebrates the salvation announced in the OT, manifested fully in Jesus, who associated mankind intimately to himself to make people able to worship God in spirit and truth; the salvation which is prolonged into the time of the Church and which will have its universal fulfilment in the Second Coming of Christ.

<sup>1396</sup> Cf. A. M. TRIACCA, *Lo Spirito Santo nella Liturgia*, p. 334. Cf. also IDEM, “‘Liturgia’ e ‘pietà popolare’: Validità della loro osmosi”, in UFFICIO DELLE CELEBRAZIONI LITURGICHE DEL SOMMO PONTEFICE, *Liturgie dell’Oriente Cristiano a Roma nell’Anno Mariano 1987-88. Testi e studi*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1990, p. 1245-1246, where the liturgist emphasizes also the celebrative character of liturgy.

<sup>1397</sup> Cf. C. MAGGIONI, “Educare alla Pietà popolare”, in M. SODI – G. LA TORRE (ed.), *Pietà popolare e Liturgia. Teologia – Spiritualità – Catechesi – Cultura*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 2004, e.g. p. 134.

<sup>1398</sup> “Ecclesiae pietas erga Beatam Mariam Virginem pertinet ad naturam ipsam christiani cultus. [...] Lex] credendi eiusdem [Ecclesiae] postulat, ut eius lex orandi ubique prospere vigeat quoad Christi Matrem. [...] Hic adicimus: cultus beatae Mariae Virginis ultimam suam rationem repetit ab inscrutabili et libera voluntate Dei”.

<sup>1399</sup> Cf. A. VALENTINI, “Lc 1,39-45: Primi indizi di venerazione”, esp. p. 334.

<sup>1400</sup> As it was done in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Egypt with the communitarian prayer of the “Sub tuum praesidium”. Cf. I. CALABUIG, “Liturgia (origini)”, p. 700-701.

response to their vocation, and in request for intercession, e.g. in the Liturgy of the Hours of the Commons of Saints and in the Proper of the Saints. The different Marian antiphons at the end of Compline were devotional hymns, which were readily accepted into the liturgy.<sup>1401</sup> The Common of the B.V.M. was created (with some changes) after the Vatican Council II out of the “Small Office” of Our Lady, after Female active congregations, founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, adopted this para-liturgical Medieval prayer to Our Lady as the communal prayer.<sup>1402</sup>

The Church uses the liturgy and other prayers to help the faithful to build up a personal relationship not only with God but also with the saints, as the Catholic Church believes that it is important to have communion with the saints already here on earth and not to relate exclusively with God. For God does not want his children to exclude each other but to love one another. (Cf. Jn 13,34) The liturgy can be said to have (among others) the aim to arouse love of God and his angels and saints in the faithful, to establish the “ordo amoris” in the communion of the Church<sup>1403</sup>.

### 3.4.2.2. Value and errors in devotional prayers

Concerning the value of popular piety, it can be said that the Magisterium pays constant attention to it. The Congregation for the Divine worship and the discipline of Sacraments issued the precious “Directory on popular piety and the liturgy”, (13/5/2002).<sup>1404</sup> The fact that this important organ of the Holy See issued an exhaustive document on popular piety, giving norms and regulations for all commonly known devotions, upgrades the value of these acts of popular piety. Another statement that adds value to popular piety is the one of Pope Francis, who took up the opinion of some theologians that it can be called a “locus theologicus”<sup>1405</sup>, i.e. expressions of popular piety can be used in dogmatic theology as source, belonging with Magisterium, liturgy and the teaching of saints to the tradition of the Church, and they can be used to express the mystery of God.

To evaluate them further, it is necessary to have a look at how they began. The invention by monks of devotional prayers that are communally recited (e.g. by associate members of the monastery) but not officially approved or led by a priest, begins around the year 1000.<sup>1406</sup> The reasons were: lay people became only spectators in the Latin liturgy, they no longer knew the Bible and its symbolic language, the centrality of Easter was lost sight of, apocryphal stories and allegorical understanding of things were at the centre of interest.<sup>1407</sup> The liturgical action became more and more stylistic, even the body of those assisting at Mass was educated to “silence”: no

<sup>1401</sup> Cf. A. G. MARTIMORT (ed.), *The Church at Prayer*, p. 14. E.g. the hymn “Alma Mater” entered the Office only with Pope St. Pius V († 1572). Cf. C. MAGGIONI, “Annunciazione e liturgia”, p. 425.

<sup>1402</sup> Cf. S. ROSSO, “Sabato”, in *NDM*, p. 1099.

<sup>1403</sup> Cf. “l’ordo celebrationis rivela e realizza quel’ordo amoris che rappresenta il fine ultimo dell’azione educativa della Chiesa.” P. TOMATIS, “La liturgia, forma fidei – forma vitae: Un obbedienza feconda.” In *Rivista Liturgica* 98/2 (2011) 239.

<sup>1404</sup> Some liturgists criticise the *Directory* for not exemplifying the prescriptions, e.g. in n. 95, leaving final decisions to the knowledge and judgement of pastors. Cf. G. CAVAGNOLI, “Anno liturgico e pietà popolare”, in M. SODI – G. LA TORRE (ed.), *Pietà popolare e Liturgia*, p. 93.

<sup>1405</sup> FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 126.

<sup>1406</sup> Cf. C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 546.

<sup>1407</sup> Cf. CDWDS, *Directory*, n. 30, 45-46.



movement, staying composed and recollected became the model.<sup>1408</sup> The monks used liturgical-Biblical texts as the “Hail Mary” (cf. medieval antiphonaries), they composed in the spirit of liturgical texts, but simplified, repeated, used the vernacular and their prayers did not require the presence of an ordained minister: e.g. the rosary.

Liturgy and popular piety were living first in unity and reciprocal salutary influence. In the West in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Latin liturgy in its rigid sacredness did no longer inspire and correct the piety and popular piety sought not first of all a Biblical and traditional foundation, but listened more to mystics, that unity broke. The Second Vatican Council made a giant step to bring liturgy, popular piety and charitable activity again into some relationship.<sup>1409</sup> Paul VI demanded that pious exercises should be turned into precious help to live the liturgy, while affirming the necessity to exercise them separated by time and space, so that e.g. the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass may not only be an occasion for a devotional practice.<sup>1410</sup>

Popular piety is inferior to the liturgy of the *sacraments*, as only there the Easter mystery is re-enacted, Christ not only spiritually made present, the history of salvation is continued in a sure, sacramental way. As the liturgy, it is an ecclesial reality promoted and sustained by the Spirit, on which the Magisterium exercises its function of authentication and guarantee.<sup>1411</sup>

The highest “title” of a devotional piety is “pious exercise”; the Holy See can give this title to four types of prayers:

1) prayers on which the Holy See itself has issued norms, regulations and recommendations, like the rosary, the Angelus Domini and the Way of the Cross

2) devotional prayers “that are undertaken by order of the bishops according to customs or books lawfully approved” (SC, 13), as the “act of faith/hope/love” after Holy Communion, or the “prayer for Nigeria in distress” in Nigeria

3) devotional prayers that are being practised according to particular right or tradition in religious families or fraternities and in other pious associations of the faithful; these prayers have often received the explicit approval of the Church (imprimatur), as the Prayer of the Hearts of Love

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<sup>1408</sup> Cf. CONSIGLIO DELL’ASSOCIAZIONE PROFESSORI E CULTORI DI LITURGIA (ed.), *Celebrare in Spirito e verità*, n. 120, p. 99.

<sup>1409</sup> Cf. S. ROSSO, “Sabato”, p. 1099-1100.

<sup>1410</sup> Cf. MC 31. Paul VI gives here a prohibition of joining practices of devotional piety with the Mass, explained by the fear that the latter may *deviate* the faithful from concentrating the attention on the most important celebration of the Holy Mass. The n. 204 of the Directory of the CDWDS advocates strongly the elimination of the term “consecration” in Marian piety (while using it in n. 174), since genuine consecration can have only God himself as receiver. The Directory applies MC 31 in prescribing that such a consecration to Mary must not be held during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, as it is an act of devotional piety which cannot be assimilated to the liturgy. Though the Prayer of the Hearts of Love seems not to deviate the faithful from the attention to the great gift of the Holy Eucharist, and though it is not a usual pious “consecration”-prayer to Mary, but a response to the (Eucharistic) love of both Jesus and Mary, it must be seen as underlying this general prohibitions. Thus, the practice of the SHL in saying in their convents the Prayer of the Hearts of Love publicly and communally after the Holy Communion seems to be against the general prescriptions of the Church. On the other hand, during Mass, it is the (main) celebrant who has the responsibility to *guide and animate* the prayer and meditation of the faithful. Cf. MISSALE ROMANUM, ed. typ. 2000, *Institutio generalis*, n. 93. The priest can say e.g. personal words of meditation after the Holy Communion.

<sup>1411</sup> Cf. CDWDS, *Direttorio su pietà popolare e liturgia* (13/5/2002), n. 50. The English translation is of the author, for in the official website of the Vatican, the English Directory, giving the date of December 2001, lacks the last half-sentence.

4) devotional acts that are being accomplished in the forum of family life or personal life, such as the blessing of a father for his children, the prayer before meal, the prayer of a mother with her children before they sleep.<sup>1412</sup>

Devotional prayers have their own dignity and importance, they are not to be suppressed.<sup>1413</sup> They make it possible for the faithful to “pray always”, to pray when they have chance, to prolong prayers, to meditate deeply, alone or in groups. More than the Psalms, many of these prayers take up the plea for the salvation of all souls, which is the centre of the will of God: that all may be united in Christ.

The document of Puebla of the Bishops’ Conference of Latin America acclaims the capacity of vital synthesis of the Catholic popular wisdom: ‘It unites with creativity the Divine and the human, Christ and Mary, spirit and body, communion and institution, person and community, faith and fatherland, intelligence and affection.’<sup>1414</sup> Liturgy and pious exercises need to inspire each other, being exercised without mixture: liturgy has to remain in the bounds of the rubrics in sober solemnity. The popular piety has to retain its freedom in expressing sentiments of faith, hope and love, and its simplicity.<sup>1415</sup> The Church recommends the pious exercises in a special way,<sup>1416</sup> leading their pastoral workers to teach these devotions to the people, even urging them. The pastor should allow the people to participate in his own devotion, giving them an example and teaching them a possibility.

Popular piety is sometimes misunderstood as meaning what the “Directory on popular piety and liturgy” calls “popular religiosity”, the cultural expression of religiosity which has human and spiritual significance, but can be without relationship to the Christian revelation and doctrine.<sup>1417</sup> This subchapter will not deal with such, but is limited on Catholic devotions belonging to popular piety, devotions that are partly recognized by the Church as pious exercises, that have a firm grounding in the Christian revelation and live in harmony with the holy liturgy.<sup>1418</sup>

Popular piety without reference to the officially approved liturgy loses the doctrinally healthy proclamation of how God actually showed his love for mankind; thus it deviates into popular religiosity. On the other hand, liturgists and pastors that do not admit the possibility of non-liturgical assemblies of the community in devotional prayer are suffocating the capacity of the faithful to respond to the love of God, and end up in destroying their relationship with God and

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<sup>1412</sup> The four types, without examples, cf. CDWDS, *Directory*, n. 72.

<sup>1413</sup> Cf. MC 31.

<sup>1414</sup> Cf. III CONFERENCIA GENERAL DEL EPISCOPADO LATINO AMERICANO, *Documento de Puebla* (1979), n. 448. (English translation of the author.)

<sup>1415</sup> Cf. C. MAGGIONI, “Educare alla Pietà popolare”, p. 141.

<sup>1416</sup> Cf. the 11 brief Encyclicals on the holy rosary of Leo XIII, the one of Pius XI, *Ingravescentibus malis* (1937) and Pius XII, *Ingruentium malorum* (15/9/1951) always calling on the faithful to pray the rosary as a help against the problems of the time, the apostolic letter *Il religioso convegno* (29/9/1961) of John XXIII. Paul VI has issued three documents focusing on encouraging the prayer of the rosary: the encyclicals *Mense maio* (29/4/1965), in AAS, 57 (1965) 354-358, and *Christi matri* (15/9/1966), in AAS, 58 (1966) 745-749, the apostolic exhortation *Recurrere mensis october* (7/10/1969), in AAS, 61 (1969) 649-654. The apostolic exhortation MC treats many aspects of Marian popular piety, especially Angelus and rosary, encouraging it. On the rosary, there is again the Apostolic epistle of JOHN PAUL II, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus received early and repeated papal encouragement, and consecrations of peoples and portions of the people of God to the Immaculate Heart of Mary were practised publicly by Pius XII (31/10/1942 on radio), Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis.

<sup>1417</sup> Cf. CDWDS, *Directory*, n. 10.

<sup>1418</sup> Cf. *Ibidem*, n. 7-9.

killing the faith.<sup>1419</sup> The two different types of prayer, brought into correlation, mutually fertilizing each other, build a formative system, upholding and transmitting the faith and educating to a life according to the faith.<sup>1420</sup> Side by side with non-sacramental liturgical prayers, pious exercises are the possibility to prepare the “culmen” of all prayer, the Holy Mass. The Holy Eucharist is also “fons”, and as such it has the capacity to lead the faithful to the height of contemplation.<sup>1421</sup> The faithful who begin during Holy Communion to contemplate the presence of God, will be filled with thanksgiving, guarding and interiorizing the graces received. Since the Mass is the highest of all liturgical prayer, no other liturgical prayer can be seen as apt to deepen what was given in the Holy Eucharist. The personal gift of God to the faithful requires a personal, involving answer, which has to be given with the whole life. It is an urgent request of the Church (in SC 48 and AA 4)<sup>1422</sup>, that the faithful may “learn to offer themselves” with Christ in the Mass, until they are in perfect union with God. Only the personal piety, devotion and charity can provide such, as it must be freely and personally chosen acts and prayers, though they can be communally recited and done.

<sup>1419</sup> Cf. MC 31, deploring the fact that some pastors despise pious exercises, creating a spiritual void. PAUL VI called it an “absolute necessity” that the faithful should express their devotion (towards the Heart of Christ, the temple of God, in which is the origin and beginning of the holy liturgy). Cf. his Apostolic Letter *Diserti interpretes facti* (25/5/1965), n. 3-4, and F. G. BRAMBILLA: “Il timore reverenziale del sacro (la devozione) richiede di diventare affidamento esistenziale (la fede). Senza questo luogo di passaggio non è possibile vivere la fede [...] come un *affectus*, cioè come qualcosa che ci tocca, che ci sor-prende [sic!], che assume le forme del sentire e del sentirsi, quali possibilità di dire e di dirsi di fronte al mistero dell’esistenza e di vivere l’esistenza come mistero.” “Fede e devozione. L’affectus e il transito”, in *Il Regno - Attualità* 50 (2005) 203. The importance of acts of faith and response to the Love of God cannot be overstressed. I. M. CALABUIG, “Il Cuore di Maria”, p. 126 points out the lack of such a response to the Love of God in the liturgical celebration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary: “Eppure i testi della solennità del Sacro Cuore insistono sull’elemento anamnetico dell’amore di Cristo mentre non contengono alcuna ‘professione di amore’ da parte della comunità: [...] l’assemblea liturgica loda ed adora perché ama, ma non dice di amare. Lo stesso avviene nella memoria del Cuore immacolato di Maria. Nel giorno in cui la Chiesa, dopo aver celebrato nel simbolo del Cuore l’amore di Cristo suo sposo, rivolge la sua contemplazione all’amore della Vergine, non fa alcuna ‘professione di amore’: solo loda e venera l’opera di Dio nel Cuore di santa Maria; loda e venera santa Maria per la risposta che essa, dal profondo del suo Cuore, ha dato all’amore di Dio.” Also in the new liturgical texts for the Immaculate Heart, as in CEI, *Messe della Beata Vergine Maria*, n. 28, p. 92-94: Cuore Immacolato della Beata Vergine Maria, there is no “profession of love”, only a request to God to give the faithful a pure and docile heart, so that they will learn to love God. In the former collect, even this request is not there, the whole mass does not mention “love”, although the introduction of the German “Schott”-missal to the memorial states: ‘Under the symbol of the Heart the Church honours the singular love of the mother of Jesus towards God and towards her Son, and her motherly love towards all human beings. In the message of Fatima this love is shown in a special way as the love wounded by the sins of the world.’ (Translation from German by the author.) O. HAGGENMÜLLER (ed.) *Schott-Messbuch für die Wochentage, Teil I, Advent bis 13. Woche im Jahreskreis*, Herder, Freiburg 1984, p. 1869.

<sup>1420</sup> Cf. A. M. TRIACCA, “‘Liturgia’ e ‘pietà popolare’”, p. 1282-1283. Cf. also J. CASTELLANO CERVERA, “Liturgia, Pietà popolare, Spiritualità”, in M. SODI – G. LA TORRE (ed.), *Pietà popolare e Liturgia*, p. 84-85, where he speaks of the importance to conjugate popular piety and liturgy for reaching the royal road of genuine Christian mystic: the Trinitarian mystic with attention to the Incarnation, to the Passion, to the Resurrection, to the gift of the Holy Spirit, to the communion with Mary and to the charisms of the saints, to the communion of the Church.

<sup>1421</sup> Cf. C. MAGGIONI, “Educare alla Pietà popolare”, p. 133.

<sup>1422</sup> ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the apostolate of the laity (18/11/1965) *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, in English in <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html)>, seen on 1/3/2014. The decree counts only 33 paragraphs, but they are much longer than e.g. those of SC. After already giving in LG special space to the laity, this decree was added to dwell again on the call of the lay people to be part of the missionary life of the Church, decreeing the duty for dioceses to make effort for the proper formation and integration of lay people in the pastoral work. Cf. AA 2, 28, 33. Cf. also PIUS XI, Encyclical letter *Miserentissimus Redemptor* (8/5/1928), in AAS 20 (1928) 171, with sustaining quotations from Holy Scriptures and St. Cyprian: “Quamobrem cum hoc augustissimo eucharistico sacrificio et ministrorum et aliorum fidelium immolatio coniungi debet”. - The Eucharistic sacrifice *must* be connected with the self-sacrifice of sacred ministers and the faithful. Of course, this self-sacrifice is the life of contemplation and charity to be lived every day. The personal or communal devotional act of consecration is only to remind of this and to foster it.

Most modern writers about devotions castigate the “errors” that can be observed in the popular piety, often without mentioning an example, leaving the reader to imagine anything as “errors” to be contested. Ildefonso Schuster († 1954)<sup>1423</sup> later gave some examples of errors from his remembrances. An error subsists when a patron saint of a parish, e.g. St. Lawrence, is being celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, so that more people will participate; or when on the day of Pentecost the priest celebrates a Mass in memory of the fallen heroes of the village, to please the mayor; or if masses in a village are celebrated only if someone requests (and pays) for a Mass in memory of any deceased uncle; or when in the Church a statue is collocated to please the benefactor, while the statue does not arouse religious sentiments, or while the community does not know the saint; or if priests give Eucharistic blessings to all who request (and give an offer), but do not care to bless the Baptismal font at Easter; or feasts of specially honoured saints celebrated on a day of fasting and penitence, thus inducing the people to ignore essential customs of Lent (and to deviate more and more from the asceticism of the early Church).<sup>1424</sup> Thus the fault of errors in “popular piety” is not seen mainly in the sentimentality of the simple faithful, or in their giving more time to social-religious activities than to the sacred liturgy, but in the lack of courage of the priests to explain to them which celebration is now more important, and this lack of courage often cooperated with the wish to receive a more voluminous offertory. In short: when money is more important to the priest than grace, this is a liturgical error!

Other errors as mentioned in the Directory on popular piety and liturgy were: the practise of pious exercises by the laity *during* Mass, the *focus* on pious exercises in the pastoral action of “missionaries”, the *substitution* of proper liturgical celebrations for certain days by devotional practices.<sup>1425</sup> Popular piety deviates to mere popular religiosity when people either concentrate too much on personal experiences and needs (health, good job, children,...), or if the object of the devotion is no longer God and those who are transparent towards God (saints and angels), but other people or things; or when the prayer shows superstition, egocentric sentimentality or vanity, making a show out of religiosity, or when people pray out of grave fear.<sup>1426</sup> An error in piety is the lack of spiritual participation of the faithful during pious exercises, watching a religious “festival”.<sup>1427</sup>

As devotional prayers can be private and can be without ecclesiastical approval, popular piety can be called the “experimental field” of prayer where errors can be detected<sup>1428</sup> before they can spoil something in the Church. As was seen above, popular piety has helped to develop liturgical texts and the “experimental field” will continue to produce fruits which will nourish the whole Church and stimulate further liturgical reforms,<sup>1429</sup> until the splendour and love of the liturgy,

<sup>1423</sup> Benedictine Abbot of St. Paul in Rome, since ca. 1927 Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, protagonist of the liturgical movement before Vatican II. Roncalli joined the orientation of Schuster and another Italian bishop, who wished to re-establish the central aspects of the Carolingian and Trentan reform. Cf. G. ALBERIGO, “Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli patriarca di Venezia”, in M. GUASCO – E. GUERRIERO – F. TRANIELLO (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa XXIII. I Cattolici nel mondo contemporaneo (1922-1958)*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1991, p. 244, and R. KACZYNSKI, “La liturgia come vissuto religioso”, *Ibidem*, p. 404. Schuster was beatified.

<sup>1424</sup> Cf. I. BIFFI, “‘Devozione’ e ‘devozioni’. La pietà secondo il cardinale Schuster”, in *Liturgia* 38/6 (2004) 13-14.

<sup>1425</sup> Cf. CDWDS, *Directory*, n. 41.

<sup>1426</sup> Some of the named errors cf. *Ibidem*, n. 65.

<sup>1427</sup> Cf. C. MAGGIONI, “Educare alla Pietà popolare”, p. 140.

<sup>1428</sup> This requires that the clergy and others who studied theology accompany the people and join in the devotional practises, for their own good and to be able to detect possible errors.

<sup>1429</sup> Cf. the opinion of Lucien Deiss CSSp, choir-master, who was a consultant of the Vatican Council II, worked with others on the new Eucharistic Prayers and on the breviary, and chose the responsorial psalms for the post-Vatican II

which Christ had in mind from the beginning for his Church, will be reached. There is one aspect in particular, where popular piety has tried since some centuries to bring about a new understanding of some liturgical acts, and that is the act of consecration.<sup>1430</sup>

### 3.4.2.3. The liturgical and the devotional “consecration” to God

The Church supposes the response of love and explicit self-offering, the priestly office of the people of God in the liturgy. This response is not very explicit in the texts of sacramental liturgy,<sup>1431</sup> since these actions are prescribed and generally communitarian, while a response must (in a first step) be personal and freely chosen and it must be accompanied with the silence of respect and desire. What the Church can do and does, is to *propose* a variety of good responses and the fitting times for it. Returning to God the gift of oneself is very essential, since the liturgy of the sacraments is also a participation in the heavenly liturgy (cf. SC, 8), in which the Son offers himself to the Father (“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”, Lk 23,46), in which he prays to the Father in the Spirit of Love (cf. CCC, n. 1073); the liturgy in which the Father generates the Son and offers him to his creatures (cf. 1Jn 4,9-10), in which the Spirit proceeds from the love of the Father and the Son, and the elders throw their crowns and themselves down before the throne of the creator (cf. Rev 4,10). Liturgy is the “work” (of love, of salvation) of God, in which the Church participates: in public worship, in proclamation of the Gospel, in works of charity. (Cf. CCC, n. 1069-1070). Thus the Church teaches that the celebration of the liturgy must be absorbed by the personal prayer of the faithful in their hearts, during and after the celebration, cf. CCC, n. 2655; the liturgy must find an answer in the life of the faithful who must show love as they have been loved in Christ by God, cf. CCC, n. 2658.

Baptism<sup>1432</sup>, the Eucharistic celebration<sup>1433</sup> and all liturgy<sup>1434</sup> are today increasingly understood as aiming at *consecration* (making “sacred”, i.e. giving in a stable way to the use of God and divine worship) *of the faithful to God*. Baptism makes the faithful to become the property of God. This may have been forgotten in past centuries, as the liturgy does not include the explicit, personal “Behold, I am the handmaid/the servant of the Lord, be it done to me...”. Baptism, in the early Church seen as “illumination”, e.g., does not contain a formula of consecration of one’s life to

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Lectionary. He believes that a perfect and final liturgical reform cannot exist, that there will always be changes. Cf. P. INWOOD, “Incontro con Lucien Deiss”, in *Liturgia* 38/6 (2004) 22-25. The Orthodox Church does not admit liturgical reforms; they do not adjust the books according to the understanding of the new generation, but ask the new generation to adapt and understand the spirit of the traditional texts. However, adding was possible until the early MA, when the patrimony of hymns and prayers was considerably extended. Cf. CDWDS, *Directory*, n. 28. Some Orthodox Churches as the Maronite and Malabarite Church have added in their liturgical year “Latin” feasts as Our Lady of Mount Carmel; the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has accepted the “Latin” Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Cf. J. CASTELLANO CERVERA, “Memorie di Maria: Il mutuo scambio tra Oriente e Occidente”, in UFFICIO DELLE CELEBRAZIONI LITURGICHE DEL SOMMO PONTEFICE, *Liturgia dell’Oriente Cristiano*, p. 1140.

<sup>1430</sup> “La credenza popolare inventa modi originali di unirsi spiritualmente a Maria”, T. GOFFI, “Spiritualità”, p. 1233.

<sup>1431</sup> Excluded from the *texts*, because the *coming* of the faithful to the liturgy can be a very genuine response of love and self-giving to God.

<sup>1432</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Consacrazione”, p. 360, 364, and cf. LG 10: “the baptised are being consecrated”; LG 34: “the laity, being dedicated to Christ and consecrated by the Spirit [...] consecrate to God the world itself”. This general “consecration” then “vocationalizes”: it is necessary to follow the indications from God for one’s life continuously.

<sup>1433</sup> Cf. the prayer of consecration, which is prayed not only over bread and wine, but also over those who are going to receive Holy Communion.

<sup>1434</sup> Even the Divine Office can be understood as a consecration to God: “la voce della Sposa che parla allo Sposo, affidandogli la propria assistenza.” P. A. MURONI, “La Liturgia delle Ore”, p. 289.

God, but consists in a renouncement of Satan and a profession of faith. The obedience of faith is today again seen as implying a consecration to God. The sign of the water signifies a “dying with Christ”, which means a rejection of worldly intentions and the readiness to accept the will of God as Christ did in his saving death but it is not expressed clearly in the formular. The “Amen!” of the faithful when receiving the Holy Eucharist is meant to express the readiness to become (part of the) Body of Christ. The Church knows well that the Holy Mass is the re-enacting of the Easter mystery, i.e. the self-offering of Christ on the Cross and celebrating the memorial of the whole life of Christ, which, from the conception and presentation at the temple till Calvary was offered to God (through and with the presence of Mary)<sup>1435</sup>. Some modern offertory songs contemplate that with bread and wine, the community offers to God the fruit of one’s work, and indeed itself, as people who are to be transformed by grace into the Body of Christ, corresponding to his self-offering in the Easter mystery.<sup>1436</sup> The Compline of the Divine Office contains the verse of Ps 31 (30), 6, which was used by Jesus in his moment of death (cf. Lk 23,46): “Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit.” In the Psalm, it is a word of trust in God and request for protection used in the Gospel to express the self-immolation to God. It thus reminds one of the personal, life-long self-giving of Christ in constantly doing the will of God, and it makes the faithful to join it, continuing and re-enacting Christ’s prayer to God in the time and in the members of His mystical body. Liturgy is a communitarian confession of love, it expresses in the “Amen” of the Church the wish that God may “possess” the faithful, use them as an instrument for His own plans and transform them into persons who cannot but love, just as God.<sup>1437</sup> But it restrains itself from explicit expressions of love and devotion,<sup>1438</sup> leaving this important task to the conscience of the faithful, who enters thus into the dynamic of the “gift” proper to the sacrament. From the liturgy descends as effect the devotional acts of popular or personal piety. The devotional “consecration” or “dedication” in turn, deepens the conscience of the faithful on what happens in baptism and other sacraments, as it speaks most clearly of the will of the faithful to make his person to be the property of God (under the guidance of the Mother of God, in the case of “consecration to Mary”).<sup>1439</sup>

The obligations assumed in baptism – to be in union with the Church and to follow its laws – show that baptism could be defined as a “consecration to God through the hands and mediation of the Church”. In baptism one entrusts oneself to Jesus and his saving power and grace which is available in the Church. (Chrism could be seen as a consecration to the Holy Spirit and his mission to bring the work of Christ to fulfilment.) De Fiores hopes that the patristic idea of the baptismal

<sup>1435</sup> Cf. G. MEAULO, “Presentazione del Signore”, p. 1033.

<sup>1436</sup> Cf. G. L. MÜLLER, *Katholische Dogmatik*, p. 693, in regard to St. Augustine, civ. X, 6: the sacrifice which the faithful should offer to God is explained as the personal act of dedication of the creature to God. When the Church carries out the sacramental memorial of the sacrifice of Christ in obedience to him, she offers herself in the gifts of bread and wine, allows herself to be taken in possession by Christ and to be associated by him to his sacrifice to the Father. (“Wenn demnach die Kirche im Gehorsam gegenüber Christi Auftrag in der Eucharistie die sakramentale Memoria seines Opfers vollzieht, bringt sie in den Gaben von Brot und Wein sich selber dar und lässt sich von Christus innerlich zu eigen nehmen und so hineinnehmen in seinen Opferakt gegenüber dem Vater.”)

<sup>1437</sup> Sic Deus dilexit mundum ut Filium suum unigenitum daret. Jn 3, 16. Si sic Deus dilexit nos et nos debemus alterutrum diligere. 1 Jn 4, 11.

<sup>1438</sup> Cf. I. M. CALABUIG, “Il Cuore di Maria”, p. 147: “Per quanto riguarda i contenuti, la liturgia preferisce insistere su ciò che il ‘Cuore della Vergine’ è per noi, piuttosto che su ciò che noi dobbiamo fare per il ‘Cuore della Vergine’. Ciò spiega che alcuni aspetti della teologia sul Cuore di Gesù e di Maria sviluppatosi nei secoli XVI-XIX, l’oblazione vittimale ad esempio, siano assenti dalla liturgia romana.”

<sup>1439</sup> It may be frequent that people pray a prayer of devotional consecration, but seek only protection and help. The consecration must be well prepared, if it shall bear fruit in deepening the love of God.

water reminding of Mary, and the immersion thus meaning an entrustment or consecration to her, could be taken up once more.<sup>1440</sup> Even if this should not occur: since the Church and Mary are united, a consecration to God through the heart of Mary is not opposed to the baptismal consecration but a re-affirmation of the same.<sup>1441</sup>

At least since the work of St. Grignon de Montfort († 1716, with his booklet on the true devotion to Mary, published in 1843), a personal consecration to Mary is understood as a renewal of the baptismal promises, and is thus more clearly a fitting answer to God after the reception of the Holy Eucharist. Since the mystery of Mary exceeds the mystery of the Church in personal holiness, it is also an extension, a deepening of the said consecration to God.<sup>1442</sup> Consecration to Mary is always to her as to the person in whom God dwells – only God is the receiver of a genuine consecration.

The term “consecration”, when speaking of a devotional entrustment of self to God (Sacred Heart), to Mary or angels or saints, was used in the documents of John Paul II, but preference was given to speak of “entrustment”, as many theologians argued that the term “consecration” should be reserved to sacraments and sacramentals as the religious consecration (profession of vows).<sup>1443</sup> Some see the terms consecration, entrustment, dedication and reception as synonyms. However, entrustment is rather a request to God or the saint for protection, mainly asking for patronage and not clearly the permission given to use the person for the plans of God.<sup>1444</sup>

<sup>1440</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Consacrazione”, p. 367.

<sup>1441</sup> Someone may oppose that there is a difference, as the sacrament *causes* the consecration (if the baptised *responds* to the grace, cf. LG 11), while Mary only *influences* the consecration (with her help to respond), but the view here is not on what causes or influences the consecration, but on the relational dimension on how a person takes his stand before God, deciding indeed to consecrate himself to God. The author has no intention to pose the sacrament and the devotional “consecration” on the same level: the latter is not a “repetition” of baptism or alternative to baptism, but just a “re-affirmation”. According to Stöckl, consecration is revealed in Christ as a Trinitarian action and in all its dimensions: the Father, the source of all holiness, consecrates the Son. The incarnate Son responds to the Father by consecrating himself. The Holy Spirit is the consecration-anointing in person. Consecration has an ontological dimension: to be consecrated/set apart. It has a redemptive-dynamic dimension: to consecrate oneself to God for the sake of mankind. It has an ecclesial-communitarian dimension: to share one’s own consecration/holiness with the People of God. Cf. F. STÖCKL, *Mary, Model and mother of consecrated life. A Marian synthesis of theology of consecrated life based on the teachings of John Paul II*, ICLA, Quezon City 2003, p. 115-123. The revelation of consecration in Christ is echoed in Mary in her “consecration” as virgin and mother.

<sup>1442</sup> Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Consacrazione”, p. 368, quoting John Paul II.

<sup>1443</sup> Cf. S. M. PERRELLA, “affidamento/consacrazione”, in S. DE FIORES - V. FERRARI SCHIEFER - S. M. PERRELLA (ed.) *Mariologia*, p. 20-21. For the religious consecration, cf. LG 44. The objection was raised in Germany, how e.g. a bishop can *consecrate* his diocese without the explicit agreement of all the inhabitants. This objection brought about two reactions: 1. Bishops and popes who did such a consecration of the diocese or the world called for personal preparation and acceptance of all people concerned. 2. The consecration was interpreted (in public) as a mere entrustment for protection and help. J. Stöhr shares with L. GOMMENGINGER, *Maria Königin des Erdkreises oder das soziale Reich Mariens*, s.ed., Paderborn 1933, p. 14, 45-46, the opinion that a collective consecration, done by the “head” of a social reality, does not force on the members a personal offering of self. J. STÖHR, “Die Rezeption der Marienweihe”, p. 226. It only expresses the wish of the “head”. Cf. S. DE FIORES, “Consacrazione”, in *Maria. Nuovissimo Dizionario di Mariologia*, vol. 1, p. 389.

<sup>1444</sup> This is the understanding of “entrustment” of the author, and probably of most theologians. J. Królikowski, however, quoting the former bishop Wojtyła without giving the source, has the opposite understanding: “Se si tratta però dell’affidamento, esso va al di là della donazione [...]. ‘L’affidarsi è invece: io affido me stesso, cioè io do me stesso, do con questa fiducia che solo Tu disponi bene di me. Perché? Perché Tu mi comprendi, perché Tu comprendi in tutta la pienezza la mia vocazione, il mio fine [...]’ L’affidamento costituisce allora un completamento ulteriore della donazione” a Maria. J. KRÓLIKOWSKI, “Consacrazione e affidamento a Maria nell’esperienza e nella teologia di papa Giovanni Paolo II”, in *POLSKIE TOWARZYSTWO MARIOLOGICZNE, La Vergine Maria nel magistero di Giovanni Paolo II*, PAMI, Città del Vaticano 2007, p. 196.

In medieval time, the devotional consecration to Mary was understood as a serious religious and juridical act,<sup>1445</sup> similar to a matrimony or a covenant with God, concluded with conversion, confession, prostration and the solemn prayer of consecration, then followed the presentation of gifts to Mary, such as the erection or adornment of a chapel in honour of Mary and the fight against moral abuses.<sup>1446</sup> Beginning with 1864, bishops were requesting the Pope to hold in the name of the Church a “consecration” of the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.<sup>1447</sup> Various popes have “consecrated” the whole world to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, alone or together with many bishops, but with the conscience that it is just a prayer of intercession for others. Every person has to find his own way to this point of giving all (time, energy, talents, sorrows, joys...) to God and accepting anything he wishes to give which is the highest possible cult, the beginning of sainthood, the aim of the Christian religion (and of some non –Christian religions as the Islam). The act of handing over one’s life to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the Hearts completely fixed on the will of God, has to be renewed in every situation of decision and in order to reach this stage it seems right to repeat an appropriate prayer very often. Repeated consecrations to God can and should give a growing awareness of the blessedness in dedicating all one has to God and the mission of Christ. Admitting repetitions and renewals of devotional and religious consecrations follows the human condition of imperfection and infinite possibility to improve in a process of learning. Every further step of consecration should be a sign of growing zeal in prayer and mystical union with the will of God, in exercise of patience and other virtues and in preaching/working for the salvation of souls.

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<sup>1445</sup> The possibility of a public consecration as a juridical act was given by the fact that the society in the MA was theocratic: God was seen as having established the social order of the world, the king and the whole society depended in the conception of the people on the benevolence of God. Cf. M. PARISSE, “La cristianizzazione della società”, in A. VAUCHEZ (ed.), *Storia del Cristianesimo. Religione-politica-cultura*, Borla, Roma 1997, vol. 5, p. 397.

<sup>1446</sup> Cf. the consecration of the city of Siena to the Virgin Mary in 1260, described by C. M. BOFF, *Mariologia sociale*, p. 154-155.

<sup>1447</sup> Cf. J. M. ALONSO, “Cuore Immacolato, I-IV”, p. 404. In 1897, Italian bishops were the first to consecrate their nation to the Heart of Mary. Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 405.



## Conclusion

In the introduction, the dogmatic main point of the present work was individuated in the union of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, as the dogmatic core of the spirituality of the Two Hearts of Love.

Being a theme connected to a pious devotion coming from Nigeria, it followed the need of examining culture and inculturation, and of showing that popular piety is re-gaining grounds on the theological field, in its power to lead the faithful to union with God through contemplation, thus sustaining them in their fidelity to the tradition of the Church, deepening the spirit with which the people of God celebrate the sacred liturgy and sharpening the moral conscience of the faithful. Since the dogmatic theme treats the union of a man and a woman, the question of the role of man and woman in God's creation was raised.

In this general conclusion an overview of the whole work shall be given, adding some concluding comments.

### **1. The Foundation context of the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love” and its beginning history**

In the first chapter, for a better understanding of the devotion of the Hearts of Love, the basic *cultural background* and the historic development were presented. The general overview of Nigeria gave an idea of the recent history of the country.

The sub-chapter on the culture in Imo State high-lighted the African aspiration for unity and peace through bonds of language, mutual assistance, love of the home-land, honour given to those who can control their passions, rituals that create communion, feasts in which each person contributes something, seeking the consent of the kindred or age-group before acting, the society supporting the weaker individual through cherishing life, through seeking communion also with the deceased dear ones and giving clearly divided roles to man and woman in the society especially in the area of ritual. This makes the reader understand why an African feels so much bound to his family, his kindred and his tribe, and how much social contacts are important to him: union has to be created and supported by all in the family doing their part for the up building of the same.

The centre of unity of all in the Traditional African Religion was the omnipresent God and the ancestors, represented in the world by the elders and the understanding that each person is in personal relationship with the High God. The social status of each was determined by age, self-control, donations given to the community or the poor and number of children, i.e. the proof of life-force.

The structure of the society exercised external constraint to unity. Not all which was done and helped to preserve peace was chosen in a free decision. Thus one can talk of suppression of human dignity for the sake of the survival of the group, and not always an informed conscience was being formed. In a Christian surrounding, such external constraint must be exchanged by gentle persuasion to do what is good, for the sake of God and in freedom of choice.

It was seen that the pagan understanding of death sounds like a fairy-tale from the past, as the long speeches at the grave-side are now usually impregnated by the Christian hope of resurrection.

Within man, it is the heart that is a centre of relationship with other life-forces in the world (human beings, animals, plants and mineral “life” as rivers and land). Seeing the importance of heart, blood, life and unity in the culture, it became understandable that a devotion to the two united, wounded and bleeding Hearts touches many Nigerians. The traditional omnipresence of prayer helps the people to see the importance of being always in dialogue with God. Prayer is understood as a real and great power.

The cultural background shows the possibility for Nigerians (and Africans) to have a deep understanding of the vital union of love between Jesus and Mary, both in its human aspect as a cooperation between man and woman and in its spiritual aspect of a creature being united to her God, in the aspect of such a union being fertile in the sense of becoming the centre of communion and life for a community.

Concerning the *ecclesiastical context* in Nigeria, it was seen that the change from the Traditional Religion to Christianity came mainly through education within 100 years and that it involved almost the complete tribe, with also many young people seeking the priesthood or religious life. It was seen that Vatican II gave an input which was followed cautiously, step by step. The Christianization of the tribe, instead of widening the union of the tribe to all Christians, is lacking as many Catholics still have only the blood relations in mind as their family. In addition, there appeared a new disunity in some families, caused by a Christianity in disunity. In this context the extraordinary growth of Pentecostal “churches” has been highlighted, and the resulting challenge to the Catholic Church. The challenge is to show a more Catholic profile in the teaching of moral and doctrine, pointing out the healthy truth which helps people to succeed spiritually in life, and also to show a more Catholic profile in the life of prayer, avoiding “powerful” expressions and allowing the Holy Spirit to let his tender whispering be heard (cf. 1 Kg 19,12). The Catholic Church in Africa should also start taking a lead in ecumenism, i.e. strive to call and integrate the various communities in a common charity and solidarity for the good of the people, battling to reduce inter-denominational provocations, in remembrance of saintly people as the Anglican Bishop Samuel A. Crowther. The differences in expressions of faith, morals and worship however, must be upheld, seeking together with the brothers of other denominations the expression which is nearest to the will of God revealed in the scriptures and in the tradition of the (early) Church.

In theology and liturgy, *inculturation* in Igboland is still in the shoes of childhood. In areas of language, quest for wealth, importance of land and purity, understanding of death, life as a gift from God, catholic devotions and prayer in general, many positive cultural values have entered the Catholic communities in Imo State, unhindered by European missionaries, as they were absent during the decisive years. These cultural values, especially the hierarchically structured parish with its many different (age-)groups promoting the life of the parish in different ways, create the “African” atmosphere in the local Church. A fruit of the inculturation of the Gospel in Nigeria are associations like the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love and the “Apostolate of the Precious Blood” of Barnabas Nwoye. Born through the instrumentality of Nigerian mystics, they have found divulgation also in other cultures. The devotion of the Hearts of Love has even Arabic, Chinese and Japanese-speaking members and has drawn Europeans to join the religious branches of

the Society, showing the “catholic” spirit of the founder. The Catholic Church in Nigeria, however, has to continue its work of confronting the negative points of the culture with the values and the faith in the Gospels, e.g. concerning the magic thinking among people.

In Africa, in strongly united communities and in situations of a public and communitarian guilt, public communitarian confession and general sacramental absolution of that particular, confessed guilt could be a valid pastoral action.

The difference of the role of man and woman in society is upheld by Nigerian intellectuals and by the traditional masses of the society. Thus the family life in the villages is generally healthy, and the children in the villages are still growing up in large numbers without psychological traumas.

It can be summarised that the pastoral care of the Catholic Church in Nigeria is facing people, whose general ideal is a most spiritual and prayerful life, in a Catholic way or in different errors, with the readiness to testify to what God has done in their life and with the need to be in close communion with other people. Benedict XVI, in his sermon for the inaugural Mass of the African Synod in Rome, 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2009, encouraged the synodal fathers by presenting Africa as the continent which represents an immense spiritual “lung” for a humanity which is in crisis of faith and hope. He sees also the danger of the “lung” falling sick.<sup>1448</sup> It seems very necessary that bishops in Africa continue to work with patience for the integration of every catholic with his genuine inspirations in the life of the Church as it was done with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. This is a fundamental condition for growth in inculturation which, in turn, is a fundamental condition for the growth of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The *ecclesiastical context in Germany* showed the difficulty of an “old” Church in reforming herself without losing devotion and faith. The Church in Germany is declining since 1968 or 1970, due to a reduction of the birth-rate and refusal of traditions in the society. The percentage of Catholics is now at 30% of the population, of which only 12% are practising. Among the reasons seems to be a wilful interpretation of the Vatican II by many priests and lay theologians with the elimination of devotions and some pious liturgical practices. Thus the faith and devotion in many modern-minded persons died off and many tradition-minded Catholics were driven away from the parishes and then lacked guidance. It can be concluded from the German negative experience that the (theologically) learned are not to suppress sentiments in the religious field but guide it to an authentic expression of faith, substituting gently all that leads to superstition, or that does not induce the faithful to a universal charity, or that leads to immoral thoughts.

The decrease in German Catholicism can be deduced also as due to the acceptance in government and society of the error of seeing man and woman as completely equal, convincing women to seek and to do “male” work and functions. Their function of transmitting life and faith in the family is thus partly suppressed.

Furthermore it can be seen as due to the fact that society first defined religion as something generally human and understandable, not as the worship of the One who reveals himself in ever new ways, who can be experienced in ways chosen by God. The society ended up in keeping quiet about God and values, thereby making a communal testimony of faith impossible.

The three tendencies seem to be symptomatic for the division visible in the Catholic Church in Germany: the acceptance of seemingly authentic visions and messages or the refusal to consider

anything which is “miraculous”; the acceptance that only men can be ordained priests (who should embrace celibacy) or the openness to the gender mainstreaming; speaking a language of (sober, but) mystic experience of God or speaking a language of scientific reasonability of faith.

In summary, the Catholic Church in Germany faces people in the parishes who may be active but who are not interested in any devotion. They are hence not fully capable of loving God and allowing themselves to be loved and transformed by God. Or the pastoral care faces people who live their right or errant spirituality in a clandestine way in their homes or on pilgrimages, in public halls or in chapels of religious houses, away from the control of bishops and/or parish priests who are feared as being “modern-minded” or prohibitive<sup>1449</sup>, the faithful thus being little effective in passing on their faith to the next generation as they cannot give a communal testimony.

There is need for thorough re-evangelisation in Germany and other Western countries - a conclusion already drawn by Pope Benedict XVI when he instituted a papal Congregation for this purpose on 29/6/2010.

The healing seems to lie in teaching the people the right approach to the mystical aspect of religion, helping them to find a personal relationship with God, in Christ, in a personal piety, which binds them gradually back to the Church, to the understanding of their own identity and to the acceptance of the moral values. Visions and apparitions should be taken more serious once more, as the authentic ones contribute a lot to the deepening of personal devotion of the faithful to God. Thus, as in Africa, the pastors must work for unity, trying to include all authentic charisms in the life of the Church. It seems also very important to re-affirm the different roles of man and woman, giving the woman the proper respect and recompense<sup>1450</sup> for the socially most important work of educating children.

The sub-chapter on the person of the founder *and the beginning history of the foundation* gave some idea of his family background, on how his charism and the new foundation grew in him, in Nigeria and in the world. It seems that it was the experience of the sound Catholicism in a united family and in the mission-schools, his being part of the Igbo vocation boom, the experiences of visions and locutions urging a growing self-abandonment and apostolic action, the Nigerian civil war and its famine, the confusing growth of sects and various Christian denominations, the positive challenge exercised by priests who were successful in founding “prayer ministries” and social activities, which made Montfort to strive for priesthood and spend it in prayer and preaching. The rejection in Germany (especially in 2000-2002) seemed to be based on a general rejection of movements with mystical inclination (Limburg) or on negative experiences with Nigerians (Cologne).

The history of the Society presents a great growth despite external pressures and financial problems. As in every young foundation, it seems necessary to elaborate more guidelines for life in the Congregation and for formation.<sup>1451</sup>

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<sup>1448</sup> Cf. <[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/homilies/2009/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20091004\\_sino-do-africa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20091004_sino-do-africa_en.html)>, p. 2. Seen on 14/7/2012.

<sup>1449</sup> Certainly not all clerics are avoided in “conservative” circles; some are highly cherished as pastors who are trying their best in encouraging what they perceive as good spiritualities. Besides, the personal experience of the author of this research about the situation in Germany ends with the year 2001 when she left for Italy.

<sup>1450</sup> Some countries are already doing it in some limited way, giving to families a certain amount of money for each child as long as the child is small or still studying.

<sup>1451</sup> Pope Francis gave some guidelines on 30<sup>th</sup> Novembre 2013: he pointed at four pillars of formation that have to go together: spirituality, intellectual studies, communitarian spirit and the zeal of apostolate work have to be instilled,

In the light of the cultural and ecclesial background, the charism seems to respond deeply to the need of the time: both in Nigeria, e.g. by stressing the importance of forgiveness from the heart and the need to expand the struggle for genuine unity and friendship towards people outside the own family and clan, i.e. to all those who love Jesus and Mary, and in Germany, e.g. by teaching how to pray proposing formulas, times of prayer, ways of expressing the prayer and by the struggle for official acceptance.

The Catholic theological meaning of history is the optimistic view that man has the duty to build up the world according to the plan of God. The Church makes effort to work in a way so that what is built will remain and be a progress towards a supernatural aim (the union of all in Christ) through the providential intervention of God. The history of the Society of the Hearts of Love is inserted in this great river of Ecclesial history.

The union of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary can be affirmed even in the life-story of Fr. Montfort, who received encouragement and direction from both in contemplation. The different role of man and woman in society could be seen and affirmed by the fact that the Sisters' Congregation was founded first to prepare the way; the Brothers and Priests followed later. Priests will always be the leaders in the SHL.<sup>1452</sup>

## **2. The congregational sources of the “Society of the Hearts of Love”: a plan for union**

In the second chapter, the congregational sources were analysed in general, with the aim of giving an idea of the *religious life* in the Hearts of Love, as a plan for union among men. G. Zarri was quoted in his observation of a difference in the beginning of religious life according to the two sexes: men were more inspired by the “militia Christi”, underlining the obedience to a common rule of life, while women had in the beginning a liturgically confirmed consecration to Christ, developing the idea of the virginal “spouse of Christ”. For both, the inspiration in the life of Jesus is unquestioned. Since religious life and also Marian devotion came up first in Israel and Egypt, and according to some voices of Fathers of the Church, also Mary is to be seen at the origin of religious life. As religious life throughout the centuries was a road of social/cultural liberation for women, bringing them into a situation of equality with (religious) men through the possibility of education and equal contribution for the construction of the Kingdom of God through their religiosity, it can be asserted that Mary helped to bring about the decisive change for women in Christian society. In the MA Marian piety among religious developed to “consecration”: those consecrated to God wanted to belong also entirely to the Virgin.

The union of Jesus and Mary was affirmed in the history of religious life by the fact that both inspired the origin and development of religious life which was born out of the wish to be

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always thinking of the people of God whom the religious have to serve as a models and educators. The formation is not done in checking that nobody commits a crime but through a lot of dialogue without fear, forming the heart. Some novices just do all to follow the rules, waiting for the day of profession. According to Pope Francis they become monsters, not saints. One always have to think about the faithful: the novice, will she be a loving sister and mother for them? He also underlined the apostolic effect of a true community-life, while members who live individualistic life destroy the apostolic action of the community. Whoever cannot live the fraternal life, cannot live the religious life. There will be conflicts and these must not be ignored but be treated with signs of “Eucharistic tenderness”. They must dissolve in a growth of maturity. Cf. A. SPADARO (ed.), “‘Svegliate il mondo!’ Colloquio di Papa Francesco con i Superiori Generali” in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 165/1 (2014) 10-14.

<sup>1452</sup> Cf. *Original Constitutions*, Art. 39; appendix 3.

united with Christ and his mother by living like them and in loving relationship with them. Hence Jesus and Mary must play an important role in explaining and living the vows. In many congregations the relationship with Mary is much emphasized. This is encouraged by the magisterium, especially by “*Vita Consecrata*”. Not to be neglected is the Epistula *Litterae encyclicae* (22/5/1988), a meditation of the non-universal ordinary Magisterium of John Paul II, of non-doctrinal character. It is important for this research, as it accords to Mary a very explicit and interactive role as a model, speaking of a desire of hers which has to be responded to.

*In the congregational sources, Jesus and Mary are the owners.* The union of Jesus and Mary is affirmed in the sources of the Society SHL by presenting them as an example of pure and holy relationship with each other, as a union/communion which is open to incorporate others, e.g. the Sisters. The Sisters of the Hearts of Love are to bind themselves to both Jesus and Mary.

Generally, Constitutions are to give a law of life and to inspire devotion according to the charism of the founder. The SHL Constitutions were originally written for a pious Society, and still need to be revised.

The *vows and four commitments* are both condition for and fruit of the union with Jesus and Mary. Concerning the vow of chastity the Constitutions admonish to keep oneself free from the wish to possess any person or to be possessed by anyone outside God, out of love for Jesus. The founder seems to presuppose hard work; under “poverty” his stress is on the generosity of sharing. With regards to obedience, the service of the superior (preparer) is seen as similar to the leadership of a chief of an African village, leading by inspiring, involving the community in the search for the will of God (in important matters). The sisters have to accept the final decisions of preparers, rejecting the human wish to be autonomous. The preparer must give the example of obedience to God.

Together with the three vows, the four SHL *obligations* should help the sisters to be united. The “commitment” of truthfulness is the promise of honesty towards oneself, God and neighbour. The capacity to live the other three obligations is the proof and fruit of the grace of vocation in the Hearts of Love. The main “commitment” of love is the starting point and aim of all vows, visible in their fulfilment and in the capacity to forgive offences. The “commitment” of Prayer has its special point in faithfulness to the devotion of the Hearts of Love and to the times of prayer of the Society. The obligation of apostolate should help the sisters to enter into communion with the laity and with all who are inclined to the devotion of the Hearts of Love.

Prayer and *contemplation* are the main means to attain union with Jesus and Mary. The origin of the devotion of the Hearts of Love lies in the contemplation of the passion of Christ, which, sacramentally and mystically, is always something present, and in the call to comfort the Heart of Jesus, and to unite with his Heart. According to the founder, the relationship with God which the members should aim at is not a quest for extraordinary experiences, but a growth in daily abandoning oneself to the will of God. Father Montfort follows rather the “bridal” mysticism of union, formed by Carmelite and medieval spirituality, with great attention to the humanity of Christ, his passion and his Heart.

It was seen that contemplation is achieved by acts of free will, deciding to forgive, not to seek human gratifications, to carry the cross. Extraordinary experiences were explained as authentic only if they are salvific, leading to increase of virtues, reverence of God, and assigning the work to call others also to the fountain of life. Nowadays, theologians recall the fact that the public

revelation was given through the senses. Even the apparitions of the resurrected Christ are understood as bodily apparitions. Thus bodily apparitions, or locutions heard with the ear are to be evaluated higher than “infused” knowledge of spiritual things, which are mainly important for the sanctification of the receiver or people around him, but difficult to communicate to one who has no direct contact with the mystic.

As contemplation means union with God, Mary is the highest model of contemplation. The father founder first contemplates the union with Jesus which Mary achieved in her life. Now the aim is no longer union with Christ, but union with Jesus and Mary. It is their union which has to be demonstrated to the world. God can touch or see a soul directly and unite with the soul, thus transforming the soul. It was added that Mary seemingly has the privilege to do the same, to unite together with Christ with every soul that is well disposed, out of her situation as perfectly redeemed and assumed creature. The action of Mary in a soul united to her, however, is very difficult to specify, since, if she acts, she must be thought to act in unison with God. Two ways of Marian action are conceivable: either Mary influences the soul in the name of God in the sense of a messenger, communicating a divine call, e.g. to conversion, or she may be perceived as standing on the side of the soul, helping to accept an intervention or initiative of God. This research advances the thesis (in sub-chapter 3.3.4.3.) that the Mother of God has received from God the privilege to help by communicating her own docility to the will of God and other virtues to the Church and to any person who invokes her in honest search for God. Apart from this moral aspect of her help, this research advances the thesis that she communicates not only her faith in the sense of her receptivity towards God, but also in the sense of giving a living contact with the contents of faith: the person of Jesus and all the mysteries of his life, and the mystery of her own person. Finally it advances the thesis that the union of Jesus and Mary is so intimate that it can be called a “union of hearts”, and that it must have an impact in the life of the Church.

The congregational sources emphasize in prayer the need to dedicate in constancy certain times to God every day, that especially through holy Mass the members participate in the union of the Hearts of Love, and they point at the Prayer of the Hearts of Love as a privileged means to accomplish the personal effort and to show the willingness to enter into this unfathomable union.

Through the study of the “*inspired*” *elements of the foundation* the conclusion can be drawn of the importance of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist for a life in unity with God and fellow men. These six elements underline the need to prepare the Holy Eucharist by acts of charity, washing of feet, a mild but regular fasting, prayers in procession, and the need of “digesting” well the Holy Eucharist, building a deep, personal relationship with Him in thanksgiving, adoration, consecration and acts of charity. The “inspired” elements help to develop devotion, charity and a deeper understanding of the union of the Two Hearts.

The washing of feet forms a common ethics of service and charity. It directs the attention to the needs and hidden points of the fellow members, with the intention to help them.

Celebrating/praying together creates communion, while directing the attention to God, in special times dedicated exclusively to God, in communitarian processions, kneeling, fasting; in getting up in the night to pray at length, desiring the advent of God and his Reign and participating mystically in the wedding of Christ with his Church, represented by Mary. It shows the importance of teaching the people of today steadfastness by encouraging them to respect fixed times of prayer as appointments with the Lord.

The Prayer and Image of the Hearts of Love are religious symbols that bind the members together. The Prayer of the Hearts of Love presents them as “ever united”: in Love (in the will of God), in saving souls, in transforming hearts into “flaming fire of love”, in using the faithful as instruments (for the salvation of others), ever united by the flow of blood of the faithful, flowing from the Heart of Mary to the Heart of Jesus, “reviving” him who is pierced by the sins of the world. The Prayer consists of a repeated consecration of the whole person to these Two Hearts. The Prayer uses the symbols “heart”, “wound”, “blood”, “fire” and “arrows” (and related verbs) in order to create the door to mystical prayer and contemplation. To make the Prayer more communal, the author suggested praying it in the plural form. (“We love you...”) The image of the Hearts of Love focuses the attention on their union and also on their union with the Holy Trinity and with the Church.

“Centres of the Hearts of Love” provide the space where the devotion can be communally lived.

The proclamation of the union of the Hearts of Love gives a prophetic, eschatological hope. This union is explained not only by sermons and catechism, but also by prayers. It was proved that contemplating the union of Jesus and his Mother avoids the danger of seeing Mary “nearer” or more “merciful” than Jesus himself. Contrarily, it reveals the plan of God for mankind to be in union with him. Mary is the revelation of the human vocation to be united to God, to be bearer of God.

The “only solution” of consecrating to the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts is the common aim of the Society. The preaching of the founder provides a “new” concept of salvation, which is seen as a renewed and ever growing relationship with God in Christ, and being inserted in a community of the faithful. He urges all to love and join Jesus and Mary in their union, who are now the core of the family of God, with the devotion of the Hearts of Love.

It needs to be annotated that the Father Founder is still alive. Hence, further developments in the charism of the SHL are to be expected.

### **3. The Marian element in the Congregational sources of the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love”: the union which God actualized in the hearts of Jesus and Mary**

In the Society of the Hearts of Love, the union among human beings is seen as sustained not mainly by blood relationships or social relationships, but by a centre of communion for all mankind: Jesus and Mary.

In a first step, it was seen that the “*heart*” in the Bible is not only a symbol of love, but the human centre of relationships. It denotes the whole person, it is the centre of life of a person, especially in his stand before God and in his will power, indicating spiritual perception of an event. The symbol calls for respect for life and dignity of a person; it stresses his uniqueness and capacity to be in relationship with others, a mother in a special way with her unborn child. The NT makes the heart a dwelling place not only for the soul, but for God himself. Later theology deepened the understanding of the “heart” as organ to desire, see and communicate holistically with God. In spirituality, it was also seen as a space of protection and as an object used to express the gift of oneself: it became the object to express love (self-giving and holistic union). In the theological language, “Mary” thus recalls a certain person, “Heart of Mary” emphasizes the will of that person,



her nature and way of life, her devotion, love and faith.<sup>1453</sup> The expression “to unite with the hearts of Jesus and Mary” points to a more personal and intimate union than the simple expression “to unite with Jesus and Mary”. To talk about “union with the hearts of Jesus and Mary” specifies not only the quality but also the type of union, as a not bodily or simply spiritual union but as a holistic one, involving every aspect of the person, allowing Jesus and Mary to take control of one’s body, soul, rationality, religiosity, affection, memory, will and relationships.<sup>1454</sup>

The devotion to the hearts of Jesus and Mary and the understanding of the heart as centre of relationships, in which all the dimensions of a person participate, can help the man of the present time which is characterized by broken relationships and atomization of the society, to re-integrate. As a quite worldwide understood symbol which attracts attention and points at something greater than the tangible thing, it creates communion.<sup>1455</sup> Right from the beginning, the devotion to the Sacred Heart was connected with a strong consideration of the humanity of Christ (which remains an ever necessary instrument of mediation to enter into communion with the mystery of God) with the contemplation of his wounds, with the idea of a mystical exchange of hearts.

The *social aspect of the Two Hearts* showed where the solution to many problems seen in the recent history of the Church in Germany must be sought: it was emphasized that the human being is in need of personal relationships which must be developed as communion, with conscience of self and with communication. Finally, they must be based on God in order to result as positive relationships. Only positive relationships can lead a person to union and to find union (with oneself and others) and thus to find one’s identity. The concept of “identity”, the “being oneself” which belongs to the “Dasein”, the existence, can be described as “narrative identity”, i.e. an identity which results from all experiences of a lifetime. Identity is understood in this research as partly based on given limits of biological facts, social and moral laws, and partly to be created by personal decisions which lead to various experiences in relationships. Finally, the theological aspect came in: relationship with God, which follows the same laws. Both “salvation” and “holiness” were defined as “union with God in Christ”, underlining the relational aspect of salvation. The union with God was made possible by the Incarnation, Jesus taking to himself the human nature in a hypostatic union, offering to God in love a human life and death. It was raised possible by his resurrection, Jesus taking up again his human nature, body and soul, after his death. It was made accessible when Jesus carried the human nature definitively into heaven, and not only his own male human nature, but in Mary also the female one, because “male and female he created them.” (Gen 1,27) Furthermore, there was postulated a “psychological side” of the “objective redemption”: the power of attraction in the objective salvation that happened in Christ and was fulfilled in Mary is proposed here as integral part of the same objective salvation. Jesus redeemed mankind also in his function as

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<sup>1453</sup> Cf. the expression “Drawing from Mary’s heart, from the depth of her faith”. RM 37.

<sup>1454</sup> Such a “possession” of the faithful by Jesus and Mary can in no way be compared with a possession by a Satanic spirit. A demon, once he has been called and accepted, maybe out of curiosity, because of being attracted by the mystery of evil, or because of an uncontrolled desire for special experiences, takes control of the spirit of man and uses his body to commit atrocities, both against the possessed person and against others. The possessed person needs prayers and love from others, and the experience of them rejecting that spirit from the depths of their heart, sometimes for a long period of time, before he can be able to free his will from the control of the devil. The Spirit of Christ and other heavenly spirits, called and accepted, guide and inspire the will of man, but always leave him with his free will. Even a little wanton deviation from the will of God can drive the Holy Spirit away, until the person returns with contrition.

<sup>1455</sup> Cf. M. G. MASCIARELLI, *Il cuore*, p. 27-28, 33.

the model of a positive relationship with God in complete trust. “Subjective salvation” then is when one allows Christ like Mary to “incarnate” mystically in oneself.

The congregational sources of the Sisters of the Two Hearts of Love are the Constitutions, the prayers, the meditations, directions and sermons of the founder. After the introductory work (chapter one and two) meant for a correct understanding of these sources, their special but Catholic approach to Mariology and dogmatics was analysed as a presentation of growing holiness, relationship and union of Mary with God in her Son.

Going through the *Marian dogmas and opinions of Marian theologians*, each sub-chapter gave the opinion of theologians and a more or less elaborated confirmation by the Magisterium. Then the view of the founder was presented and commented on.

First the *graces which God communicated to Mary* in her life were presented as three: the Immaculate Conception, the Divine Motherhood and the gift of knowing Christ and his teaching.

Her Immaculate Conception expresses the fact that Mary was created in view of Christ and the new creation in him. The contemporary discussion on “original sin” was presented. The founder sees in the Immaculate Conception a preparation for her maternal ministry: making her from the beginning not to be attached to anything but God. In the Theology of the Hearts of Love, being the union of Jesus and Mary at the centre, the Immaculate Conception is seen as a preparation and a call to virginity. Man, with his will power is called to decide for the grace of Christ, for entering into communion with the paschal mystery and receiving the Holy Spirit of Love. This decision which should be taken at baptism, has to be re-affirmed continuously, as human beings are always free to reverse a decision taken once, until the point of death. It may be possible to see Mary from the beginning of her existence on the spiritual level of a baptised small child who was taught some basic virtues and daily prayers. Such a child who has not yet taken a personal firm decision to follow the way of God, can still fall into mortal sin. It is possible to see the gift of the Immaculate Conception as a special help given to Mary to turn her attention and love towards God. Her special grace is not a means for her to reach heaven more easily but a challenge to soar higher. It does not remove from her the duty to respond. The common idea in East and West (there with the feast of the presentation of Mary, here with the Immaculate Conception) is the necessity of special preparation for a unique ministry, which must involve a moral, personal effort (in order to be a human preparation) and which must be thought of as sustained and anticipated by the grace of God.

In the Divine Motherhood as presented in Luke, Mary became the dwelling place of Christ and the Spirit through her loving acceptance of the will of God for her. The contemporary Magisterium underlines the relational aspect of this motherhood: her entering into communion with the mystery of life.<sup>1456</sup> The founder stresses more her ministerial status in receiving the gift of Christ: “it is in and through Mary that mankind received Jesus”. In addition it could be said that here Mary received the sense for her life, the vocation: to be completely of God, to be needed and possessed (indwelled) by Him, and thus to possess (dwell in) Him: God willed to “need” human beings to draw all to follow his will and be saved, and each has a special task to accomplish.

The gift of knowing Christ is so obvious in the life of Mary that it is rarely discussed. Father Montfort has a preference for the idea of Christ being the revelation of the Love of God, in him the Love of God can be encountered. This can be seen e.g. in Art. 6: “God made his infinite Love

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<sup>1456</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Mulieris dignitatem*, n. 18.

visible, more accessible and exemplary by becoming a human being". The founder fixes the attention to the human experience of a person: knowing how he relates to others in love, what annoys him, what makes him happy. In addition it was commented that Mary should be seen as gaining both spiritually and also "theologically" from her privileged contact with the person and the teachings of Christ.

Secondly, the *response of Mary* to the gifts of God was equally presented in three points: the Perpetual Virginity, her receiving Christ in faith at the Annunciation, and Mary's followership.

The historic and the symbolic aspects of the Perpetual Virginity were mentioned underlining that it is not a sign of contempt of the human wedlock but sign of the gift of oneself and an exaltation of the sexual energy of man as so precious that it can be offered to God in a complete continence. It was explained how on the physical basis builds the "spiritual virginity", love of God and obedience to God, as expressed in the Magnificat and in the detachment from people. On the foundation and the importance of physical virginity/chastity, the founder develops the thought that the spiritual virginity of Mary – love of God and obedience to him, seeking his will and desiring his presence – is necessary for her to be in perfect union with Christ. The virginity of Mary is not a marginal fact, as virginity brings autonomy and capacity to donate oneself in freedom, complete openness and love, for building an intimate, personal relationship.<sup>1457</sup> It remains a secure part of the Catholic faith that God wanted this virginity for his earthly mother, as a preparation both for her diaconal ministry to the mystery of the Verbo caro factum est, and for her continuing ministry as sign and example to the people of God.

Concerning the reception of Christ in the Annunciation, many theologians were quoted: Mary here represented Israel; the importance of her answer was shown and her inner freedom, reverence, responsibility and faith. Father Montfort stresses in the Constitutions the aspect of Mary providing a place in the world for the Incarnation. He built a parallelism of love and obedience towards the Father in the offer of the Son to become man and the acceptance of Mary to be the mother: it is a clear allusion to a spiritual "matrimony", a covenant. This research proposes to see in the visitation to Elizabeth a sign that Mary had begun to live the "resurrected" life, the life of the young Church going everywhere to proclaim and bring Christ. Mary first of all did not speak the Word, rather she allowed the Spirit to "incarnate" him in her and she brought him to others.

The discipleship of Mary is very important for the present work, since it expresses in an eminent way a deeply involving personal relationship, similar to the terms "mother" and "bride". The theme came up in the discussions of Vatican Council II and was taken up by mariologists only in the 1980's. It is connected to the Biblical theme of the faith of Mary and to the "bridal" love which Catholic theologians contemplated in her since the MA. It was shown that discipleship involves an arduous struggle for faith and faithful love towards the "Master". On the part of human effort, the discipleship of Mary is the peak of her union with Christ. The spiritual virginity developed into attachment to the Redeemer and his teaching. The union between disciple and Master can be compared to a "marriage" covenant, in which Mary has the role of representing all believers. Her disciple-like attention to Jesus increased her faith and her readiness to control her human sentiments. In the founder can be seen the idea of continuity of the discipleship of Mary from the birth to the death of Jesus. A (rare) comment during a sermon makes it clear that in the

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<sup>1457</sup> Cf. D. DEL GAUDIO, "Maria modello", p. 281.

founder, a human *process* of growing in knowledge and faith can be seen in Mary: “In the Annunciation, Mary did not know what it means to be the mother of Jesus.”<sup>1458</sup> Father Montfort speaks of her “sharing in his redemptive sufferings” (Art. 8), seemingly in the traditional sense of compassion. It is remarkable that the founder did not follow the “traditional” presentation of deducing from her participation in the passion her main merit and direct salutary influence of Mary on the faithful. The Marian experience of the cross is contemplated by Father Montfort in the view of her participating in the life of Christ. The compassionate love of Mary is just her “salvation”: it is part of her union with Christ. To investigate further the mystery of Mary suffering with Christ, a basic vision of the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts was analysed. It was commented that the capacity of Mary to ‘make the Heart of Jesus regain its blood and thus save the world’ depends on her acceptance to be wounded *by the Love of God*. Taking up the above mentioned “struggle” in the life of a disciple, the wounds of the Heart of Mary were interpreted as signs of her victorious fight to stay in loving union with Christ, despite his not being (immediately) understandable, disappointing her and sometimes rejecting her motherly care, cf. Lk 2,48-49; Mt 12,46-50 par. and Jn 2,4. The vision was explained saying that the blood gushing from the wounds of her heart, caused by the “arrows” of the Love of Christ, Mary allowed it to flow into the heart of Christ, wounded by the sins of mankind, to sustain him in doing the will of God. The acts of Mary of *receiving* the redeemer in every act of his, especially the love of Christ on the Cross, is her subjective salvation: in Mary, a seed of perfect union with Christ is present in the world. To this seed/beginning of salvation, the faithful are being associated. This research wishes to present the foundation of the Church in a relational view, seeing it founded on the communion of Jesus with Mary, the apostles and other disciples, a communion into which all are to be called. This research takes up the Biblical and African concept of a “corporate personality”, seeing in Mary the representative of the Church in the aspect of disciple and “Bride of Christ”.

In a third sub-chapter, the acceptance of Christ of the response of Mary was looked at under the title *The growing relationship of Jesus with Mary – Marian cooperation*. First the Trinitarian and Christological theology underlying a relational Mariology were looked at. Then the Mariology was deduced: under the term “cooperation”, many theologians treat the idea of “co-redemption”, but this research remains here on the level of human relationships during the life of Jesus. It treats the aspect of the personal gain Jesus had from the human relationship with his mother. The most obvious gain is that Christ received from her physical reality his human nature. An aspect which is treated very rarely in theology and Magisterium is the subsequent “social generation”: he received from her the emotive-affective energy necessary for the process of identification. This includes that Mary (and Joseph) generated in Christ a process of sharing the parents’ culture and the development of an attitude towards life which is the foundation for a capacity for oblation love. John 2,3 is explained as the challenge not to hide any longer, but to begin his public preaching and ministry. In the founder, comments on what Jesus gained from Mary are rare and general. However, he emphasizes that all Mary did for the Son was inspired and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Thus the role of the Holy Spirit in the union of the Two Hearts is very clear. In the commentary, it was reviewed that Mary received and answered three graces: in her perpetual virginity, in the acceptance of Christ at the annunciation and in the discipleship. Only the second point receives attention in the

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<sup>1458</sup> 8/12/2000, Friday, Immaculate Conception (Orlu, Holy Mountain) 9am Morning Mass. Appendix 4.

above mentioned few theological studies which treat an acceptance and response of Jesus to an act or attitude of Mary. This research advances the thesis that based on her virginity and her victorious battle with human negative sentiments, Mary gave to Jesus the possibility for a relationship with a woman which transcended the normal mother – child relationship. It was sustained that in this relationship Christ found his identity as “bridegroom” of mankind, as someone permanently bound to humanity out of love. As the first disciple, Mary marks the beginning of the mastership of Jesus. This research advances the thesis that through the attention of the mother to his words, Jesus discovered himself as an authority. Furthermore, as both became “Victims of Love”, persons who sacrifice themselves for the will of God to be done on earth, this research presents the thesis that the two wounded and bleeding Hearts are the image of those, who found together their identity as Centre of communion of the Church, finding their identity in their union with each other, in faithfulness to the plan of God.

The fourth sub-chapter treats *The fulfilment of the union of the Two Hearts*, once again in three historical steps: Mary caring for the faithful in the early Church; the Assumpta as sign of encouragement for the Church; the glorified mother helping from heaven.

The Virgin was presented as a spiritual centre of the early Church in the NT, as first disciple of Christ now teaching others. Father Montfort did the same in the Constitutions, showing Mary as associated to the mission of Christ which consists of doing the will of God: worshipping the Father in the Spirit and teaching purity, love and zeal for God and charity for all. Union with Christ is realized in joining him in these two main aspects of his work, prayer and preaching, continuing his prayer in time and space and repeating and applying his teaching in one’s life and before other people.

Concerning the Assumption, its harmony with the Biblical message was highlighted and it was presented as a sign of hope. The world is already saved, because through the Virgin all the effects of redemption are already present in the world. Her glorification in Christ is her definite union with the Holy Trinity, her being definitively part of the mystical “Body” of Christ, into which she brings in her own body. In the light of Mary as a sign of salvation for others, her privileges of grace are more clearly given to her for the sake of all. In the Constitutions Art. 15, the Assumpta is not only the type of the Church, but the “prototype of the new creation in grace”. Her “crown of eternal glory” is also the crown of “union with God”, and every child of God “hopes to share” in it.<sup>1459</sup> Mary has become an illustration of the teachings of Christ, because she was “assumable”, giving to God the possibility to express the greatness of his Love for mankind. As she wants to share all she has with all believers, like Jesus, her presence in heaven doubles the human hope that all others will follow.

The “fama signorum”, the vital influence of the heavenly mother is well attested in tradition, theologians and Magisterium. The reflection of theologians on the vital influence of Mary was presented: she is seen by many as the Mediatrix of all Graces, urged by the Holy Spirit to help all believers. The teaching of the Magisterium is very rich in this topic. In the founder, there is the theme of Mary suffering with Christ in heaven. He encourages the members to entrust themselves to Mary in their striving for virtue and for heaven. He sees her action as especially efficacious, because Mary takes those who entrust themselves to her into her heart, i.e. she unites with them,

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<sup>1459</sup> Appendix 3.

sharing her own faith and virtues with the believers. Thus he maintains that there is no qualitative difference between the Immaculate Conception of Mary and the grace of baptism, equally maintaining that the call to remain sinless is for all. The same graces which he sees available for all in the Church, he calls them also personal graces of Mary which she shares freely with all. In the founder, Mary is “Mediatrice” by making the only Mediator present through her union with him. His preferred title for Mary is however “Heart of Love”. As “Love” is a name or title of God himself (1Gv 4,8), “Heart of Love” can be translated as “Heart of God”, which could be seen as a greater Marian title than “Mother of God”. Also this sub-chapter was concluded with some comments: in the founder can be seen some reminiscence of the spirituality of the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, but not in its popular level of just seeking protection. The “giving ourselves to Mary”, and the following “the way of Mary” is a clear indicator for the seeking of a mystical union with her. The heavenly communion of saints with God implies the participation in the divine omniscience and omnipotent power of love, of touching the hearts of people and of communicating. Thus Mary has (in the Holy Spirit) the power to encourage men to embrace Salvation (i.e. Jesus). In this way God creates communion between himself, the saints in heaven (and purgatory) and the faithful on earth. The thesis of “Mulieris dignitatem”, that especially women are called to follow the example of Mary, was re-proposed in the sense of their being called in a special way to a dynamic relationship in which Mary lives out “her” virtues in those who unite with her. This communion could be likened in some cases (especially in the cases of female saints) to an “incarnation”, making Mary herself present, making present *her* faith, *her* virtues and *her* special union with Jesus. Such a mystical union could be paragonated in Africa to the “coming back to the world” of the ancestors, with the consciousness and acceptance that it is Mary guiding the person. The person who represents or “incarnates” the “spirit of Mary” has to receive her in a free decision and keep to it. The mystical union with Mary is parallel to the mystical union with Jesus, who is the Mediator by uniting with human beings and allowing them to offer to God his own divine love and worship of God, his own obedience unto death. The Holy Trinity involved her in bringing all men into union with the will and life of God, as she did her own part of following Jesus wholeheartedly. It can be asserted that after every act of accepting the revelation in Christ, the Holy Spirit took control of her in ever new ways, inspiring her. Concerning the question of “Mary Mediatrice”, it was said that as salvation is union with God in Christ, the only Saviour, “mediation of salvation” is simply the help to human beings to build up their own personal relationship of love with God. Mary and the Church mediate salvation by making present the person of Jesus. Both are necessary because they are associated with Christ in a way that he identifies with them. From this fact that Jesus identifies himself with his disciples (cf. also Mt 25,40.45), it could be asserted that a person who wantonly excludes Mary or another person who is already one with Christ from his heart, might meet the resistance of Jesus when trying to unite with Jesus alone. An exclusive union with Jesus and God, i.e. excluding the communion of saints the faithful are called to join in, may not be possible. This research proposes that Mary received Christ as a gift from God which changed her to become permanently and qualitatively the first bearer and bringer of Christ.

Finally, the Two Hearts of Love were presented as Centre of union in images and prayer.

The *artistic meditation on the union of the Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary* was seen as rather desolate as the pictures used for the devotion so far are only bringing out the hearts of Jesus and Mary for receiving veneration, mostly without showing the invitation and possibility for the faithful

to join the Two Hearts in doing the will of God. The sacred arts should develop new expressions in order to capture the mystery of their union and the invitation to unite with them.

The *devotion of the Two Hearts of Love in the framework of popular piety* formed the last part of the work. The “popular piety” considered was limited to Catholic devotions that have a firm grounding in the Christian revelation, and live in harmony with the Church’s liturgy. Concerning the Marian cult and generally it was seen that popular piety and liturgy are both important and should inspire each other. Popular piety gives the possibility to make experiments and to experience the value or not of a type of prayer or a text, and the genius of the faithful has used this freedom to express their love and self-giving to the God revealed in the Scripture and celebrated in the sacred liturgy. The act of “consecration” to God was seen as a fundamental Christian act (present in the sacraments), which needs to be renewed frequently (e.g. through a devotional consecration to Mary) in order to become ever more vivid in the conscience of the faithful. The official recommendation of good devotions, especially those which help to interiorize the meaning of the basic Christian exercise of consecrating oneself to God, was encouraged.

#### **4. Where has this research reached?**

The anthropological question of man and woman was looked into, affirming with a solid tradition in the Church their equal dignity and right for education and their different functions in society. The polarity of man and woman are together with the polarity of body and soul, and individual and community, the basic problem of every human being. These polarities have to be brought into union with patience and love according to the will of God, by each person in his own life and in the society. How can the important work of raising and educating one’s children be made more appreciated, remunerated and valued? How can women be protected from being forced into the role of the bread-winner of the family? How can women be given more room for their spiritual contribution in the Church, to exercise their feminine charism of counsel and support?

It needs to be annotated that the relationship of Jesus and Mary cannot be taken as a normal or ideal relationship between man and woman because of the divinity of Christ: the type of submission due to him as God is of a very different quality than the partnership submission which a woman should give to her husband. On the other hand, Jesus has raised his Mother gradually into a true partnership position with himself which is her glorification and “divinisation”, her being taken up into the divine life, and to some extent already while on earth, in her cooperation in Christ’s work. The features of their relationship are therefore a real model for man and woman of every time and age, while the sublimity of their relationship is unique and can be lived by each soul only with Christ, the Bridegroom. The Annunciation and Divine Motherhood shows how a woman must be taken serious by the man in her decisions and her responsibility for her life and in her dignity as Mother of life. It shows the importance of a religiously lived chastity of spouses, to preserve the divine gift of bodily purity, which is necessary for both to keep the contact with God, who alone can unite two persons in love, giving them the mission to build up a family. The discipleship of Mary shows that the woman is to give counsel and inspiration but it remains the duty of the man to discern, to accept or reject a counsel, to keep watch over the woman who can be misled by her feelings. The cooperation of the Virgin proves that a woman who follows the “master” does not remain an obedient sheep, but can be inspired by God in her creativity, to sustain the partner in new

and surprising ways, giving him the challenges he needs to go ahead, especially if she accepts human disappointments from him.

The importance of devotions to sustain the faithful in fidelity to the Church, to deepen their spirituality and to sharpen their moral conscience was re-affirmed by the history of the devotion of the Hearts of Love with its cultural background, and also in theory. The Holy Father and many bishops are aware of this, but the practical realization of this awareness is often hindered or ridiculed. A lot of work of enlightenment of the clergy, the theologians and the laity is yet to be done. The same is true for the importance of inculturation, which needs to be continued always and everywhere.

Concerning the importance of apparitions, i.e. the active presence of Jesus and Mary, saints and angels in the Church, this research proposes to ask whether it makes sense to continue to cling to the traditional phrase that the public revelation was concluded with the death of the last apostle. Could it not be said that the “public revelation” began with the baptism of the first disciple, which is based on the life, death and resurrection of Christ and on the faith of Mary in the baptised disciple, served by the successors of the apostles? Of course, such a “public revelation” is what used to be called “tradition”. The critique and proposal is here not to change the world-view and does not deny the absolute and fundamental importance of the Gospels in the life of the Church. The proposal is to change the nomenclature, which confines words of God through human beings *after* the apostles into a merely private sphere.

The dogmatic main point of the union of the Two Hearts of Love was highlighted through the history and practice of religious life and of the SHL, it was analysed in its beginning in grace, its development by personal effort of Jesus and Mary, its perfection in finding the personal identity in the relationship with the other, its consequence in being the centre of communion for all the saints and angels. It was demonstrated as a union which can be joined through the practise of the religious vows, and/or through prayer of love and acts of charity.

The life of Mary gives the key to the process of growth in union with Christ: 1. gratefully receiving all the gifts of God, e.g. the sacraments; 2. responding to the gifts e.g. by preserving the natural gift of virginity in a chaste life and by paying great attention to the teachings of Christ; 3. cooperating with the Holy Spirit in any work and mission one sees oneself called to do; 4. allowing God to glorify one and to continue using one to draw others. All this should be done in conscious union with Jesus and Mary, the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts.

The “thesis” of the author that the understanding of salvation as a renewed personal relationship with God can be applied to Mariology, was broadly used in the third chapter. Backed up by many other modern theologians, this research has “modernised” the whole presentation and understanding of Marian dogmas without changing their content. It overcame the problem that in former times the Immaculate Conception was already seen as the “salvation” of Mary, thus presenting her as a person who did not need to fight to overcome temptations. Seeing that she, too, had to sustain a fierce spiritual struggle in life, the struggle leading to complete self-donation to the will and plan of God, it is no longer necessary to overstress her physical sufferings in order to make her extraordinary holiness understandable. It was not said that Mary “shared” in the objectively redemptive acts of Jesus Christ: in the incarnation, the public life, the passion, death, the resurrection, the ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit through her love and presence/participation. But in this research, the stress is not on her being “co-redemptrix” but her



being the first and foremost disciple, cooperating with Jesus by uniting to him. Her assumption into heaven is no longer “singular privilege”, but becomes more clearly an invitation to all the faithful to entrust themselves to her guidance and help, and to follow her example of holiness. This research has overcome a view of Mary in heaven which was too static, seeing there also the dynamics of personal relationships. The self-donation of Jesus and Mary continues in heaven, as they decide to love all, despite the pain caused by those who refuse the Love of God and sustained by those who show them love. The mediation of grace of Mary is no longer to be seen as a distribution of pieces of a heavenly “treasure”, but a human sharing of faith in the one who is the “Treasure”. This research has equally overcome (and also in this aspect it stands in a tradition which becomes ever stronger in the Church) the idea of a Jesus who passes through his life-history without any change: a truly incarnated God allows himself to be “changed” and determined by his relationships with the human beings. Thus it becomes possible to believe that every soul that unites with God adds to the identity of God a new facet: the Creator God becomes the God of Abraham, the God of David, the God of Mary, the God of Simon Peter. The man that unites to God does not dissolve in Him without leaving any trace.

The nucleus of this research counts only 57 pages, thus it cannot be said that the union of Jesus and Mary has been exhaustively explained. It is a mystery beyond understanding; thus many more thoughts and insights are to be expected in future in this area. This research is a first trial. Especially it has been excluded to treat expressively the relationships of the Father and the Spirit with Mary. Thus the Mariology of relationship can be developed in this direction.

Theological discussion is called to evaluate further the “new” concept of salvation as a renewal of man’s relationship with God. It is challenged to apply this concept of salvation and the Mariology of relationship e.g. to the celebration of the sacrament of marriage, which, like every sacrament, *re-enacts* the mystery of salvation in an important aspect.

Generally, as this research is a pioneer work on the theology of the Two Hearts of Love, the author expects various reactions from experts in dogmatics, liturgy, spirituality and other theological disciplines, hoping to receive stimulation for further clarifications and studies.

## Afterword

When Jesus declares “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”, he leaves us a fundamental teaching of the Christian faith. Jesus is, as his name signifies, the saviour of humankind (Mat 1,21). He is the concretisation of the love of God, by which we are saved. (Joh 3,16).

What Jesus does not tell us is that we should not seek the help of others in order to get to him. On the contrary, the Gospels are full of stories of persons who come to Jesus or are put in contact with him through the intervention of others. We think of Andrew bringing his brother Peter to Jesus (Joh 1,40-42), of the people who bring to him a paralytic (Mat 9,2-8), of the Greeks who wish to see him and turn to Philip, who then takes them to Andrew and with him to Jesus. What about Jairus (Luk 8,40-56), the centurion (Mat 8,5-13) or the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7,25-30) who pray Jesus to heal their loved ones, who are absent and may not themselves even know Jesus?

The examples are many. It is not only a human phenomenon. God himself, in order to take flesh and dwell among us in the person of Jesus (Joh 1,14), chose to do so with the intervention of a woman. St Paul declares: “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal 4,4). God was not obliged by any particular human need or circumstance to make such a decision. He could simply have broken into human history and taken human form, without a known father or mother. The example of Melchizedek proves it. This high priest, who receives the offerings of Abraham (Gen 14,18-20), is presented as “without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues to be priest forever” (Heb 7,3). It is clear therefore that God freely wished and chose a woman, Mary, to be the channel of his love and word personified, his tangible presence, among human beings.

Mary is the choice of God. The Son of God, in spite of his divinity, wished to be fully human in all things except sin and really took flesh in the womb of Mary. Like any human offspring, the flesh of Jesus was from the flesh of his human mother, Mary; the blood of Jesus was from the blood of Mary. This reality underscores an intrinsic unity between the hearts of Jesus and Mary, since the heart is the fundamental seat and power-house of the human flesh and blood. Between the two hearts exists a deep intimacy that finds its roots in the mind and choice of God. God himself united them and no one should divide them (Mat 19,6).

The unity between the two hearts is not one of identity. No two hearts are exactly the same. Yet, although distinct from each other, the hearts of Jesus and Mary are held together in a deep embrace of divine love and plan. So united are they that, in the Gospels, Jesus never turns down any request of the mother, even though, because the hearts were not identical, those requests do not always come at the “right” moment for Jesus (cf. the encounter at Jerusalem in Luk 2,42-53, and that at Cana in Joh 2,1-11).

Intimate love, while respecting our differences, brings and binds hearts together. This is the love of Jesus and Mary. This is the love that the Society of the Two Hearts of Love wishes to spread. This is the fundamental theme of this book. The author has woven together a monumental quantity of materials and information, spanning from the fundamental documents of her religious Society, across the reception of the gospel of love, through mission and theology in the African context, to the universal outreach of the gospel of love taught by the two hearts of Jesus and Mary.

If Jesus is the only way to the Father, Mary is also the surest way to Jesus and constitutes an integral and inseparable part of Jesus, the Way. The special election of Mary by God brought on her a special and unique blessing. Pope Francis clearly underlines this point. He teaches that “no other creature has ever seen God’s face shine upon it as did Mary. She gave a human face to the eternal Word, so that all of us can contemplate him”. It is Jesus himself that has given Mary “the knowledge of the heart, the knowledge of faith, nourished by her experience as a mother and by her close relationship with her Son”. Mary, continues the Pope, “is the woman of faith who made room for God in her heart and in her plans; she is the believer capable of perceiving in the gift of her Son the coming of that ‘fullness of time’ (Gal 4,4) in which God, by choosing the humble path of human existence, entered personally into the history of salvation. That is why Jesus cannot be understood without his Mother” (Cf. Homily on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. XLVIII World Day of Peace. Vatican Basilica, 1 January 2015, in: [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)).

Mary is the woman chosen by God to present his Son, Jesus Christ, to the world; a mission she faithfully fulfilled, as is evident in her encounter with the angel Gabriel (Luk 1,26-38), her visit to Elizabeth (Luk 1,39-56), the events of that holy and silent night of Bethlehem as well as those of the infancy of Jesus (Luk 2), her interventions during the public ministry of Jesus and her continued presence among the disciples of Jesus after his ascension. By this fact, she is the prototype of the apostles who are later commissioned to bring the Gospel of Jesus to all nations unto the ends of the earth (Mat 28,19). In this way, Mary is, as Pope Francis teaches, “the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus, the first and most perfect believer, the model of the pilgrim Church, is the one who opens the way to the Church’s motherhood and constantly sustains her maternal mission to all mankind” (Ibid). All this is no surprise since Mary is the mother of him who is the head of the body, which is the Church (Col 1,18).

The many pages of this volume are surely going to entertain and enrich the mind of lovers of Jesus and Mary, inspire the interest of the tepid ones and assuage the curiosity of others on a wide range of themes from the making of a young religious Institute, to the challenges facing missionary initiatives in Africa, including the ongoing debates on the Church and theology in the African continent. The reader will certainly not be disappointed.

+Fortunatus Nwachukwu  
Tit. Archbishop of Acquaviva, Apostolic Nuncio  
Managua, Nicaragua, Easter Sunday 2015.

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## **Appendix: Documents of the “Society of the Two Hearts of Love”**

This appendix contains documents of the Society of the Hearts of Love, which are in the great majority not yet published. The appendix is divided in 11 sections. The first five are spiritual sources of the Congregation, Appendix 6-10 has mainly a historic value, section 11 is a theological study. Many writing/typing errors of the various originals have been corrected; some seeming errors that do not disturb the understanding of the text were copied, especially those which are typical ways of expression and writing of Father Montfort. In the re-copied booklets, as in appendix 5, the page-numbers of the original booklet is given in brackets.

Section 1. contains the Prayer of the Two Hearts of Love, which can be found in almost every publication of the Society of the Hearts of Love.

Section 2. are the “promises of the Hearts of Love”, excerpts of messages of Jesus and Mary, most of them from the time before 1988/89, when they were printed by the founder in the booklet quoted in Section 5. New “promises” were gradually added: the seventh to last paragraph is the newest, also the first “promise” is of a new date. They were all typed by Father Montfort.

Section 3. contains excerpts of the “Constitutions of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love”. They are the “Original Constitutions” for the whole Society, Priests, Brothers, Sisters of the Hearts of Love and the lay-members and devotees, 193 articles written in Hütting (Germany) in winter 1997/1998 by Fr. Montfort Okaa. They were never published as a whole. The Sisters use as their Constitutions a much shorter text of 167 articles, printed first in 2001 and approved by Bishop Ayo-Maria Atoyebi. In it, many articles of the Original Constitutions which are not specifically for the sisters, were cancelled, among others all the articles presenting the role of Mary in the history of salvation. Some articles on the three evangelical vows were added and a new order was given to all the articles, grouping them together differently. The “Original Constitutions” are published here (partly) for their carismatic value.

Section 4. presents selected (extracts of) preaching, meditations and prayers of Father Montfort from 1997-2014, partly containing “messages of the Hearts of Love”. The passages are in chronological order, few have been published. They give an idea of the present-time sermons of the Founder, and they show how he uses the “messages” for his priestly ministry.

Section 5. gives a major part of the booklet “Come. News letter of the Hearts of Love” Vol. 1, n. 1-8. This is the earliest testimony of writings of the Founder known to the author. It was printed ca. in 1989 in Orlu and contains already the presentation of the complete structure and especially the contemplative and Eucharistic part of the spirituality of the Society of the Hearts of Love. It was given by Fr. Montfort to the first aspirants and volunteer workers and to educated devotees.

Section 6. contains part of the booklet “SHL, The devotion and Society of the Hearts of Love – the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary – the Two Hearts ever united in Love”. It was written by Father Montfort Okaa and printed in Eichstätt in 1999. The booklet of 116 pages (A5) which does not mention the name of the author, contains a long excerpt of the Original Constitutions of the whole Society of the Hearts of Love (appendix 3). Then follows an apologetic-historical (reminding of the growth of the attention to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary from

the NT till today) defence of the devotion of the Hearts of Love, taken from the letter the Founder wrote to the Nigerian Bishops in 1999, a little bit shortened. It was printed and distributed by Father Montfort to some people in the years 1999-2000, but it was not published. Here are given only some excerpts of the apologetic part, and the pages on the history of the devotion of the Hearts of Love in Nigeria and Germany, 1970-1998.

The history from the booklet “SHL” is integrated in brackets and giving the page-number of the original letter by additional parts that were contained in the “Solemn appeal to my brother priest, on behalf of the devotion, society and work of the Hearts of Love”. This is a letter of the Founder to the members of the Nigerian Bishops’ Conference, in their assembly in 1999. It is a letter of defence of the devotion and Society of the Hearts of Love, written by Fr. Montfort in Germany, sent to the novices in Nigeria, who photocopied it and brought it to the meeting-place of the bishops in Lagos in 1999, where it was shared.

Section 7. presents a copy of the letter of Father Montfort to all the enrolled members in Germany. In November 2000, the Vicar General of Limburg asked Father Montfort to leave the diocese and forbade the monthly charismatic mass in the convent of the Ursuline Sisters in Königstein. Father Montfort sent this letter to all members, asking them to accept the decisions in obedience, but to continue with the prayer and the devotion of the Hearts of Love.

Section 8. is the testimony of Sr. Matilda Ugochukwu Egbusinwa SHL. In February 2003, all Sisters and many lay-members wrote testimonies about the founder and the Society. This is the testimony of one of the earliest aspirants for sisterhood in the Hearts of Love, and the only available such testimony for the author. The original is handwritten.

Section 9 gives some selected congratulatory messages of the brochure of silver jubilee of priesthood of Fr. Montfort Okaa, celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 in Orlu, Nigeria: Only the messages that have been quoted in the work. Before each message, the page-number of the brochure is given.

Section 10. contains part (p. 5) of the “profile” of Sr. Cecilia Okanwikpo D.C., written by her family in the brochure for her silver jubilee of sisterhood, celebrated on 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2010 in Orlu.

Section 11. is the speech “La dimensione sponsale del Cuore di Cristo e di Maria: Prospettive di teologia biblica”, given by Prof. Giuseppe De Virgilio on the congress of the Two Hearts of Love during the annual Feast in Rome 2006, held at the church of St. Ambrose, Via di S. Ambrogio della M., only contribution handed over to the Society of the Hearts of Love on electronic device.

## **1. The Prayer of the Two Hearts of Love**

Jesus Mary, I love You! Be appeased. Save all souls. Amen.

O! Hearts of Love!

O! Hearts ever united in Love!

Make me to love You always and help me to make others to love You.

Take my poor sinful heart to Thyself

and do not give it back to me, until it becomes a flaming fire of Your Love.

I know that I am unworthy to come to You, but take me to Thyself and cleanse me by the flames of Your Love. Take me to Thyself and use me as it pleases You, for I am entirely Yours.

Amen.

O Pure Love!

O Holy Love!

Pierce me with Your arrows and let my blood flow into the wounds of the Immaculate Heart!

O Immaculate Heart!

Unite with the Sacred Heart to give life, to comfort, to glorify and to love. Amen.

O Jesus! O Mary! You are the Hearts of Love. I love You! Consume me. I am Your victim of Love!

Amen.

O Hearts of Love! Consume me. I am Your victim of Love! Amen.

## 2. The “promises” of the Two Hearts of Love

(Published already in the 5th “Come”-letter, cf. appendix 5; since 2001 with the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, and in other publications of the Hearts of Love since 2002. In different years and different editions, new “promises” were gradually added. In the following “promises”, the seventh to last paragraph was not published before. Also the first “promise” is of a new date. Typed by Father Montfort.)

After the Holy Eucharist, after the Holy Mass, the greatest gift I have given to My Church and to the whole world is this Prayer and devotion of the Two Hearts of Love. This Prayer of the Hearts of Love comes from the Holy Mass, just as the flow of blood and water comes from My pierced side; for the Holy Mass and this Prayer are united. You cannot separate this Prayer and devotion from the Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass. My son, let My Love reign. Let My Heart reign. Let My Hearts of Love reign.

O Hearts of Love! O! How I love to be called this. I am really a Heart of Love as so is My Mother. We are Hearts of Love. I am God but a God of Love. All who call Me this (O Hearts of Love!) devotedly even once in their life, will have the seal of the Heart (Hearts of Love) engraved in theirs. Those who practice this devotion constantly will turn into flaming fire of Divine Love and will never be lost.

Any person who at his or her death bed, after cleansing himself or herself with the Act of Love (i.e. Jesus Mary, I love you be appeased, save souls, Amen) and devotedly says the Prayer of the Hearts of Love (O Hearts of Love! O Hearts ever united in Love!), while kissing the Hearts of Love, I will take to Myself. No purgatory for him.

I will bring out a date especially for the feast of the Two Hearts of Love. On this day, the Hearts will be pierced with masses and prayers, and its blood will flow into purgatory and all those bearing the mark of the Hearts of Love I will attract to Myself like a magnate.

O Hearts of Love! When will I stop bewailing My Love, which is being repaid with ingratitude and sin? How I wish to spread My Love in the whole world, but wickedness, hatred and sin keep Me. I promise now no matter the fewness, I will use those who are devoted to the Two Hearts of Love to spread My Love in the whole world.

Instruct people to say this Prayer especially at twelve, at four and at six o'clock, at communion and at mass.

Those who will have their names enrolled will never be lost, because they have specially consecrated themselves to Me, and it is then a challenge to Me, that at death, I owe them a special fight.

Those who will propagate this Devotion will have their state in heaven raised according to their zeal, and success will accompany them.

This Devotion will spread like wild fire, because many people and places have begun it, but have not yet known that it is this Devotion that they have started. One need only instruct them and it is taken up. Get ready.

This is the time for trial and glory.

I promise, any person who even once kisses the Image of the Two Hearts of Love, will have the seal engraved in theirs.

Any home that exposes and honours the Image of the Two Hearts of Love will be free from sudden death, and I will prevent any mortal sin from being committed in that room.

You may think these promises fantastic but it is not. Just consider the length of time I have been waiting establish the rule of My Heart in the world but wickedness and sin prevent Me. I mean to pour the Blood of My Heart of Love on the whole world not minding the obstacles.

My child, you are going to suffer much, but it will last but a little while, because Satan knows that

My Heart must triumph and is ready to give the last fight, which will last a while and My Heart will triumph.

My child, I don't want you to doubt any more because this will mean a postponement of the triumph, which I am not ready to grant.

I only want you to give up yourself in simplicity of faith, prayer, Love, obedience and humility.

My child, I have taken you as a victim and I am going to consume you till you become nothing.

Just give up yourself to Me and I will use you as it pleases Me.

It is I your Love Jesus Christ speaking.

I want to establish the reign of My Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of My Mother ever united. We are One, for we are united in Love.

And I don't want any person to separate the Two Hearts anymore. Any person who tries to separate the Two Hearts, I mean to eliminate.

The laity, seminarian and aspirants, religious, priests and all the clergy, should rally around the Triumphant Two Hearts of Love.

Satan knows that his time is expired. Even when it is come, when he sees shining blinding rays of victims of Love, it is not I who will tell him to run and hide in his home.

My child, I mean to give you My Heart. You will draw the Blood from it and pour on the world.

Oh! My Heart will triumph.

Through this Devotion to the Two Hearts of Love, the Love of God, the Love for the Holy Eucharist, the Love for the Blessed Virgin and the Saints of God, the Love for the Church and the Love for religious things will flourish, will triumph and will reign on earth as it is in Heaven.

Through this Devotion to My Infinite Love in the Hearts of Love, I mean to bring unity to My whole Church.

I want to promote unity among the various races and cultures in the world.

I mean to unite families, unite the hearts of husbands with their wives, and the hearts of women with men, the hearts of children with their parents, the hearts of relations and friends with one another.

This is apostate and mission of friendship, unity and Love for all and among all.

I mean to fight the evil of hatred, wickedness and sin.

It is My Will to establish the reign of My Infinite Love and Mercy in every heart and home, everywhere and every time, in the whole world and in all creation.

Oh! My Love will reign on earth as in heaven. Oh! My Heart will reign! Oh! My Love will reign!

### **3. The Constitutions of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love**

Original Constitutions for the whole Society, Priests, Brothers, Sisters of the Hearts of Love and the lay-members and devotees, written in Hütting (Germany) in winter 1997/1998 by Fr. Montfort Okaa; several times slightly corrected, never published as a whole. In the work it is quoted as “Original Constitutions”.

## **THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE CATHOLIC SOCIETY OF THE TWO HEARTS OF LOVE**

### **Introduction**

#### **Art. 1**

God is Love! He created everything out of Love and filled all creation with His blessings and goodness, and the whole of creation overflows with His infinite love. To love God, to offer Him the perfect response to His Love, by giving Him all our Love in a perfect union with His infinite Love, is the greatest thing that we can do. To Him be all praise, thanksgiving, honour, glory, worship, power, obedience, respect and love in heaven and on earth both now and forever. Amen.

#### **ART. 2**

It is His eternal will that His Love reign in every heart and home, everywhere and every moment in all creation. He is Love Himself and has already filled his creation with his goodness and love. He unified the love of Him with the love of our neighbour.

#### **ART. 3**

To the greater glory and honour of God the Most Blessed Trinity of Love, of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the higher honour and joy of Our Blessed Mother the Virgin Mary whose Immaculate Heart is full of Love and ever united in Love with the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, to the reign of the Love of God in the Hearts of Love, to the great happiness of all the Angels and Saints, and in accordance with the law of the Church, this Society of the Two Hearts of Love is established as a religious organisation in the Catholic Church.

### **I. Name and nature**

#### **ART. 4**

The Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love is a recognised Catholic religious organisation. It is dedicated to the reign of the Love of God and for the living and spreading of the devotion to the Hearts of Love, the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Two Hearts ever united in Love. It is established out of the Love of God for the greater glory and honour of God, for the good and the welfare of the Church, to help the poor, the sick, and the needy in our midst; and to assist in the education and evangelisation of mankind and the salvation of all souls.

#### **ART. 5**

God loves us with an eternal love, called us into being out of love and endowed us with the highest vocation of love. To love God and to bring people to the Love of Him is our greatest vocation, our work, our mission, our life and our joy; and His Infinite Love is our greatest fulfilment, reward and happiness.

*The Two Hearts of Love: Jesus and Mary are ever united in Love*

#### ART. 6

God made his infinite love visible, more personal and exemplary by becoming a human being (like us in all things but sin) in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, in whom through the action of the Holy Spirit he received human nature in its most pure state and unified divinity and humanity in the most pure and holy love. Through the eternal will of God the Two Hearts (the Divine Heart of Jesus and the most pure human Heart of His Mother the ever Blessed Virgin Mary) remained ever united in Love.

#### ART. 7

Mary, whom He created as his most beautiful masterpiece of creation gave birth to Him in Bethlehem and nurtured Him to full manhood, followed Him and stood by Him as He died to redeem us on the cross of Calvary. Before he breathed His last in an unspeakable act of Love he tenderly gave His Mother as Mother to His followers, to His Church (represented by the beloved disciple, John) and in the same act of indescribable tenderness and Love He gave His followers as children to the same indescribable tender Love and care of the most pure and holy Heart of His Virginal Mother whose love He personally experienced throughout His earthly life.

#### ART. 8

Even as He hung on the cross he allowed the soldiers who crucified him to pierce His Heart with a lance as His Beloved Mother stood there at the foot of His cross, united with Him in a unique union and therefore sharing in his redemptive sufferings in a most special and intimate way, the Two Hearts remained so united that her motherly Heart was pierced together with His Divine Heart with a sword, as the aged and holy Simeon had prophesied. From His pierced side and Heart flowed blood and water - the sign of His absolutely self-sacrificing and redeeming infinite love, the sign of the sacraments which give life - from which flows the life of the Church, his mystical body in the whole world.

#### ART. 9

With the same Heart, the same love with which the Mother loved, nurturing and attending to her Divine Son she loves and cares and attends to all His followers, as members of His mystical body the Church. After His resurrection from the dead and ascension to the right hand of the Father, the disciples were together in a room, Mary was there with them and united with them in prayerful expectation of the coming of the Holy Spirit, by whose overshadowing power she had conceived, born and nursed Jesus. She was there praying with them, contemplating God, His great works and intervention in history, the person and mission of Christ and narrating some of the events in his life which she alone knew and retained in her tender motherly Heart. Thus opening the treasures of her Heart she cared for the followers of her Divine Son, and the disciples were reciprocally comforting, caring, and attending to their Mother.

#### ART. 10

After the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church, the same motherly heart so uniquely united to that of her Son, the head remained united with the apostles, disciples and all followers as members of the mystical body of her Son. Her motherly heart followed them with love wherever they went, sharing in their works, sufferings and successes. With the same motherly heart with which she loved Her divine Son, the head, she also loved all the members of her Son's mystical body - the Church.

#### ART. 11

With the incarnation, birth and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ everything became changed. Nothing remains untouched by the infinite love of God which became visible in His only Son, Our Lord



Jesus Christ, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

ART. 12

Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, followed Him and cared for Him, having conceived and carried His Body in her virginal womb, received His pure martyred body brought down from the cross and pressed it to her heart.

ART. 13

Mary is the place (and person) of the union of the divine and the human nature in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. This union took place according to the eternal will of the Father through the action of the Holy Spirit.

The only begotten Son of the Father took flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary and became man through the action of the Holy Spirit out of love (one and the same love of God and love of man in need of redemption) and in obedience to the Will of the Father. Mary, the young virgin, agreed to become His Mother, conceived Him through the action of the Holy Spirit also out of love (her love of God and her fellow mankind in need of divine redemption), and in obedience to the supreme will of the Father. In this love and obedience she remained ever united with her Son, Jesus, in love and obedience to the same will of the Father.

ART. 14

Mary remained united with Jesus from His conception beyond death into eternity. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity received His human nature (everything human) from Mary. In Jesus, God perfectly and eternally united His uncreated divinity with created humanity. In Jesus He gives humanity the fullness of his Godhead. In Jesus is the fullness of divinity. But it is in and through Mary that mankind received Jesus.

ART. 15

On her death and assumption into heaven, she who is the prototype of the new creation in grace was taken into the heavenly union and given the crown of eternal glory and union with God, in which every true child of God and follower of Christ hopes to share. The Two Hearts of Jesus and Mary remained united in life and in death and then beyond death into eternity.

ART. 16

The Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love is the Society of the love of God. It is the Society of Jesus and Mary who are the Two Hearts of Love and ever united in love. They are one for they are ever united in love according to the eternal will of God. The Society is dedicated to the love of God and exists only for this reason.

## II. Place and role in the Church

ART. 17

The place of this Society is in the very heart of the mystical body of Christ, the Church. Its role is that of the heart in the body. Just as the heart exists and functions in the body, so this society exists and functions in the Holy Catholic Church. And just as the heart cannot exist and function outside the body, this Society does not exist and function outside the Body of Christ, the Church.

## III. Mission - aim and objectives

ART. 18

The aim of this Society is the love of God and neighbour and to help people to love God. It is this same eternal will and love of God which has given us the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most

Immaculate Heart of Mary His mother, as living personal symbols of love. The Two Hearts are ever united in love.

#### ART. 19

It is the will of God that the fire of His Love be enkindled in every heart and home, in every person, community and human gathering, in every place and every moment. It is His eternal will to establish the reign of His Love in the whole world - in all His creation. He is doing this by establishing the reign of His love in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Two Hearts of Love.

#### IV. Means of work

#### ART. 20

##### Obligation of Members

The members have two main obligations: Prayer and Works of Love.

They are to recite the prayer of the Hearts of Love and perform works of love. These two acts form one and the same obligation, i.e. love of God is expressed in prayers and works of love, hence love of God and our neighbour are unified. Prayer is the expression of love of God and to help people to be able to love God is the great work of love. Members of the Society will bring people to the love of God, especially by teaching them the prayer dedicated to the love of God.

#### ART. 21

The Society aims to combine an active and contemplative life.

The contemplative life is lived in prayerful union with God and an active life is lived in the union with God through works of love in the service of our fellow men and caring for God's creation. Members will live life in the prayer of love and while doing works of love. By regularly reciting the prayer of the Hearts of Love members find intimate union with God and with one another. In performing works of love they will also find the same union in the love of God and their fellow men. Hence prayers and works of love are essential aspects of the life of the members and the Society.

#### ART. 22

##### Apostolate and Propagation

The obligation of members can be summarised thus: to bring people to the love of God. It is only through love that people can learn to love. Unless the members are capable of loving God and their fellow men they will not be able to bring others to the love of God. The most effective and also the simplest and divine way available to us to bring people to the love of God is by prayer: by praying for them, teaching them to pray and saying the prayer of the Hearts of Love with them. The prayer of the Hearts of Love is God's own special gift to enable people to love Him.

#### ART. 23

##### Society - Coming Together

The Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love is the Society of the love of God. The Two Hearts of Love always refers to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary - the Two Hearts ever united in love. God is the heart and centre of this Society. The first members are Jesus and Mary. The members will join this Society as individuals called by God's love and who respond to God's love and call on the Hearts of Love.

## V. Governance - administration

### ART. 24

The Society is organised in circles. Together the circles form one unit. No circle or group of circles is completely independent of the others or constitute a whole.

## VI. The various Circles of Membership

### ART. 25

#### The Invocators and Children

##### Invocators

§ 1. Any person who devotedly calls on Our Lord Jesus Christ as: Heart of Love! even once in his life belongs to this circle. The invocators, i.e. those who call on the Hearts of Love devotedly even once will receive some blessing of the love of God - of the Hearts of Love in their own hearts.

##### Children

§ 2. Our Lord said: Let little children come to me, do not prevent them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as they (Mt. 19:14). In the Society little children of the Hearts of Love will constitute a special circle. Our Lord and our Blessed Mother have a special love for them and love to see children say this prayer. The Society will organise centres of prayer and learning for children where they can come regularly to pray, sing and learn about the love of God. Here they will be taught catechism, catholic doctrine and morals, encouraged to go to church, receive the sacraments and pray regularly, to say the prayer of the Hearts of Love regularly and to live lives in the love of God and their neighbour and do some small good works of love towards their fellow children and others in need. God blesses them abundantly.

### ART. 26

#### Devotees

This circle is made up of those who practice the devotion to the Hearts of Love constantly in their lives. The prayer is a part of their daily lives and they live the life of love. By doing this they will be turned into flaming fires of divine love and they will never be lost.

### ART. 27

The poor, sick, needy, those in extreme difficulty and the dying

In the Hearts of Love the love of God and the love of one's neighbour are inseparable. Every human being, especially in need, is my neighbour. The Society of the Two Hearts of Love has a special love and care for the poor, sick, needy, those in extreme difficulty in life and the dying. They are special members of the Hearts of Love, who have a special duty to love, visit and care for them and keep their love for God aflame.

### ART. 28

#### Benefactors

These will give themselves to the Love of God and will pledge their resources for the work (mission) and projects of the Hearts of Love and support the poor, needy, sick and those in extreme difficulties. They will either make a single donation or make regular contributions freely and according to their means. Their donations (unless anonymity is requested) will be properly entered in the records of the Hearts of Love. Members of the Society, especially the religious, will pray for them, their families and their undertaking regularly. At the Universal Centre they and their loved ones will be remembered in the daily prayers and sacrifices, especially at Holy Mass. God will bless and reward them.

#### ART. 29

##### The Enrolled

This is the circle of those who enrol their names in the Society of the Two Hearts of Love. By doing this they specially consecrate themselves to God, to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to our Blessed Lady the Mother of God - to the Hearts of Love. It is then a challenge to the Hearts of Love, to God, to fight for them especially at the hour of their death. God owes them special care and protection. They say the prayer of the Hearts of Love regularly and do the work of love. They will never be lost.

#### ART. 30

##### Propagators

This is the circle of those who live and propagate the devotion to the Hearts of Love. They will have their state in heaven raised according to their zeal and success will accompany them.

#### ART. 31

No Matter How Few; Families and Homes; Stations, Parishes, Dioceses and Provinces; National, Regional, International and Universal or Central Circle

§1. Persons who are devoted to the Hearts of Love no matter how few they are will be used by the Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Hearts of Love to spread the love of God in the whole world.

[...] §5. A Central Circle of the Society is to be established at the station, parish, diocesan, provincial, national, regional, international and universal level. It is the duty of the Central Circle to organise the prayer, work, meetings and affairs of the Society at its own level, for instance, the Parish Central Circle organises everything at the parish level, the Diocesan at the diocesan level, the National Central Circle at the national level and the Universal at the universal level. The Universal Central Circle organises and administers the affairs of the Society at the Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love.

§6. All the registered members at the parish level form the Parish Central Circle or Society. The Diocesan Central Circle will consist of the Preparers (Presidents) and Visitors (Secretaries) of the various Parish Circles. The members of the National Central Circle will be the Presidents and the Secretaries of the various diocesan Central Circles. The International Central Circle will consist of the Presidents and Secretaries of the various National Central Circles.

§7. The Universal Central Circle will exist at the Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love and will take care of all the affairs of the Society at the Universal Centre and level. The Universal Central Circle is the highest circle and authority in the Society of the Two Hearts of Love. It will consist of the General President and Secretaries of the various Circles, including the President and the Secretary of the International Central Circle, the Father General and the Secretary of the Circle of Priests, the Brother General and the Secretary of the Circle of Religious Brothers as well as the Mother (or Sister) General and the Secretary of the Circle of Religious Sisters. [...]

#### ART. 32

##### Volunteer Workers

These members will make the prescribed solemn declaration of great love of God and willingness to work with us in the Society to bring people to the love of God. They will give themselves to the love of God and pledge their services to the work (mission) of the Hearts of Love.

#### [...]ART. 34

##### Religious Sisters and Religious Brothers

These men and women inspired by the Holy Spirit who, answering the call of God, are filled with love of God and fellow men, freely decided to dedicate themselves completely to the love of God and neighbour and to a life of prayer and work for the Hearts of Love. They will consecrate themselves to the love of God and will offer their lives - all they have, are and can be - to the love

of God in the Hearts of Love. They will give their whole lives to the work (mission) of the Hearts of Love as religious sisters and brothers. They make and live the required solemn vows. They will strive for perfection in love, both as individuals and in a community, according to the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus Christ (and His Blessed Mother - the Blessed Virgin Mary) the Hearts of Love. Their complete love and sacrifice is pleasing to God and completely accepted by Him. They have and enjoy a special place in the Heart of Love of God. God blesses and covers them with His infinite love on earth and their reward in heaven is great.

#### ART. 35

Priests and all the Clergy

[...] §5. By the power of ordination they represent Our Lord Jesus Christ in a very special way in their persons. In the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love they will have a very special and central role and duty of sanctification towards themselves, all members of the Society and all who come to the Hearts of Love. This they do through prayer, by preaching the word of God, celebration of the sacraments, by the exemplary holiness of their lives and all that their priestly ministry in the Church entails. [...]

#### ART. 36

Those who kiss the Image of the Hearts of Love (Image of Divine Grace) and make pilgrimage to the Universal Centre

§1. The Image of the Two Hearts of Love is the sacred representation or image of the presence of the infinite love of God in the Two Hearts of Love in our midst.

§2. To kiss this Image is an act of love to God in the Hearts of Love and a sign of dedication and commitment to the Love of God in the Hearts of Love, as well as total submission to the eternal and infinitely loving will of God. Any person who kisses the Image of the Hearts of Love receives blessings from God.

§3. The Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love is to organise international pilgrimages, during which the pilgrim dedicates himself or herself or renews his/her total dedication to the eternal and infinitely loving will of God in the Hearts of Love. [...]

§6. The special feast days of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love are: Immaculate Conception, Annunciation, Christmas (and its octave), Easter (and its octave) and the Solemn Feast of the Hearts of Love - the Two Hearts ever United in Love, beginning on the Thursday before the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, and incorporating the solemnity of the Sacred Heart on the Friday and the commemoration of the Immaculate Heart on the Saturday. The climax is the Sunday of the Solemn Feast of the Hearts of Love which is to be celebrated on the Sunday immediately following the solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the commemoration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, i.e. on the third Sunday after Pentecost.

#### ART. 37

Homes (and places) where the Image of the Hearts of Love is exposed and honoured

§1. God wants to live in our hearts and our homes. God's love wants to dwell among His people. The greatest expression of God's love for us men, for His entire creation, is the blessed incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity - Our Lord Jesus Christ. In the epilogue of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ according to St. John it was clearly stated: "In the beginning was the Word [...]" (John 1: 1, 14).

§2. Our Lord died of a broken heart. This Heart of Love, so infinitely loving, so full of the longing to pour out His Love for us and to be loved, was rejected even to being condemned to death on the cross. "That was the true Light [...]" (John 1: 9 -13).

§3. The picture of the Hearts of Love or symbol of the infinite love and presence of God - the Image of the Hearts of Love - will be exposed and honoured in the homes of the faithful. [...] God blesses any one that receives Him in Love. He blesses with superabundant blessings any home that receives

Him with Love and reverence; any home that exposes and honours the image of the infinite Love of God in the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. [...]

#### ART. 38

Victims of the Hearts of Love: Victims of the Love of God, also called Victims of the Hearts of Love, or simply “Victims“

§1. The members of this special circle of Victims of the Love of God or Victims of the Hearts of Love will live a life of constant prayer, self-denial and penance, contemplation and teaching. They are to serve the needy through prayer and counselling.

§2. They are based at the Universal Centre of the Hearts of Love and will organise and live in perpetual adoration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, as well as offering constant prayer at the Shrine of the Two Hearts of Love. They are to oversee the cleanliness, tidiness, fitting decoration and proper decorum in these places of prayer. They may not leave these places except for serious reasons. They freely determine how long they wish to live this special life of prayer and penance. At the end of the elected period they are free to renew their commitment.

§3. Inspired by the Holy Spirit and consumed by the love of God these men and women freely undertake to live a life of exceptional purity and holiness in love. Their thoughts, words and actions are to be centred on the love of God in the Hearts of Love. They freely request to be permitted to live a life of prayer and penance for the love of God and the salvation of souls. This constitutes a type of hermitage adapted by the Society of the Two Hearts of Love to the atmosphere around the Centre of the Hearts of Love.

§4. God means to pour His blessings, graces and inspirations on them in abundance and through them on the Universal Centre of the Hearts of Love and all who come to Him in the Hearts of Love.

#### VII. Services in the Society

In each Circle the Society is to have the following servants or officers:

#### ART. 39.

##### 1. The Father or Spiritual Director or Superior General

He is father to all the members of the Society everywhere and its first servant

§1. He is the Priest of the Hearts of Love who sees to the spiritual welfare, growth and authenticity of the members both personally and as a Society. Inspired by the Holy Spirit [...], he is to be unquestionably faithful to the vows of his priestly ministry and all the vows taken by the priests of the Hearts of Love. Through a life of exemplary dedication to the great love of God made manifest in the Hearts of Love, the prayer and work of the Hearts of Love, a pure and holy life, through great love to all those associated with the Hearts of Love without exception, his priestly ministry and devotion to penance and sacrifice for the reign of the love of God in every heart and home, in all the circles of the Society, in every person and community everywhere and at all times, he is to be an inspiration to all the members to strive for perfection in the love of God and one another.

§2. By his preaching he is to admonish the members to greater devotion to the Hearts of Love and greater dedication to the work and mission of the Hearts of Love everywhere and at all times. He is to be giving well prepared, meditated and prayerful spiritual talks at meetings and conferences, explaining to all the mysterious depths of the eternal will of God and the infinite riches of the Love of God in the Hearts of Love. He is to be a living sign of the presence of Christ among the members, loving caring and teaching all as Christ did when he was physically alive among his followers. He is to be an embodiment of selflessness and true and deep humility. His heart is to be open to all since through him the members will reach the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary and come to the Love of God. He is to take an uncompromising stand against all evils and devilish deceptions and pretences and falsity. Without fear or favour he is to speak up against hatred, wickedness and sin, as well as anything that will weaken the devotion, dedication and pure and holy love of the members.

§3. He is to make an unflinching stand and support for everything good, truly Christian and authentically catholic, being constant and faithful to the teachings of the Church. He should be loving, respectful, obedient and helpful to the Bishops and the Pope, the Magisterium of the Church. He is to develop and foster a very cordial, Christian and loving relationship among Society members, between the various Circles, between the Society of the Two Hearts of Love and other societies, congregations and organisations in the Church. This loving relationship is to be extended to non-Catholics, even non-Christians and secular organisations as well as state administrations and all with whom the members live and interact. The Society's aim and mission will always be to bring the love of God to all mankind and all creation and to lead all people and all creatures to the Love of God made manifest in the Hearts of Love.

§4. All members of the Hearts of Love are to remember him daily in their prayers, works and sacrifices. [...] All have the duty to co-operate and work with him [...].

§5. In his work he is to be closely helped by the Universal Central Circle. The spiritual director is selected by the members of this circle after consultation with all the other circles that have the right to make suggestions to the central circle. His selection will normally take place during a ten-day retreat of the central circle, during which fasting and ardent prayers are to be offered for the help of the Holy Spirit. Ideally, election will be by general and unanimous agreement. Where unanimous consensus is not reached then a two-third majority of the members of the Universal Central Circle is sufficient. If a two-third majority is not reached then members are to observe a full holy hour of prayer in which they earnestly ask for the intervention of the Hearts of Love and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Following this the selection is to be done by a simple majority. Any form of worldly campaigning for this work and service is strictly forbidden.

§6. [...] On his first day of service he is to lie prostrate before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and make a solemn promise (vow) to love God in the Hearts of Love and to serve Him in the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love, to love, care and pray for every single member in the whole world with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his strength every day of his service. [...]

#### ART. 40

2. The Preparer or President or Superior: He Who Comes Before the Other Members to Prepare the Place for them

§1. He comes before the other members of the Circle to prepare a place for them. He has to have a greater love of God, of the Hearts of Love, of all the members of his respective circle as well as of all the members and work of the Hearts of Love.

§2. He has to be able to answer humbly, truly, wholeheartedly and affirmatively a question similar to that asked by our Lord Jesus Christ to Peter: Do you love me more than the others? He has to possess a greater love and be eminently able to take care of all the other members well. He has to be a good and saintly servant (mother and father) to all in the circle. Love here will not be measured by popularity. He does not need to be more popular than the others, although it is natural that in an enlightened circle one who loves the others more may also be loved more than the others in return. He should be a greater and clearer embodiment of the spirit of the Two Hearts of Love in the Circle.

§3. He is a person who is respected and loved both by the members of the circle and other members of the Hearts of Love and even by non-regular members.

§4. He has to be able to represent, defend and promote the cause of the Society of the Hearts of Love at any time and in any place and before any person. He has to be a person full of God's grace, wisdom and love and radiant with pure and holy love of God and his neighbour.

§5. Preferably, he will have been a member of the Society for not less than three years (in that particular circle). In the case of the Universal Central Circle he must have been a member of the Society for at least seven years. [...]

#### ART. 41

### 3. Vice President or Assistant Superior

§1. He washes the feet of the members. Following the example of our divine Saviour who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many, and learning from our Lord who gave us a new commandment of love: Love each other as I have loved you, he washes the feet of the members of the respective circle in the spirit of the new commandment of love and living this new commandment.

§2. He shows and teaches the members of the circle how they are to love and serve one another according to the new commandment. He is to be an embodiment of the commandment of Love.

§3. He is to take a deep and personal interest in the personal welfare of each and every member of the circle.

§4. Whereas the President might concentrate on the general good and collective welfare, and proper decorum, the Vice President will see to the personal welfare of each individual member of the respective circle. He has to have a personal and intuitive but not disruptive or intrusive insight into the needs of particular members of the circle.

§5. He reassures each and every individual member of his personal worth, esteem and dignity before God and man, of their special place and acceptance in the particular circle, and in the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love.

§6. He has the duty of ensuring that each and every member makes his own useful contribution according to the graces and talents given to him by God for the good of all the members, and the furtherance of the mission and work of the Society. He must make sure that all individual members make a useful contribution and are properly regarded.

§7. He has a special concern for the recruitment and integration of new members. [...]

### ART. 42

#### 4. Visitor or Secretary

§1. He is to visit sick members. He will take special interest and charge of members who are sick, caring for their health and well-being. Whenever a member is sick, weak or falling behind he will pay him/her a personal visit, bringing with him the goodwill of the Circle and the Society of the Two Hearts of Love. He must make every effort to help the sick or weak member to recover full health, both in body and spirit.

§2. Fully aware that one of the questions we shall be asked both individually and as a Society is: When I was sick and in prison, did you visit me?, the secretary visits not only sick members but all who are in need, forgotten or in difficulty as well as all who need to be shown love in their homes and places of stay, work or prison.

§3. In addition, he does the usual work done by a secretary in a society as well as his main task of caring for the sick, weak and troubled members.

§4. His main duty, like that of every member, servant or officer in the Society is to lead people to the love of God. In this case he brings God's love especially to the sick and weak members and all in need of comfort and company and in so doing also helps them to a deeper love of God.

§5. He will give them the encouragement they need to see the love of God in the Hearts of Love, whatever situation they might be in. [...]

### ART. 43

#### 5. Almsgiver or Treasurer

§1. The Society of the Two Hearts of Love has a special love for the poor, the sick, the needy and all in extreme situations. The service of the Almsgiver or Treasurer is a special assignment for the needy, both members and non-members. Wherever the Society exists the poor and the needy are always a special concern.

§2. The treasure of the Society is not money but the poor and the needy and the help given to them; in other words the Society's treasure is God's grace. The poor, sick, old, abandoned, prisoner,



orphan, widow, handicapped, and all those in extreme situations form the wealth of grace of the Society.

§3. The members identify with them in order to help them in a more humane way without degrading their dignity as human beings created in the image and likeness of God.

§4. In the faces of these people the face of God is visible. In the eyes of these people God gazes at us, Our Lord Jesus Christ turns helplessly to us and looks intently at us almost in the same way as he turned and looked at Peter during His trial. What did this look produce in Peter?: And Peter remembered the word of the Lord... and he went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22: 62 -63).

§5. Each and every member has the right and duty to help the poor in his own personal way, but as the Society of the Two Hearts of Love, members do it in a more organised, collective, effective, humane and Christian way, through the service and work of the Almsgiver or Treasurer. [...]

#### ART. 44

##### 6. Recorder or Financial Secretary

§1. He keeps a record of the poor. He has to get very close to the poor to find out their genuine needs and make recommendations to the Treasurer who administer appropriate help. He has to be somebody who can listen, keep records and keep confidences (secrets). §2. Records kept concerning the poor are never to be made public. They are always to be kept in the secret archives of the Society. The help given to the poor is never to be broadcast. Only God should know about it. The personal dignity and worth of the poor has to be religiously respected and protected. Our lord Jesus Christ enjoins us: Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen by them, otherwise you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven... Mt. 6: 1-4.

§3. However, it is necessary that clear and accurate records and accounts of all income and expenditure of the Society be kept. [...]

#### ART. 45

##### 7. Transporter or Public Relations Officer

§1. He looks after the transport of the members. The Society of the Two Hearts of Love is a Society on the move and a society of action for the Love of God. Members will visit each other; different circles and branches will pay visits to each other and pilgrimages will be organised to the Universal Centre and to holy places of Divine, Christian and Catholic pilgrimage and worship.

§2. It is fitting that an able member be entrusted with the service of organising the transportation and pilgrimages of the members [...] to places of prayer, apostolate, mission and ministry. [...]

§3. He is responsible for drawing up a programme in consultation with the Spiritual Director and Preparer. [...]

#### ART. 47

§1. Except where expressly indicated, the selection of the services is to be done during a retreat or chapter after serious prayer, fasting and invocation of the light and help of the Holy Spirit.

§2. The selection of the qualified candidates is always done by the members of the particular circle in which they will serve.

[...] §7. The Priests, religious Brothers and Sisters will enjoy a special degree of autonomy in the administration of their Circles or Congregations and Communities, but not complete independence, for the Society of the Two Hearts of Love is one Society with various Circles. [...]

## VIII. Discipline of Members

[...] ART. 49

### Daily Holy Hour

The Society organises daily Holy Hour in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament, at the Universal Centre for the Two Hearts of Love, in Churches, in the Garden of the Hearts of Love and in the presence of the Image of the Two Hearts of Love. [...]

ART. 50

### Daily Vigil Mass

At the Universal Centre for the Two Hearts daily vigil is held and, when a priest is available, mass will be celebrated in the vigil in honour of the Two Hearts of Love, at this most sacred place for this Devotion and Society of the Two Hearts of Love. [...]

ART. 51

### The weekly devotion and adoration on Thursdays

The Society holds weekly prayers of devotion and adoration of Our Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament every Thursday. This is best done in combination with Holy Mass when a priest is available.

Every effort is made to do this devotion in a place where the Blessed Sacrament is present and, if possible, with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. However, when neither the Blessed Sacrament nor a priest is available members still hold the devotion in the church or chapel or Centre for the Hearts of Love. In certain (extraordinary) situations it can be held in the home or house of any member where conditions are favourable to prayer or in any suitable place which is conducive to prayer. The Spiritual Director or the President judges the suitability of any other place but will always seek the consent of the members.

[...] ART. 55

### Weekly prayers and care for the poor, the sick and the needy

Weekly or regular sessions of prayer, care and visits to the poor, the sick and the needy are organised by the Society. The Society i.e., its members, can always help them and organise help for them. The Love of God is made real to them through prayers and visits. Gifts expressing this Love of God are given to them depending on Divine Providence, available means and need.

[...]ART. 57

### Congresses

The Society holds a congress or rally two times a year from Thursday to Sunday within the Octave of Christmas and from Thursday to Sunday within the octave of Easter. Where it cannot be held at this period another befitting period lasting between 3 - 7 days will be set aside for it.

[...]ART. 59

### Solemn Feast of the Two Hearts of Love

The Solemn Feast of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love occurs annually on the Sunday following the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus on Friday and the Commemoration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the Saturday. On that day many masses are celebrated and prayers are offered by all members to God for the reign of the Love of God in the Hearts of Love, for the eternal happiness of all members, the repose of the souls of all departed members and for the salvation of all souls, and for the renewal of the whole church in the Spirit of the Love of God - see how they love one another“

#### ART. 60

The Programme for the monthly meeting

Opening Song. Opening Prayer. Spiritual Reading and Talk. Introduction and Roll Call. Minutes. Matters Arising. Issues on Living (Devotion to the Love of God). Anthem of the Hearts of Love. Issues on Propagation of the Hearts of Love. Concerning the Poor. Projects and Expansion. Prospects and Plans for the Future. Concluding Prayer. Blessing and Dismissal. Closing Hymn.

#### ART. 61

Prayer of the Hearts of Love

People are to be properly instructed to say this prayer constantly and devotedly. This prayer is to be recited by all people, everywhere and at all times. It is to be said solemnly, devotedly and repeated often, especially at 12, 4 and 6 o'clock, at Communion, Mass (at the end of Mass) and at prayers. These are the solemn moments of union. This prayer is also to be said during the daily Holy Hour, weekly adoration and vigils.

#### ART. 62

The reign of the love of God in the whole world

§1. Aims: This Prayer and devotion is dedicated to the Love of God, the reign of the love of God in the whole world, the love of our neighbour, ourselves and all creation at all times. It is dedicated to bring about the reign of pure and Holy Love and good, Christian life, and for the eradication of hatred, wickedness, sin and all evils. It is for obtaining of abundant favours, special graces and blessings from God through Jesus and Mary. These favours can be obtained for oneself and for anybody else, anywhere and at anytime. God wishes to establish the reign of His Love, the reign of the Hearts of Love - the Most sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in Love. They are one for they are united in Love.

§2. Through this prayer and devotion God wants to end the reign of Satan. He wants to renew His Church and renew the face of the earth. Through this life of prayer and love he nurtures many victims of His pure and Holy Love throughout the Church in the world. It is a prayer of atonement to appease God for the innumerable sins committed against Him; it is a prayer and devotion for the salvation of all souls and the spread and reign of Love in every heart, home, family, community, among all peoples and all nations.

#### ART. 63

Parts: The Prayer has many parts.

1. Prayer of Sanctification or Purification or Act of Love. It is also called Act of the Hearts of Love.
2. Prayer of Unification.
3. Prayer of Immolation.
4. Prayer of Consummation of the Victim of Perfect Love of God.
5. Prayer of Perfection is the short form of the Consummation of the Victim of Perfect Love and a summary of the whole prayer.

#### [...] ART. 65

When

This prayer is said at all times, but especially at Twelve, Four and Six O'clock, at Communion and at Mass and the end of Mass. This prayer is for the solemn moments of union. At the end of Mass it can be said after the "Ite missa est" or after the dismissal hymn, if the respective celebrant permits it to be said publicly. However, it can always be said privately at Mass especially at the individual's communion as this most solemn moment of union with God in his Love. At this moment Jesus comes into our hearts in a very real and sacramental way and we are united with Him.

#### ART. 66

Where

§1. This Prayer is to be said everywhere especially in churches and in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. When the Blessed Sacrament is exposed it is to be said with the greatest love and solemnity, and the highest spirit of adoration. Authentic and deeply reverential postures like bowing to the ground and prostration before Our loving Lord and God are to be assumed.

In obedience to the will of God and following the teaching and example of Our Lord Jesus Christ, this prayer is said with the greatest love, constancy and fervour. It is said in the spirit of love, adoration, total submission to the eternal and infinitely loving will of God. It is also said in expiation for sins, especially the sins of sacrilege, hatred and wickedness, as well as any sin whatsoever against the infinite love of God revealed in the Two Hearts of Love and really flowing in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

It is to be said for the reign of God's Love in the Hearts of Love in every heart and home everywhere and at all times in the whole creation and for the salvation of all souls.

The Society is to organise perpetual adoration of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist and its members keep Holy Hour in turns and organise and inspire others to join them.

§2. The prayer is said constantly in Centres of the Hearts of Love. Since the devotion and the Society of the Two Hearts of Love is lived, practised, propagated and organised on the level of Personal and Interpersonal Circles, Families and Home Circles, Stations, Parishes and Dioceses and Provincial Circles, National, Regional, International and Universal Circles each branch or circles should organise Centres of Prayer, devotion, meeting and work of the Hearts of Love after consulting the legitimate Church authority in the area. They also receive the acknowledgement, approval and confirmation of the Universal Central Circle which also sends them the Image or Symbol of the Two Hearts of Love which is normally accompanied by the written and express blessing of the Father or Superior General of the Society.

#### ART. 67

The Image of the Two Hearts of Love

§1. The Image of the Two Hearts of Love is holy and a source of the abundant graces and blessings of God in the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. It is the symbol of the presence of the infinite Love of God, of the presence of Jesus and Mary, the Two Hearts ever united in Love in our midst. It is neither Jesus Himself nor Mary herself but the presence of Jesus, of the Hearts of Love in our midst.

§2. The prayer is to be said especially at the Centres of the Hearts of Love, at the shrines of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Angels and Saints. In all places designated for the worship of God in homes and other buildings where the faithful live, work or stay; before statues and pictures or representations of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Angels and Saints and wherever members have divine presence; wherever members see the Image and Symbol of the Two Hearts of Love; in every heart and every Christian home; at meetings and public gatherings, wherever two, three or more persons/members meet; in whatever place and in whatever situation and at whatever time by any heart, soul or person who is loved by God and who loves God; everywhere and any time is the time and place for the love of God.

#### VIII. The Religious Sisters of the Two Hearts of Love

#### ART. 68

The Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love is a family within the Catholic Church. The Religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests of the Hearts of Love form special circles within this Society. They have their own administration and possess some property and finances which they administer and use for their work as well as the good of the members, and the furtherance and fulfilment of the mission of the Society in general.

#### ART. 69

71 §1. The Sisters of Love, abbreviated SHL, also called Sisters of the Two Hearts of Love are the children of God's love and the sisters of Jesus and Mary, daughters of the Hearts of Love and victims of the love of God. They have given themselves wholly and entirely to the Love of God in a specially consecrated life.

#### ART. 70

On incorporation the members assume the rights and obligations according to the universal law of the Church and the proper law of the Institute.<sup>1460</sup> The Sisters undertake to follow the universal principles of Religious Life given by the Church, the principles contained in the constitutions of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love and the Rule of the Religious Sisters of the Hearts of Love. This religious life lived as a member of the Church and the Society is a life dedicated to following Christ who Himself remained pure, holy, virginal, poor and obedient to the will of the Father unto death. Canon 573 §1 states: "Life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living [...]."

§2. The Sisters are to see, love and serve God in the members of the Hearts of Love and in all the members of the Body of Christ (the Church), in every person everywhere at all times and in every situation. They are to serve the Love of God wherever they are needed.

§3. Their work is to love God in every situation everywhere and at all times and to bring people to the Love of God. Their state of life as Religious of Love belongs to the life and holiness and apostolate of the Society and the Church; and as canon 574 §1 states: "It is therefore to be fostered and promoted by everyone in the church."

#### IX. Charism of the Institute

#### ART. 71

The Charism of the Society is that of the Hearts of Love: the Love of God in the Hearts of Love.

#### [...]X. Prayer

#### ART. 74

§1. Prayer is not just an aspect of the life of the members, it is their life itself. Living means praying. Growing in prayer is akin to growing from breathing, eating, drinking and exercising.

§2. The Brothers and Sisters live and grow in prayer just as one lives and grows by breathing, drinking, eating and exercising. They live always in the presence of God.

§3. Prayer is the life of the members (the Sisters of the Hearts of Love). The members live from Communion with God. Daily Mass and Communion is a sign of unconditional love. Daily participation at Mass (or Masses) is greatest. Only when this is impossible, i.e. when there is no priest available or no Mass within reach are they to practice spiritual communion.

§4 Daily they are to keep at least one Holy Hour of prayer and adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the day and at least three hours of Vigil in prayer and adoration in the night. [...]

#### ART. 75

They are to say the full Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary our Mother daily and the full Rosary of the Hearts of Love daily.

There are very many ways of praying the Rosary of the Two Hearts of Love. Therefore, there are very many themes for meditation.

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<sup>1460</sup> PC 4; ET II, 13-29; cc. 662-672. [footnote present in the original]

#### ART. 76

Contemplation of the Love of God is absolutely recommended. Daily at least a quarter of an hour is to be spent in silent contemplation of the infinite love of God. Half an hour of silent meditation daily is recommended. When practicable, especially during retreats and special days of recollection and prayer, one hour of meditation is to be done. Aids to deeper and profitable meditation can be used such as texts from the Bible or spiritual writings or sacred history, lives of saints etc., which help to produce an environment and atmosphere for deeper meditation. But in no way are such aids to fill the whole time or replace the meditation or act of contemplation which has the ultimate aim of union with the Infinite Love of God. The aim is a deeply personal union with God, a total union (even if only felt for a moment), of our person with the person of God, of our hearts with the Heart of God, with the Hearts of Love; our wills with the will of God, so that in everything and at all times all our words, thoughts and actions will flow uninterruptedly from this union of Love with God. In this way a communal union (of all the members) with God is sought, fostered and prayed for.

#### XI. Promise and Vow

#### ART. 77

§1. The members make a solemn consecration to the Hearts of Love and promise to say the prayer of the Hearts of Love, do the work of love and live a life of love.

§2. The volunteer workers make a solemn declaration of great love of God and willingness (and readiness) to work with us in the Society to bring people to the Love of God. [...]

#### ART. 78

The Sisters of the Hearts of Love.

§1. Answering the call of God in following Christ under the influence of the Holy Spirit to a new and special life of consecrated love and work (service), the Sisters, having a great love of God and willingness to work with us in the Society to bring people to the love of God (in the Hearts of Love), enter, assume and live a stable life of consecrated love by the public and solemn profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience in the love of God in the Hearts of Love, which is supreme and absolute.

§2. The sisters are completely dedicated to the Love of God and the Work of the Hearts of Love. The Love of God is all - supreme and total - yet simultaneously united to the love of our neighbour. They live a life of prayer and work for the love of God in the Hearts of Love. They live a life of service to God and mankind. They are dedicated to the honour and glory of God, to the building up of the Church and the salvation of souls and the whole of the world's creation. [...]

#### ART. 80

Through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience members are more deeply united with Christ in whom they constitute essential aspects of His own total and perfect self-oblation. It is a closer union with Christ in following His life and teaching.

#### ART. 81

In accordance with Can. 573 §2, members shall take the following additional vows (beyond the three traditional evangelical counsels), namely: the vow of Love - great love of God; the vow of prayer - prayer of the Hearts of Love and the vow of work or apostolate - to work with us to bring people to the love of God.

The vows to be taken and lived in the Institute or Congregation or Society are as follows: chastity, poverty, obedience, love, prayer, and work or apostolate.

## XII. Charism of the Society and charism of the members

### ART. 82

§1. The members are God's special gifts to us, to the Society, the Church and the world at large. They are souls formed by God to have great love of Him and to work with us, the Society. The personal charism with which God blesses them are gifts with which God blesses us, the Society, the Church and the entire creation. The Society receives the members and all their charisms with gratitude, thanksgiving and in praise of God.

§2. In the Society the members and their charisms are to be given adequate room for development and growth as is the fruitful exercise of these charisms for the good of all and to the greater glory and honour of God.

§3. The evangelical counsels and vows which the members make following the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and the special mission of the Society are a divine gift to the Society, the Church and the world from God. [...]

## SERVICES IN THE INSTITUTE

### ART. 83

Following the example of Our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ who came to serve and not to be served and who taught His followers that he who is to be first among them is to be the servant of all, the Religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests of the Hearts of Love are to have officers who are servants rendering special, stable and official services in their congregation. These offices are not modelled on the pattern of this world but are modelled on the pattern of services given in the mission of the Hearts of Love. In the Congregation of the Religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests of the Hearts of Love their servant officers will also be given the titles which are used in canon law and the tradition of the Church and other religious congregations in the Catholic Church. [... Art. 84-91 repeat parts of Art. 39-46, re-proposing the 8 offices of the Society]

## XIII. Admission and Instruction of Members

### ART. 92

§1. Persons who come to the Heart of Love are souls formed by God who have great love of God and who are willing to work with us to bring people to the love of God in the Hearts of Love. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ said: Nobody comes to me except the Father draws him. It is God Himself who brings the members to His Hearts of Love.

§2. The general condition for the admission of any person as a member of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love is Great Love of God. Our Divine Lord said: It is not you who chose me. It is I who chose you. St John wrote: "Beloved let us love one another [...]." (1 John 4: 7 - 12).

### ART. 93

Our work is to accept the Love of God and live according to it. God has revealed His Love most eminently in His Only Begotten Son Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same Love which God is, the same Love with which the Father loves the Son, with which His Son Jesus Christ loves us. It is the same Love which is found in His Heart. The same Love of God exists in the Hearts of Love - the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Most Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in Love. The same Love of God should exist in the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love. The same love of God exists between God and the Hearts of Love, between the Hearts of Love and us, between God and us. This same Love should exist between the members everywhere and at all times. The Love of God knows no bounds whatsoever. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you [...]." (John 15: 9 - 17)

#### ART. 94

§1. It is God's love which calls us as persons together to love Him and to love one another and all people everywhere. [...]

§2. Our love for God, like the love in the Hearts of Love, in the Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary, has to come from the very source of Love: God. It has to come from our very hearts and be rooted in our innermost being. It has to be true and genuine, pure and holy, whole and entire. From the very beginning the Love between the members has to be all-encompassing. It has to be international and universal like the Society, like the Love which Jesus lived, taught and commanded us to live and teach.

§3. Therefore, every member of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love has to have great and boundless love of God and his/her neighbour, say the prayer of the Hearts of Love devotedly and constantly, live the devotion of the Hearts Love constantly and do the Work of Love [... Art. 95] to bring people to the Love of God.

#### XIV. Obligations and Rights of Members

#### ART. 96

Canon 662 - Religious are to have as their highest rule of life the following of Christ as proposed in the gospel and expressed in the constitutions of their institute.

§1. The highest obligation of members is the perfection in the Love of God made manifest in the person, life and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself is the Heart of Love, He and the way of life he taught in the gospel is the origin and centre of the religious life. Each member has the obligation to follow Jesus Christ and the gospel and to live a life of pure and holy love in imitation of Him and His Blessed Mother who is also a Heart of Love. They are the Two Hearts of Love.

§2. Every member is to imbibe the Spirit of the Hearts of Love and be led by this Spirit all the days of his/her life; to be a flaming fire of divine love. Each and every member is called to be holy: "be holy for I am holy" Without holiness - without being and striving to be holy, membership is a lie and is useless. Each member is to strive with all his/her strength, through the grace of God and aided and supported by all the other members, to be holy and advance in the perfection of pure and holy love of God and all other members, persons and creatures of God.

§3. The greatest norm and the greatest way given to us in the perfection of love is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each member has to read the Holy Bible, especially the Gospels daily, to deeply meditate on it and draw life from it and live it: man does not live from bread alone but from every word that comes from the mouth of God.

#### ART. 97

##### The Constitutions of the Society

§1. The Constitutions of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love is inspired to guide the members. Each and every member is to follow the spirit and the principles of the Constitutions, to live according to it, to read it regularly, understand it, internalise it in everyday life and defend it in every situation.

§2. The Spirit and the principles of the constitutions is that found in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

§3. The most authentic interpreter of the constitutions remains the Spiritual Director and the Universal Central Circle under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of Love.

§4. The particular regulations given by the Central Circle or decided commonly by all in a particular circle in accordance with the Gospel, the law of the Church and the spirit and principles of the Constitutions of the Society are to be followed by those belonging to the particular circle for whom it was made.



#### ART. 98

The first duty of each member is the union with God in His infinite Love made clear in the Hearts of Love through prayer. Prayer is the first, most important, all-encompassing and the last duty. [...]

#### ART. 99

§1. The religious sisters of the Hearts of Love will live active and contemplative lives. Their lives will be one and undivided love of God in prayer and works of love. The love of God will consume them completely. The contemplation of the love of God - of divine things - will be the greatest delight of their little souls aflame with the love of God. They no longer exist for themselves or for any thing - but only for the love of God. They will find all the meaning of their lives in the continuous loving union with God. Outside this they have no meaning, or existence.

§2. Their life, vocation, mission, prayer and work is love. The law governing and guiding them is always the law of love. And their eternal reward is the love of God.

#### ART.100

§1. The Holy Eucharist is the centre of the Christian life, the centre of community life and the centre of the personal life of the members. In it the loving Lord nourishes the member with Himself and unites him to Himself. He will experience the mass as the greatest and most comprehensive and efficacious prayer, sacrifice and highest expression of love both in heaven and on earth. The mass unites all in heaven and all on earth in God's infinite Love

§2. They will participate daily in the Most Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice of Mass. They will receive their Lord and God with the greatest love in their little but pure and holy heart and soul and person. In this communion they will consume Him who consumed them completely and they will unite themselves fully in body and soul to Him who gives Himself wholly and entirely in His Divinity and sacred Humanity to them in His Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine.

§3. They will strive to avoid the least impurity in thoughts, words and action for His sake who is Holiness and Purity Himself but has chosen a poor miserable sinner like themselves to be His lasting bride. He is not ashamed to be theirs in every way and everywhere. They will not be afraid or ashamed to be His in everything and everywhere and at any time. He has given them His Sacred Body and continues to give it to them always. They offer their bodies and keep their bodies pure and holy for him always. He gives them His Blood always. The whole blood of their life and love belong to Him. They will live on His Body and Blood.

#### ART.101

The members will read His holy words in the Holy Scripture daily, meditate on it and model their whole lives on it. The loving Lord speaks to them always in the Holy Scripture. It is not just a piece of writing or something from the past. In it He talks to them here and now and whenever they read it. [...]

#### ART. 102

§1. The members celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours not just recite the breviary as a duty. [...] While celebrating it they do not just talk to Him, he also immediately talks to them. They pray with the whole Church. [...] The members will sing the prayer in a beautiful and sweet melody. In this way their whole being will be taken up in the prayer and they involve all creation, even the air, light, ground and all other creatures around them in their praise of love. Thus they will make every liturgy of the hours a feast of meeting with the God of my love. They will say the office of reading during the daily vigil of adoration. For mass, holy hour and vigil they will stop or suspend every other activity except what might be life-threatening and all the members should be present and take part.

§2. The members should say especially the office of reading, morning, midday and evening prayers together. It is always their greatest joy to be with Him who loves them, He whom they love and

whom they are never tired of meeting and being with, even when they are physically tired and have a lot to do.

§3. In each new meeting they should become more and more deeply in love with Him who is infinite Love and who is the Love of their whole Heart and being. From this regular meeting of love and prayer with Him they should draw all the strength to live and to do all they should and can do, and be there for Him, for their sisters and brothers and for all. They should become little living flames of His Infinite Love. In Him and with Him they can do all good things for he strengthens them. He who created them also called and chose them to be His and do all these things for Him, for His Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love, for the Church and for the eternal salvation of their souls and all souls and for the good of all creation.

§4. Each time after being with Him in prayer He follows them and lets them know that He is lovingly by their side. He talks to them and encourages them, directing them to do what they do better and with their whole heart and love just because of Him whose loving presence is always with them. They should know He is with them everywhere. [...]

#### ART. 103

Before the members go to bed they should examine their consciences both individually and as a community. The first servant of the community will lead in examining community conscience - what the members have done wrong or failed to do or have not done so well as a community in their relationship with each other and with others outside the community. Every member will apply himself/herself to a deeper conversion of heart and soul to God both as individuals and as a community. The members will examine their individual and community conscience in all humility, truthfulness and openness before God. They will confess their faults and ask for forgiveness when they offend any one in any way. The first servant will ask for forgiveness on behalf of the community by anyone offended and by God when the members do not live His love and do not fulfil His constitutions. Above all the members should go to sacramental confession and receive sacramental absolution and forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another as often as needed, or at least once in ten days or two weeks. This is to be done without in any way abusing this most wonderful divine opportunity, grace and love for our spiritual, psychological and social purity, holiness, growth, balance, maturity and perfection in love. The principle should always be to seek perfection in purity, holiness and love. The smallest sins and tiniest faults and imperfection should have no place in their precious souls. They harm and hinder the members as well as the community. Above all they hurt and are displeasing to Jesus the Lord their Love, since they are living temples of God who is Holiness, Purity and Love Himself. (Can. 664).

#### ART. 104

Every day they should do an examination of conscience for about 15 minutes towards the end of the day, every week or at least every fortnight they should go to sacramental confession. Every month they should do one day of recollection; and every year one week of retreat, during which they let the Holy Spirit take over and direct their lives and their community and the Society as a whole. God manifests that he is in them and that the members are His, and that the Devotion, Society and Work of the Hearts of Love is also His.

#### ART. 105

§1. The members should have the most special Devotion to and Love of the Virgin Mother of God, model and protector of all consecrated life. [...]

§3. In the evening, especially on Saturdays, members should come together to say the rosary in a procession. The members take care in propagating the devotion to the most holy rosary even among children. Members should always see Mary in union with Jesus. They are the two Hearts ever united in Love! (Can. 663§5).

#### ART. 106

§1. Community life will be one of their greatest joys. Come let us go in the love of God! Members should cherish each other's company and they should grow together in the love of God. The members live in union with Christ and mutually support each other in every way on the road to perfection in the love of God. [...]

#### ART. 107

The members should share everything they have, everything they are, everything God has given to them and brings to us. They should share their thoughts, feelings, ideas, background, cultures, past present and future aspirations, families, friends, well-wishers, benefactors, joys, sorrows, achievements and even faults and failures, graces and blessings.

#### ART. 108

There is nothing which they have which they have not received and also there is nothing which they have which is theirs. Therefore they should share everything they have and are with their sisters and brothers. Everybody should have equal right to each other's pure and holy love.

### XV. Media of social communication

#### ART. 109

The media has a considerable impact and influence in the world today and is can also be useful in the spread of the Gospel and the message of the Hearts of Love. Maturity, discretion, holy prudence and proper wisdom are necessary when using the media of social communication. Whatever is harmful to one's vocation, harmful to the chastity of the consecrated person and unbecoming and demeaning to the religious life is to be scrupulously avoided. (cf. Can. 666).

The Society will use all available media of social communication to spread the message of the Hearts of Love. Members suitably talented are to be properly trained and professionally equipped to effectively carry out this service.

#### POVERTY

#### ART. 110

The institute (Society, Congregation) provides all things necessary for the life of the members. It should furnish them with all those things which are necessary for the achievement of their vocation according to its means (cf. Can. 669). The members support the Society with their whole life - with all they have, their talents, energy, initiatives, connections, ideas and all that they are.

#### ART. 111

Before making their profession members are to cede the administration of their goods to whomsoever they prefer. Before perpetual profession they are to make a will which is valid in civil law, and are free to dispose of all the property which they actually possess or may subsequently acquire (cf. Can. 668).

#### OBEDIENCE

#### ART. 112

Superiors are servants. They are members who have the duty to serve God, the Society and all the members especially those specifically entrusted to their care in accordance with Christ as He lived and taught in the Gospel, in accordance with the principles and guidelines laid down by the Church and the Constitutions [...].

#### ART. 113

By the evangelical counsel of obedience deliberately and freely undertaken in the spirit of faith and out of great love in following Christ who was obedient to the will of His Father even unto death to redeem sinful humanity, the members lovingly surrender their will to God as a sacrifice of themselves which requires expression in the filial submission to their legitimate superiors, who stand in the place of God when they direct according to the Constitutions (cf. Can. 601).

#### ART. 114

The members are bound to obey the Supreme Pontiff as their highest Superior by reason also of their sacred vow of obedience (cf. Can. 590 §2).

#### ART. 115

§1. Mature responsibility is required of members in the observance of their vows of obedience as well as in the whole of their religious and apostolic life (P.C. n.14). When a member considers a particular directive as mistaken, he will present the views respectfully to the superior, and explain the reasons. However if the superior, after considering these views stands by the original directive, the member will accept it cheerfully and comply.

§2. When it should appear necessary to make representation to a higher superior about the particular matter, the member will inform him of the answer he has already been given.

#### ART. 116

In their office of service and leadership superiors will respect the personality of each member in their care. They will strive to lead by inspiring and encouraging the members to assume initiative and responsibility in their life and duties. They will listen attentively to the members and seek full information in matters requiring decisions. In fervent prayer, openness to the spirit and sincere consultation with the members they will search for clear discernment of the will of God, and once clarity is achieved they will submit themselves to it in all humility. Any form of arbitrary directives, obstinacy, partiality, pride and respect of personages is to be avoided. In grave matters consultation with all the members of the community, communal discernment in prayer and common responsibility of all the members in a house or community are to be enlisted by the superior (first servant). The authority and the burden for final decisions will always rest however with the superior or preparer or first servant (cf. Can. 618) who will be with the other members as one who has "come to serve not to be served" (Mt. 20:28) in keeping with the example of Christ.

#### ART. 117

All the members of the community form one body which is a family called to do the will of God. The search for and execution of the will of God should be an on-going process in the whole community. Decisions and orders are to be made only in accordance with the will of God, and the following of decisions and carrying out of orders is also to be done in the same obedience to the will of God. All is to be done in union with Christ who is obedient to His Father (E.T. n.25).

#### ART. 118

In accordance with the tradition of the Church and custom, old age will be respected.

#### [...] ART.120

The Father General while doing all he can to preserve the unity and oneness of the Society will not erode the service, leadership and authority of the Brother General and Sister General or the relative autonomy of these circles in determining and directing the affairs of their circle. He remains the overall Servant and Leader of the whole Society. The Brother General and the Sister General, while remaining the overall or First Servants and Leaders within their circles, always work in close unity with the Father General in love, obedience and respect. Between them should exist mutual respect,

confidence, trust and, above all, love. They should jointly have the greatest concern for the reign of Love in their particular circles and the welfare of all the members. They should have the utmost concern for the unity and welfare of the Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love in general as well as for the welfare of the members and the fulfilment of the mission of the Society of bringing people to the Love of God.

#### ART. 121

By their vows the members make the strongest commitment to the evangelical counsels and in thus professing before the Church their intent of total self-giving, they bear testimony with their lives to the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which bears values transcending this world in which the human being finds ultimate meaning and purpose. The vows give firmness and stability to the love of God and our neighbour and their striving for perfection and eternal life and union with God (L.G. 43). However, it should be understood that taking the vows is not the end but a new beginning of life lived in the perfection of pure and holy Love; and that the true response to God's love lies [...] in living them and making them yield abundant grace and bring God's blessing to oneself, the Society, the Church and all creation. The consecration of their vows affirms more profoundly the consecration of baptism [...]. (P.C. n.2 & n.5; E.T. n.7).

#### XVII Prayer

#### ART. 122

Prayer is the core of the whole life and work of the Society and members, therefore the spirit of prayer and the consciousness of God's loving presence should pervade everything we do. Everything we do should be enveloped in prayer. In prayer we not only express the love and submission to God's loving will but find new love, insight and strength and grow in deeper union with God and love of one another. The members should always live and follow the command of Christ to pray always (Lk. 18:1). They should always be fully aware that theirs is a Society which unites prayer and work, contemplation of God's Love and with the apostolate of Love, which is the example Our Lord Himself gave us with his life. The members seek to find God and see His Love in all they do and all that happens to them and all that comes to them. Also following the example of Christ Himself who sought a lengthy solitude in the desert for prayer (Mt. 4:1), and spent whole nights in the prayer to God (Lk. 6:12), and stole away from His disciples at dawn to a lonely place for prayer (Mk. 1:35), the members will set aside certain times every day for formal prayer and contemplation (cf. Can. 663 §1).

#### ART. 123

The members will join the whole Church in praise and gratitude to God through the liturgy. Daily participation at the Most Holy Sacrifice of Mass which is the greatest prayer in heaven and on earth is, as far as possible, to be cultivated and cherished with great joy [...]. In it the members unite themselves completely with Christ and offer to God ever anew the perfect response to His Infinite Love in union with the perfect response which our Lord Jesus Christ made, and which His Blessed Mother Mary made, the Two Hearts ever united in Love. In this the union of all in heaven with all of God's faithful on earth, with the whole Church is celebrated. From this fountain of Christ's Sacrifice which is the same on the altar as on the Cross, from the crucified and broken body of Christ and the pierced side and heart of Christ which is ever united with the pierced Heart of Mary even as she stood at the foot of His Cross, flow all life and grace, all the sacraments and power of the Church. In the Holy Mass we perceive and participate in this union of the Hearts of Love, in the union of all God's faithful, in the union of heaven and earth, in the Infinite Love of God and we become one heart, one body, one in the infinite love of God. In this we become living flaming fires of Divine Love and carry this flame and light of Love to everybody and everything and everywhere. (cf. Can. 663 §2).

#### ART. 124

In our convents and centres the Eucharist should be so celebrated as to deepen the members' appreciation, involvement and love of the liturgical action and of the faith which underlies it. Celebration of Holy Mass should express and strengthen their love of God and Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, the reality of the Union of the Hearts of Love made visible at the incarnation and tangible at every Holy Mass, as well as their mutual bond of Love in the community of prayer, life and work. The celebration should incorporate elements of symbol and of music drawn from the spirituality of the Two Hearts of Love, which already has a long and salutary tradition in the Church, as well as elements from the genius and traditions of the local people in so far as these are in accordance with the spirit and purposes of the liturgy of the Church and have been approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority (S.C. 48, 26-32, 36-38, 40).

#### ART. 125.

The Society joins the whole Church in continuing the Work of Christ in praising the Father and interceding for the salvation of souls, not only by celebrating the Eucharist but also in the liturgy of the hours (cf. Can. 1173). Conscious of the Mission of the Society in the Heart of the Church and in the world for the salvation of all souls and the sanctification of all creation, each community or house is to celebrate the Office of Reading, Lauds, one Little Hour, Vespers and Compline every day. Members are not bound, however, by the canonical obligation of choir; if they have been absent from the celebration [...] they are not bound to recite these Hours privately; but they are very much encouraged to do so when they have the chance (cf. Can. 1174 §1).

#### ART. 126

Members are to strive for constant union with God in prayer both in their community and privately. Following the example and words of Our Lord to "enter into his own chamber to pray to the Father in secret" (Mt. 6:6), they are also called to private prayer and contemplation in which they seek wordless, loving communion with God in His Infinite Love. They will strive daily for deeper spiritual insight into the mysteries of God's Love, especially manifested in the Hearts of Love, and so gain insight into their own personal position before God. They will devote a half-hour to mental prayer daily during which each tries to find and encounter God in loving union, and a half-hour to spiritual reading. Before retiring at night they will briefly examine the work of the day in His loving and merciful presence (cf. Can. 664). Prayer is a gift of God's Love which He readily gives to those whom He loves and who love Him. Each member must continually and perseveringly ask God for this great gift. Personal prayer is absolutely necessary in order to be active and contemplative. Without personal prayer we cannot fulfil our mission of loving God and bringing people to the love of Him.

#### ART. 127

The life of liturgical and private prayer is to be built on the solid foundation of authentic Christian spirituality. [...] (cf. Can. 663).

#### ART. 128

§1. The Members should be given every possible opportunity to receive Our Lord daily at Holy Communion, and to approach the Sacrament of Penance very frequently as needed. The Superior has the obligation to lead the members in freedom to this greatest font of love, holiness, purity and union with God but Superiors must not interfere with the personal decisions of the members in these respects.

§2. The members may confess to any Priest authorised to administer the Sacrament of Penance in the diocese.

§3. The Superior of the community as the First Servant will arrange for a Priest to visit the community bi-weekly for confessions (cfr. CC 630 §1 & 2; 663 §2; 664).

#### ART. 129

Each year the Members will make a retreat of six full days.

#### ART. 130

§1. Little sacrifices are to be made by the members as penance and self-discipline which are also acts of love. Though little they are highly meritorious before God. Such little acts include modesty in eating and drinking, sitting, standing and walking; kneeling rather than sitting while praying, sitting and standing erect, self-control or mortification of the senses of hearing, talking, tasting, etc., custody of the eyes, not eating between meals.

§2. Members will train themselves to accept with love, patience understanding and resignation the disappointments, unpleasant situations and even painful events which may happen to them such as bereavement, sickness, misunderstandings, bad weather, inconveniences, one's weakness and others' weakness as coming from the hands of our good Father.

### XVIII. Community life

#### ART. 131

§1. Religious life in the congregation is lived in community since it is a vocation to a communal expression of divine love and consecration. The members share a common faith, hope and charity. They help and encourage each other in all things on this difficult road towards perfection. They are convinced of the value and usefulness of community life we can hardly live it heartily and joyfully enough (cf. Can. 602). In their communities they will strive to be "of one Heart and one mind" (Acts. 4:32).

§2. Jesus, the Son of God, became man in a community. He established a new and vital community, the Church into whose hands He entrusted His work. The Catholic Society of the Two Hearts of Love exists today as part of this community of the Church. The communal life in the Society compares with normal human experience in the family, in the world as well as the Christian experience in the Church. Human and Christian maturity will be rightly expected of all the members through their response to God and to each other.

§3. The members will cherish this community life and one another as a special gift of God and will not stay outside their respective communities without due reasons and proper permission of the Superior.

§4. The Superior General with the consent of the Central Circle can for a just reason e.g. for apostolate, health and study purposes, authorise a lengthy absence of a member from the religious house (cf. Can. 665 §1).

§5. Any member, who must leave the convent premises on any business, should ensure that the Superior or some other member is clearly informed about the nature, destination and duration of the journey. No members may undertake any responsibility outside the community without the prior consent of the Superior.

#### ART. 132

A local Superior will be appointed by the Superior General to direct the affairs of each community or house. He will be a source of unity in the community and will inspire and direct the member of the house to faithfulness to their religious vows and life in the Society according to the constitutions (cf. Can. 608). Every community has to have a chapel around which will form the centre of the life of the community. In it the Holy Eucharist will be celebrated and reserved. It will also be a centre of the devotion to the Hearts of Love. In every community or house of the Society there will be ardent practice and propagation of the Devotion to the Two Hearts of Love.

Every member has the duty of ensuring harmonious and fraternal relationships among all the members within the community. Friction is to be avoided, restraint exercised, reconciliation sought

immediately any misunderstanding arises. The members will be open to each other, develop interest in each other's concerns encourage, assist and love one another.

Every member will strive to do his assigned duty well and cheerfully. It is the work of the Superior to assign duties. However, there will be only one class of sisters. All the members share equally in the burdens and benefits of the community. Sick and aged member are to be given adequate and special care by the community.

Functions will be assigned according to aptitudes and inclinations. Some members may be given wholly domestic functions within the community. However, every member no matter their primary apostolate is to assist in domestic duties.

When a member is unable to carry out an assigned work or duty for any reason, he should inform the Superior in good time so that alternative and timely arrangements can be made in order to avoid undue inconvenience to individual members or the community.

#### ART. 133

§1. The apostolate of the members consists primarily in loving God and bringing others to the love of Him in the Hearts of Love and bearing witness through their consecrated life of love.

§2. They are always to practice and propagate the devotion to the Hearts of Love wherever they are.

§3. Areas of apostolate include catechetics, education, health, parish assistance, organisation of lay apostolate groups, schools, hospitals, catering and domestic centres, prisoners, care for needy helpless children, especially orphans, vocational training, producing religious articles, press and publishing, organising youth clubs, women's organisations, co-operative societies, family and marriage counselling, rehabilitation of delinquents, care and training of handicapped people etc.

§4. The apostolate in the diocese is carried out under the direction of the diocesan Bishop.

#### [...] ART. 137

Members should obtain the permission of the local Superior to attend outside functions such as ordinations, weddings, naming ceremonies, burials and anniversaries or jubilees involving their relatives and friends [...] when charity and spirit of apostolate and solidarity requires them to do so [...]. In every case and in all situations they will bear testimony to the life they have been called to live and use every opportunity to bring people to the love of God in the Hearts of Love and the love of God to people.

#### [...] ART. 139

§1. Members' families (parents and relations), have a special place in the Society. Members and the entire Society shall not forget the obligation to parents and relations arising from the Fourth Commandment of God and from charity. Blood-relationship is further strengthened and sanctified by the bonds of the Hearts of Love. The members are to pray for them always and offer up sacrifices for them. With the permission of their local Superior members can take an interest in their own family affairs and problems even though they cannot provide financial assistance.

§2. Members of each community are to take a proper and charitable interest in the families of fellow members. Visiting families are to be made to feel especially welcome whenever they visit. They are to be shown due respect and hospitality and benefit from the good advice of community members as well as sympathy and consolation when needed. The family and relatives of fellow members are to be regarded as the family and relatives of all the members. Each member must accept the parents and family other members as his own. Where practicable, both parents or two relatives of each member may be invited to a gathering with other parents once a year [...] to bring them even closer to the Love of God in the Hearts of Love, in which they have a special place.

§3. However, members must not forget that, through their consecration, they now belong to a greater and universal family. Consequently, their love should know no boundaries, reaching everyone and all creation as belonging to God their Father whose true children they now are fully in the Hearts of Love. Undue attachment to natural families must be avoided in order to maintain



independence of spirit and a broad and universal love. [...] Each and every life has its share of the Cross to carry and there is no family without problems even if they do not broadcast them. However, when a member is aware that his parents are heavily weighed down by problem which the congregation could help to relieve to some extent, even materially, then he should seek the advice of the Superior, who may table the issue before the Superior General [...]. The members must imitate Our Lord's example in such a case as just as much as in all other things.

[...] ART. 141

Every community is to give witness to poverty and charity. Within its means it should cultivate a spirit of generosity: toward the members of their community, other communities, other institutes, towards the Church and towards strangers and those in need (cfr. Can. 640). [...]

## XIX. Enclosure

ART. 143

The members require enclosure in order to cultivate the silence, solitude and spirit of detachment and penance necessary for contemplative prayer, and which is essential for union with God.

Members must avoid the spirit of worldliness and seek spiritual solitude with God. They should refrain from unnecessary attendance at parties, functions and unnecessary outings. There is a need to limit visitors entering the convent so that members can be given every opportunity for deep prayer, contemplation and silent intimacy with God, especially within the enclosure. A visitor's room and visiting periods should therefore be clearly defined. In their daily lives members should cultivate an atmosphere of personal solitude, recollection and awareness of the presence of God.

Certain areas of the convent should be sealed off from the public and outside world. If possible, these areas should be out of range of any loud noise or any form of music. This measure is to support spiritual solitude and prayerful union with God. The members should learn to keep absolute silence by not talking at certain times and in places specified in the Directory, such as in the Chapel, at the Shrine, in some part of the Enclosure, as well as after night prayers. In general, members should strive to be wise and moderate in speech.

They should also manifest the spirit of silence and solitude by the way they speak, look, move about and carry themselves. In using means of communication, a necessary discretion is to be observed (cf. Can. 666).

[...] A chapel or oratory is to be built so that outsiders do not intrude into the Sisters' choir. [...]

ART. 144

Within the limit of its resources, the Congregation will choose its particular apostolic engagements in accordance with the changing needs of the time and place (cfr. Can. 677 §1). They need to develop a strong sense of fraternal charity which will dispose them to share in the living conditions, labour, sorrows and hopes of the brethren among whom they work and with whom they have contact.

ART. 145

§1. In the dioceses where they work the Society will strive to accommodate the requests of diocesan Bishops when setting their priorities, since all apostolic action is fundamentally an assistance to the Hierarchy, and should be carried on under its direction, (cfr. Can. 675 §3).

§2. [...] The members are to have marked respect and love for the Bishop and his Priests, Religious, of other Institutes as well as lay folk and show willing obedience and co-operation towards the Hierarchy.

In their apostolate members are subject and responsible to their own Superiors and must remain faithful to the discipline of their Congregation (cfr. Can. 678 §2).

While every effort must be made to win all men for Christ, members must avoid all forms of coercion, especially when dealing with the poor and uneducated. In exercising the apostolate, members are to manifest undeviating honesty, safeguard professional confidence and above all demonstrate that supernatural, fraternal charity, humanly manifested and felt, which can attract all men and women to the love of truth and goodness and finally to the Church and to Christ (cfr. Can. 220). [...]

#### ART. 146

All members are to be especially mindful to give the sick and elderly members of the Congregation their sympathy, care and love. [...] For their part, sick and elderly Sisters should accept their sickness or failing strength with patience and offer it to God for the welfare of the Congregation and the progress of its apostolic work. By reason of their full maturity, they should give to younger Sisters an example of life lived wholly according to the spirit of the Congregation, and should try to lighten the work of those caring for them.

The Local Superior will try to provide sick and elderly Sisters with frequent opportunity to receive the Sacraments. For the seriously ill, they are to arrange an early opportunity to receive the sacrament of the sick, and request prayers in all the houses of the Congregation (cfr. Can. 921 §1).

When a member becomes seriously ill or dies, the member's family should be notified promptly. Arrangements for the funeral will be made in consultation with the Diocesan Bishop. Her Sisters in the Lord have the same duty of love to pray for her in death as in life.

#### ART. 147

Formative training is the conscious assistance and guidance given by the Congregation, especially during the novitiate and in the early years of each member's consecration. The member must cooperate earnestly in her own formation by her attentive response to the action of the Holy Spirit, by her efforts and willingness to learn and by engaging in frank dialogue with Superiors and the community (cfr. CC 646, 652 §1-4).

#### [...]XX. Aspirancy

#### ART. 149

Aspirants are those young people who are giving serious consideration to dedicating themselves to the religious life. The purpose of the aspirancy is to allow women to complete their basic intellectual training in circumstances that assure solid understanding of Christian faith and Christian living, and which allow them to make an informed decision for or against embracing the religious life.

The aspirancy programme should provide a firm grounding in Christian doctrine, some elementary training in prayer, and an experience of community living, it should be directed as to lay women. It should accordingly permit aspirants freedom of communication with their social milieu and freedom of movement and decision appropriate to young women of their age. From the very beginning they will be initiated into Christian virtues, especially the virtue of love, Christian humility, chastity, self-sacrifice and detachment. The aspirants should be under the direction of a mature Sister.

#### [...] ART. 168

Superiors and Novice Master/Mistress must always show evangelical simplicity and kindness towards novices, coupled with gentleness and respect for their personality. This should create a climate of confidence, docility and openness which will enable the Novice Master/Mistress to orientate the generosity of the novices towards making a complete gift of themselves to the Lord in faith. This should gradually lead them by word and example to learn in the mystery of Christ crucified the exigencies of authentic religious obedience.

[...] ART. 176

§ 1. Throughout their lives, Members shall labour earnestly to perfect their spiritual and doctrinal, as well as their professional development. [...]

#### XXIV The necessity of constitutions for a religious congregation

ART. 185

As the physical world has its laws which govern it and direct its activities for its development, and as societies have their statutes which help them in the attainment of their end, so Religious communities for stronger reason have their laws or Constitutions appropriated to the end they have set themselves.

Constitutions are of very powerful assistance in the attainment of perfection of the Religious life. For, in effect, perfection consists in the accomplishment of the evangelical counsels. But the Constitutions are the expression of the counsels in the daily life of the Religious. They regulate their relation with earthly things and also raise them to God. They disengage the soul, give it flight and elevate it to God, through contemplation of God and the service of the brethren. The faithful observance of the Constitutions while forming an exterior fortification against the attacks of the enemies of perfection, interiorly facilitates the following of Christ and the flowering of Christian charity that exists in every true community life (cfr. P.C. §1).

#### XXV The obligations of the constitutions

ART. 186

All the Members Religious, both the Superiors and the other members are bound to observe the Constitutions of the Institute, to regulate their lives by it, and to strive for the perfection of their state through it.

[...] ART. 188

The members are obliged to observe the Constitutions in virtue of the formal promise they make and reiterate often at the foot of the altar and also in virtue of the vow of obedience which they vow to the Superior.

[...] ART. 191

All theologians and spiritual writers hold that the Constitutions with regard to the vows obliges under pain of sin, more or less serious according to the degree of malice and the seriousness of the matter. Otherwise the Constitutions does not bind under sin, of itself.

[...] ART. 193

Violation through negligence, tepidity or contempt is blameworthy in accordance with the degree of culpability and the gravity of the matter. "LOVE IS THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW" (Rom. 13:10)

#### XXVII FORM OF RELIGIOUS PROFESSION OF THE SOCIETY OF THE TWO HEARTS OF LOVE

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Most Holy Trinity of Love! I, N.N, do freely and willingly dedicate myself completely to you in the Society of the Two Hearts of Love as a religious sister/brother and now do solemnly make in your presence, and in the presence of the Hearts of Love of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the B.V. Mary and of all the angles and saints in heaven, and of the Church and the members of the Society on earth, the vows of chastity,

poverty, obedience, truthfulness, love, prayer and work of the Hearts of Love, for ... years/in perpetuity at your hands, Most Rev. N.N., in accordance with the Constitutions of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love.

Oh God, my Love! I pray you, accept me and consume me in your infinite Love and fill me with your blessings, grace and Love. All to your greater glory and honour, for the Reign of the Hearts of Love in every Heart and everywhere in all creation, and for the good of the Church and the salvation of souls.

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Love of the Hearts of Love, the help of the B.V. Mary and of all the angels and saints, I will strive constantly to be faithful to my vows and to seek perfection in Love in the service of God, the Church, the Society and humanity.

My dear brothers and sisters, I humbly request the support of your help and prayers. Oh Hearts of Love! [...]

*When all have read their profession - the Superior (or her delegate), who receives the vows says:*

"In the Name of God the Father Almighty who called you, and of Our Lord Jesus Christ whom you are following and of the Holy Spirit who inspires and strengthens you, and of the Hearts of Love whose member you are [...] I accept you in the name of the Church and as a Religious Member of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love and recommend you to the Infinite Love of God flowing in and through the Hearts of Love into your precious soul and informing it and uniting it to God through and in the Hearts of Love which indescribable union of Love we now enact and celebrate in this Most Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass."

#### **4. Selected sermons, meditations and prayers of Father Montfort**

The passages are in chronological order. Few have been published. The texts in inverted commas are “messages” from God or a saint.

19.01.95, Thursday (Paderborn) (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“Here is My message. My son, I love you with an eternal Love. In Umuchima I let My Love blossom. In Orlu I let My Love Triumph. Here I will let My Love reign. Reign in the whole world. Only I require you do is avoid all evils.”

22.02.95 (Paderborn) (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“Today, I promise you, I give you all the hearts of all the peoples in the world as your heritage, and in heaven, I give you My Own Heart, I Myself. The sign of My covenant with you is the Eucharist. As long as the Eucharist is celebrated, as long as thanksgiving is given, so long is My covenant of Love, so long as you carry Me in your heart so long have you the hearts of all men. So long as you give Me your heart so long do you have possession of My Heart. So do I give you authority over My Heart. You have the authority over the Blood of My Love: to draw and drink, to bath in it, to bring people and dip them in My Blood of Love; to draw it and pour on the people; to ask whatever you want, whatever you will in the Name of My Hearts of Love and it will be granted. What do you ask?”

(Lord grant that I will love You always and bring all others to the Love of You, to your Love, to Love You. Make me to Love You always and help me to make others to Love You.)

“My son because you did not ask the destruction of your enemies or even power over the devil and evil or to heal diseases or power of wisdom or anything spectacular and personal but only to Love Me and bring people to the Love of Me. I grant you all. Love is All. Only be perfect to do My Will.”

16.06.95 (Paderborn) (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“Here in Europe My Love will reign. I mean to renew all hearts and homes, all persons and things in My Love.

O! My Love will reign! O! The Hearts of Love will reign!”

23.06.95 (Paderborn) (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

Dinwenu m taa bu feast Obi Gi Di Aso (Obi Ihunanya) ka mu na-ewere onwe m nile nyechaa Gi n’aka. Agaghi m eche, kwuo, m’obu mee ihe obula na-abughi uche Gi. Were m mee otu o siri so Gi n’ihi na abucha m nke Gi. Amen. [My Lord, today, on the Feast of Your Sacred Heart (Heart of Love), I give myself completely to You, take me wholly into your hand. I beg, do not allow me to do anything whatsoever which is not your will. Take me and use me as it pleases you, for I am entirely Yours. Amen.] (English transl. from Igbo: Sr. Chukwuemeka Maria Steidl)

23.06.95 (Paderborn) (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“My son, I accept you wholly and entirely and I give you all the blessings of My Love. As you have consecrated yourself to Me, I consecrate Myself also to you.”

18.07.96 (Eichstätt) (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“My son, go daily to the Dom [cathedral] and do Holy Hour 3-4 constantly, unfailingly. I mean to draw people to My Love. Be constant in the Prayers in the Holy Hour. I promise you before the end of the year I will establish this Devotion and Society here. All you need to do is to be constant steadfast in the Holy Hour of Prayers 3-4 and try to speak to at least one person every day and when people come around try and invite them to join in the prayers. Be open to all, do not be closed. Go

to the Dom and do the Holy Hour of Prayers everyday 3-4. Only what is greater than Prayer will make it (you) fail. Even if you have prayer Holy Hour at another time still keep the 3-4 Holy Hour in Dom constant. I am with you, get up.”

Early 1997, in Eichstätt, Father Montfort tells the author in German his experiences, after she insisted that he must surely be a visionary. This is what she remembered of the narration and noted down some hours after:

“Ich ahnte schon als kleines Kind, dass Gott mir einen Auftrag geben will. Am 7. Oktober 1972 (Rosenkranz-Fest) wurde es klar. Ich war 14 Jahre alt, am Beginn der Secondary School (BSC) und kam von der Kirche. Es war schon dunkel. Ich spürte eine Person bei mir, sah aber niemanden. Ich hatte Angst, lief schneller. Ich hörte eine Stimme: „Fürchte dich nicht. Ich habe einen Auftrag für dich. ...“ Ich hatte noch Angst, ging weg. Ich hatte Zweifel: Ist das von Gott, wenn Angst da ist? Die Stimme sagte: „Fürchte dich nicht. Ich bin es. Du sollst zu den Leuten von meiner Mutter reden. So viele kennen sie nicht, lieben sie nicht. Du sollst sie bekannt machen...“ Ich hatte Gewissensbisse: Er war es, und ich war weggelaufen. Ich betete ein kindisches Gebet: „Jesus, Maria, wenn ihr es seid, dann will ich Euch jetzt sehen. Das war im „Obi“, zu Hause. Es war finster, und da kam ein starkes, helles Licht von einer anderen Seite als wo die Kerze stand. Ich lief schnell in mein Zimmer, das Licht kam auch da. Ich rief: „Mama, Mama“, lief zu ihr, sagte ihr aber nichts von dem Licht. Dann hatte ich wieder Gewissensbisse: Erst hatte ich darum gebetet, dann war ich weggelaufen! Ich tat Buße. Danach hatte ich eine Vision – oder war es ein Traum? Maria! Ich bat sie, Jesus um Verzeihung zu bitten. Sie sagte nichts, lächelte nur. Als Jesus kam, hat er geweint. Das war die erste Vision. Er gab mir den Auftrag, jeden Tag Heilige Stunde zu halten, um Ihn zu trösten.

Ich hatte öfters Stimmen gehört, und heute bin ich mir sicher: es war Gott selbst, oder Maria. Jesus sprach stets über Maria, Maria immer über Jesus; aber nicht gleich von Herzen der Liebe. Jesus gab mir den Auftrag: „Die Menschen hungern nach Erkenntnis, niemand belehrt sie! Sprich du zu ihnen, ich werde die sagen, worüber du reden sollst. Sprich nach dem Block-rosary zu ihnen.“ Ich habe um Erlaubnis zu reden gefragt und meistens bekommen. Die Leute haben aus Erstaunen über mich kleinen Stöpsel zugehört.

Maria hat darüber gesprochen, wie die Sünden ihren Sohn verwunden: So viele Sünden, so viele Beleidigungen, und niemand denkt daran zu bereuen, um Verzeihung zu bitten.

Jesus sagte: „Schreibe das auf, für spätere Generationen, wenn es dann noch welche gibt: Ich kann die Sünden der Welt bald nicht mehr ertragen. Wenn diese Generation nicht umkehrt zu Gott, wird es keine spätere Generationen mehr geben!“

Er sprach oft vom fasten. Ich habe es ja gemerkt: Wenn ich faste bin ich stark, auch physisch. Wenn ich zu viel esse werde ich ganz schlapp. Wenn wir fasten, übernimmt Gott die Kontrolle über uns. Jesus sagte: “Wenn du wüsstest, wie viel mich jede einzelne Seele kostet, du würdest bis in alle Ewigkeit arbeiten um nur eine einzige zu retten. Es sind alle Meine Seelen. Täglich fallen hunderte in die Hölle, und sie gehören doch mir! Viele Seelenführer sind verdorben; sie füttern nur sich selber und lassen die Seelen verderben...”

Wir sind große Sünder. Wir stehlen und morden zwar nicht, aber wir lassen uns die Seelen rauben, die Gott uns anvertraut hat! Das ist vor Gott viel schlimmer als alles andere.

[Bericht von der Vision von Jesus am Kreuz, woraufhin er Freunde zum Gebet in der Heiligen Stunde ruft, und Vision von der „Einzigsten Lösung“ der Einheit mit den Zwei Herzen] Nachdem Jesus mich das Gebet gelehrt hat, hatte ich drei Tage lang tiefste Zweifel, Schlaflosigkeit und Ratlosigkeit. Dann kam Jesus und sagte: „Ich wusste dass es so kommt. Nun aber zweifle nicht mehr!“ Ich betete dann das Gebet mit Freunden und in der Familie, aber ohne jemandem von den Visionen zu erzählen.

Später sah ich den Leidensweg Jesu: Das Ölbergleiden: Jesus schwitzt Blut und niemanden kümmert es. Satan rät ihm zu fliehen. Pilatus beugt sich dem Druck. Die Geißelung durch die römischen Soldaten: Sie streiten sich um die Geißel, sind voller Hass, auch auf dem Kreuzweg.

Maria: Die Soldaten lassen sie vorbei. Simon von Zyrene hat Mitleid mit Jesus, dies treibt ihn, die Mutter sehen zu wollen. Er läuft hin. Die Soldaten zwingen ihn, das Kreuz zu nehmen: so hat er diese große Gnade bekommen. Veronika liebt Maria, nicht so sehr Jesus. Nun sieht sie wie Maria wegen Jesus leidet, deshalb hilft sie Jesus mutig. Jesus am Kreuz. Satan verhöhnt ihn und zeigt ihm alle Sünder bis zum Ende der Welt: „Dafür leidest du!!! Verfluche sie!“ Jesus betet: „Vater, vergib ihnen!“

Als Seminarist habe ich dem Regens alles gesagt. Er hat aber dem Bischof nicht davon berichtet. Wenige Jahre nach der Priesterweihe wurde ich zum Leiter [chaplain] des Laienapostolates der Diözese ernannt, zum Leiter einer neuen Schule und Pastor. Jesus sagte mir: „Stelle ein Kreuz auf den Berg und bete dort täglich.“ Ich tat es. Bald begann eine Person, mir zu meinem Gebetsort zu folgen. Ich war sehr verärgert, sagte ihr, sie soll weggehen, aber sie ging nur ein Stück weit weg, blieb in der Entfernung stehen. Jesus sagte mir dann: „Schicke die Leute nicht weg.“ So erlaubte ich ihnen, mit zu beten. Es kamen immer mehr Leute. Jesus sagte mir: „Bitte den Bischof, hier Messe feiern zu dürfen.“ Der Bischof sagte weder Ja noch Nein, er sagte mir, ich soll den Dompfarrer fragen. Der war sehr erstaunt: „Ich soll das entscheiden?“ Er hat mir aber kein Verbot gegeben... Ich habe es nicht verkündet, dass ich Messe feiern würde, aber zur ersten Messe kamen sehr viele Leute. Ich begann, täglich die Messe zu feiern. Einige Leute stachelten dann den Dompfarrer zum Neid gegen mich auf, und er begann, gegen den „Heiligen Berg“ zu predigen. Dadurch wurde der Platz bekannter, und mehr Leute kamen. [...] Der Bischof nahm alle Ämter von mir und schickte mich in ein Benediktinerkloster, für 30 Tage, damit ich dort die Dummheiten vergessen möge. Ich hatte lange Gespräche mit dem Abt, und ich lehrte ihn das Gebet der Herzen der Liebe. Er fand es sehr gut. Als wir im Klostergarten knieten und gemeinsam das Gebet beteten, und uns bei „Jesus“ bis zum Boden verneigten, waren da ein paar Kinder, die haben erst gelacht, aber dann kamen sie und haben mitgebetet. Nach dem Klosteraufenthalt wurde ich als Kaplan in eine andere Pfarrei geschickt, mit der Erlaubnis, einmal die Woche am „Heiligen Berg“ die Messe zu feiern, und auch sonst erlaubte es der Bischof, dass ich dorthin gehe und meine Gebete bete. Als ich kurz vor Weihnachten Beichte hörte waren um 12 Uhr viele Leute für die Beichte in der Kirche, und ich betete mit allen den Angelus, und danach das Gebet der Herzen der Liebe. Während wir beteten, kam der Pfarrer angerannt und verbot das Gebet der Herzen der Liebe in seiner Pfarrei. Am folgenden Donnerstag war die halbe Gemeinde am „Heiligen Berg“.

15.09.97, 07.30 am, during Mass (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

„My Son, it is Me your Lord, your Love, your God, your All. It is Me, I who am. I let this blood come out to let you and all know that it is really me. I feel the pains, I see, I feel, I hear, I breathe, I suffer. It is Me. I am real, I live. Whatever is said, whatever is done I see, hear and feel it all.

Before it is a piece of bread, after consecration it is Me. It is really Me. I am with all I am

Any insults and sacrilege make me suffer, - cause me pain for I see, hear and feel.

Tell them to come to Me with love and respect. Tell them to receive Me with hearts full of Love and respect.

Whether they receive Me with the mouth or with the hand is for Me okay, but they have to come to Me and receive Me knowing fully well that it is Me who am that they receive. They should receive Me with Love and respect. I suffer, I weep and I bleed wherever they receive Me without Love and respect. My Mother suffers also whenever I am insulted. Preserve this Host. It is me. Let people come. I will make this place into a place of pilgrimage of Love.

Never celebrate mass hastily and without Love and respect. If they cannot wait, let them go. Never celebrate Mass in haste for it is Me.”

29.09.97 (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

Jesus said after communion: “Only two things are now important in your life: holiness of life and doing your work. In short only one – doing My Will; concretely your studies and your work; or preaching and praying. Your study is part of preaching and your work is praying.”

05.10.97 (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“Any day you did not teach at least one person the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, and any day you did not do some work of Love to somebody at least one person, that is sinful, for this you should go to confession.”

1997 (meditation not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

There are two instances (times) when I feel most my priesthood:

1. When I am breaking The Bread. 2. When I am breaking The Word.

Breaking of Bread: I feel most involved in what I give in the Body and Blood of Christ: I am breaking Him who has captured all of me. I am sharing Him who has consumed all of me, in whom I am, I am nothing outside Him: in Him I am everything, in whom I am All.

Breaking of the Word: I feel most involved; I am sharing Him who has chosen me as the instrument of His Love, to preach His Love. In preaching Him I am bearing witness to His being in me and I am in Him.

In both cases I must let Him be Himself God, through me who am nothing.

26.11.97, 12.00 noon (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“The sisters are your children. Work directly with the sisters. Love them with all the Love you have. Trust them with all you have. Live for them. They will never disappoint you. They will never break your heart. Live for them. They are your children.”

“That day I will give you all the blessing I promised. It is a covenant between Me and you, between Me and My Church, between Me and My people; between Me and My creation; between Me and Me. I AM. Get up.”

15.6.1998, 6.45 o'clock (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“My Son, I want My children of the Hearts of Love, the brothers, sisters and priests to wear this piece (he showed me) of flowing clothes also, on which will be the symbol of the Hearts of Love and the inscription of the religious congregation both front and back and on the two shoulders. It is a sign of My Infinite Love. It is a sign of the total dedication, offering and belonging to Me. It will be made to suit the colour of the habit they wear. Anybody who wears it will never allow impurity in thought or words or action, to enter him/her. He will never allow himself to impurity. It is a sign of My pure, holy and perfect Love, and as sign of pure, holy and perfect Love for Me. It is also a sign of My absolute, infinite and unconditional Love of him/her who wears it. Anybody who wears it with the right spirit, living the life of Love, saying the Prayers of Love and doing the works of Love, will never be lost. He/she has my absolute infinite and unconditional Love. He/she has given himself/herself absolutely completely perfectly to My Love and I have taken him completely in My Love.”

September 1999 (Hütting, typed by Father Montfort, text of one page published in [www.twoheartsoflove.com](http://www.twoheartsoflove.com).)

On the Prayer: “My members, members of my Love! [...] Pour this prayer like rain. [...]”

October 1999 (Hütting, typed by Father Montfort, text of 2 pages published in [www.twoheartsoflove.com](http://www.twoheartsoflove.com).)

“This is the prayer of the new age, the age of the Reign of Love, the reign of the Hearts of Love. Do you know that prayers of Love never end? Hope may end, faith will have an end but Love never ends. In heaven the only prayer that is said is the prayer of Love. [...] The Father prays also. The Holy Spirit prays also. [...] I love you Father! I love you Son! I love you Holy Spirit! [...] I have taught you this prayer of Love – a version of which is this prayer of the Hearts of Love, with which I mean to introduce you into this new age of Love – the age of the reign of the Hearts of Love. [...] My child, come into my Heart. What do you see? What do you experience?”



*I see and experience flaming fire of Love. Infinite ocean of fire of Love. Indescribable brightness. Indescribable Peace. Indescribable Serenity. Indescribable Joy. Indescribable Quietness. Indescribable LOVE. Indescribable Union. Indescribable Oneness. Perfect union of Hearts, of beings, of persons, perfect fulfilment of all true heart's desires.*

8.12.1999 (Hütting, typed by Father Montfort, not yet published.)

“I, Father of Love, God the Father, Father of all Love, your Father, origin of all Love, I speak to you my child. I love you. I am Love himself and origin of all Love. [...] I am always with you. You are pleasing to me. I am happy with you. You are my child, I am your Father, you are my Love. [...] I sent you into the world so that the world will realize me as God Love; always be in love, always love, love all with my Love. [...] When you love all with my Love you win all back to me. My beloved! My Love! My Heart! My Child! My Son! You are mine. You are me. I am you. Mine. My Love, the world is beclouded because the world does not realize me as Love, God of Love. This is your mission, the most important mission this time and forever that my Love will reign in the whole world. It is for this that I, Father, created the world. I have been waiting very, very patiently for the reign of my Love in every heart, in every home, everywhere, every place, every time. My beloved, give all your strength, all your time, all your energy, all that you have for this work, waste no time, waste no energy on useless things. [...] With your hands I mean to bless the whole world. With your eyes I mean to look at the whole world. With your ears I mean to hear the whole world. With your heart I mean to love the whole world. Love all with my Love. Come deeper, come deeper in Me. My Love. Be perfectly united with me.”

“I God the Son, your Jesus, your Love, your Heart, I, the God of Love, the Heart of Love, I embrace you. I kiss you. I love you. I thank you for being my Love! [...] Never, never, never be separated from me. Nothing can ever separate you from me. I, I cannot separate Myself from you, and you cannot separate yourself from Me, because you are my Love. We are forever united, you come from me.

[...] Stand up. Do not be afraid of anybody or anything. Go ahead and say the Prayer of the Hearts of Love and do works of Love, and through this I will establish the reign of My Love everywhere and every time. Don't apologize to anybody for loving me, or blame yourself for accepting to be My Love. It is they who should apologize for not accepting My Love, and not you for being my Love.

The whole world belongs to Me. Every Heart belongs to Me. I am the God of Love. You are my Love. I have given you the instrument of prayer, the Prayer of my Heart, the Prayer of my Love. I love you, My Love. [...]

“I, God the Holy Spirit! The Spirit of Love! The Spirit of the Father and of the Son! I am in you. [...] Love all with My Love. Win all with Our Love. [...] Let all experience that we are Love, that I am Love. [...] Call me the Spirit of Love. I am there. Call me Holy Spirit of Love and I will act. Call me Holy Spirit of Love and I will establish the Love everywhere and every time. When it appears to be most impossible, call me, Holy Spirit of Love. I am specially given to you this time to be with you to see that you succeed in your work. I am God's Power, I am God's Love. [...] Your work is My work, your work is work of the Father. Your work is work of the Son. [...]

“I, your mother, the mother of Divine Love, I am the handmaid of the Lord, but God my God, God your God, has exalted me and made me the mother of Divine Love, your mother, call me Mother of Love. [...] There is no other Love than the Love born of me. There is no other Love than the Love that is in God. There is no other Love than the Love that is in me. [...] I am the mother of Love. It is my duty to bring Love into the world and to be the mother of Love. [...] Take my heart, my pure heart, my Immaculate Heart. God has made my heart pure and immaculate. In this pure and immaculate heart I have born the Righteous One in this world. There is eternal happiness in this world. I love you, my Love. [...] Call me always the Heart of Love and I will fight for you. I press

my heart to your heart. Our hearts are one. I love you. Be assured. [...]"

"I Michael, Who is like God?, Archangel Michael, I come to you sent by God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I greet you [...]. I love you my lord, I worship you [...] my Love. I am sent to protect you, to fight on your side. I, who drove away lucifer, with all his followers, I have been given special charge to protect you. I am your angel. I with all the angels we are sent to fight on your side. Everywhere the Prayer of the Hearts of Love is being said, we are there to pray and to protect. Everywhere the Prayer of the Hearts of Love is being said, everywhere Mass is being celebrated, everywhere Mass of the Hearts of Love is being said, we are there. Everywhere Holy Hour is being held, wherever the Image of the Hearts of Love is exposed, wherever the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, we are all there. To worship, to protect, to fight. We love you and we want to assure you are protected, completely protected. [...]"

"I, St. Joseph, the Protector of the Holy Family. I have received the special assignment from the Father, from the Son and the Holy Spirit to take special charge of you and this work of the Hearts of Love in the world at this time, as I took care of the Hearts of Love from the very beginning till my death. [...] The eternal Father has given me the charge and I will do it with great Love and dedication. More than I did it in former times. He has given me great powers to take care of this because he knows that the fight is terrible. I just want to assure you that I with all the saints am on your side. [...] The Hearts of Love is my special work forever. God chose me to be the protector of the Hearts of Love, always, forever, until all is Love, until all is restored to the Hearts of Love. I with all the saints in heaven, we are with you. [...] Prepare all the members, let them not be afraid. [...] All of them are protected. As long as they remain constant in saying the Prayers of the Hearts of Love and doing the work of Love."

2.3.2000, Vigil. (Hütting, typed by Fr. Montfort. Text of 4 pages published in [www.twoheartsoflove.com](http://www.twoheartsoflove.com).)

"My people, the people of my Love, I am your God, I am your Love, I am your Jesus Christ. I am the Holy Eucharist. I am not only present in the Holy Eucharist. [...] The Mass you celebrate is Me. [...] When I was washing the feet of My apostles at the celebrations of the Eucharist, they did not understand what I was doing to them. [...] It is Love. It is service. [...] I give Myself to you in order to serve you. [...] I give Myself to you in order to redeem you from your sins. I give Myself to you in order to unite you to Myself. I give Myself to you in order to unite you to My Father. I give Myself to in order to in order that My Holy Spirit will live in you. [...] At every mass is a new creation, [...] a complete renewal of all who participate at mass very, very devotedly, with open hearts and mind. [...] The Holy Eucharist is Heaven in your midst. I am your Heaven. [...] The greatest joy of My Mother Mary is to bring people to the Holy Eucharist. You remember the miracle at Cana. That miracle is a miracle that points to the Holy Eucharist. What did My Mother say: DO WHAT HE TELLS YOU. Because of the unity she has with Me, She knows the culmination of My salvific act in the Holy Eucharist and She pointed to it. Everybody who loves My Mother Mary must love me in the Holy Eucharist. The changing of water into wine is a foretaste, it is a pointer to the Eucharist. [...] During the Prayer of the Hearts of Love always wish to unite yourself to Me in the Holy Eucharist, especially when you say: "O Hearts of Love! Consume Me. I am your victim of Love!" It is Eucharistic prayer. You consume Me and I consume you. You eat Me and I eat you. [...]"

Before June 2000, Germany. (Excerpts of a letter to members, inviting them to join the pilgrimage to Rome in June 2000, typed by Father Montfort.)

"I Invite all who honour me in My Love. I invite all who honour Me in My Hearts of Love. I invite all who honour My Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of My Mother. I invite all who are waiting for the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of My Mother and the triumph of My Most Sacred

Heart. I invite all who are waiting for the reign of the Hearts of Love to come to me to me in Rome for three days during the feast of My Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of My Mother and the Hearts of Love. Let all come to Me. Let them all come to Me. I will pour My abundant blessings on them all. I am their blessing. I am their Lord, I am their God. Tell the bishop to help and organise it. Let all societies dedicated to the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart. Let all come. Let all help to organise it. Let all come.

For these three days let all come. [...] I mean to pour My Love on the whole world. I mean to pour My Heart of Love out to them. I mean to pour the blood of My Love on the whole world not minding their obstacles. [...] My Church is not a creature. My Church is Me. My Church is My Body. [...] With the Love of My Father. The Love which is Me. The Love of My Holy Spirit. The Love of My Love. I bless all of you.”

“My son. I am the Father of Love. I invite all to come to My Love. I will pour My blessings of Love on them all.”

“I, the Holy Spirit of Love, invite all to come at this time. I will pour the fire of My Love on all of them.”

“I, the Handmaid of Love, I am the invitation, the organiser of this pilgrimage. **THIS MOST SPECIAL PILGRIMAGE OF LOVE.** It is to be called the Pilgrimage of Love.”

“I, Joseph with all the angels and saints I am there.”

“I, Michael with all the angels and saints we are already there. We are calling all of come to this pilgrimage of Love. It is a pilgrimage to pray and praise the Love of God.”

“We also, the poor souls in purgatory, we are crying to all of you come, come. In these three days, your prayers and masses will release all of us from our purgatory. Please come. Let all come. Let all who loves us come. Let all who care for us come, to pray for our release. We call on all our brothers and sisters, to all whom it is possible to come. Come, come, come, come all. [...]”

27.10.2000, Friday (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“My Son, My Love! This is the work of My Hearts of Love: To love all with My Love and to bring all to My Love, to unite all in My Love. I love you with eternal Love. And I want you to love all with My eternal Love no matter where you are. Every person, everything, belong to Me...I alone I am God. There is no other. I have everything in My hands. I control all. Even the most free creatures. The angels are freer than human beings. They are spirits. I made them so. They worship Me with there freedom. They love Me. Love is worship with freedom. Love is service in freedom. Love is union in freedom. I am Love. Love is self-giving in freedom.

My Love! Be very, very strict in leading My people on the right way of My Love. Do not let anybody distract you. Be very, very, very strict with Love. Be very, very, very strict with yourself. Remain in My Love.

You have passed the stage of compromise with My Love, My purity, My holiness. There is and there can be no compromise. Do not compromise My Love, My holiness, My glory, My purity. I am not a God of compromise. I am God. [...] It is not they who will lead you or dictate to you. It is you whom I have appointed leader of My people in My Hearts of Love. Let them realise that there is no alternative to you, no alternative to My Love. There is no alternative to Me. I alone, I am God. Let them do what I tell them. He who is not ready to do what I tell them, you should help. If he/she remains unwilling leave him/her aside. No weakness, no compromise. Love is not compromise. Love is self-sacrifice. Love is union. Let them give themselves to Me and I will do with them what I like. I will unite them to Myself. No compromise with the Prayer, life of Prayer, the special times of Prayer. No compromise with works of Love. [...] Demand from all regular report of life, of prayers and works of Love. Be very loving and very strict. Be strict with My message. Obey Me completely. Let all know that you are not doing your will but, My Will. Let them realise that you do not compromise with anybody on My messages, My instruction. [...] I have entrusted this message

of Love to you. Let all the members of My Love learn to listen and follow you. I have sent you to teach and lead them in the way of My Love. Be completely united with Me in Love. [...] It is My Will that My Society of Love be organised in circles. I am at the centre and everywhere. Let the various circles be functional. Strengthen the various circles, but let them realise that no circle is complete and isolated from the other. All the circles are interdependent. All of them are responsible to you. All the circles form one single union, one single Society of My Hearts of Love. [...] Protect the rights of each circle. All are responsible and dependent on you My Love. [...] I am Love. You are My Love.”

27.10.2000, Friday (Neunkirchen) (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort.)

“My son, I thank you that you have come here. Live here and pray and work here. Take two or three persons but not more than five persons, who will live and work and pray with you here. Here is a place of prayer and work of the Hearts of Love. Perpetual adoration! Perpetual prayer! Take people who will be completely prayerful and peaceful and all Love, who will be obedient to you, and will be more active with the heart and the hands than with the mouth.

The various circles of the Society will be coming and they will have place to stay. They will have the opportunity to stay, live, pray and work with you. Let all be welcome here. I want you to concentrate the centre of the work of the Hearts of Love here. Eichstätt is for studies. Here is the little centre.”

*The following till 6/2/2001 are excerpts of sermons and comments of Fr. Montfort, followed by the author, Sr. Maria Steidl, in handwriting, without the help of a recorder, later typed by her. Due to the velocity of the talk, errors and omissions can be there. They are not yet published.*

17.11.2000, Friday (Aschaffenburg). Public Mass of Father Montfort with two other priests in the Capuchin church, with special prayer for healing at the end.

Ihr habt vor der Messe Rosenkranz gebetet. Unsere Mutter Maria hat gesagt: Wenn wir die Gnaden der Messe ganz ausschöpfen wollen, sollen wir vorher Rosenkranz beten und nachher den Rosenkranz der Herzen der Liebe: Dieses Gebet ist das rechte Dankgebet. [...] Es gibt nur einen Weg zu Gott! Nicht zwei! Dieser Weg ist Jesus Christus. Jesus Christus ist Liebe – das Herz der Liebe. Gott ist zu uns gekommen als Mensch, geboren aus Maria der Jungfrau: das heißt dieser Weg ist auch der Weg Mariens.

18.11.2000, Saturday (Ursulinen-convent Königstein, Vigil with few sisters.)

Das weggehen von hier wird sehr positiv sein für die Verbreitung der Herzen der Liebe. In Aschaffenburg waren so viele Neue! Diese Wanderung ist Verbreitung.

26.11.2000, Sunday (Okigwe, Noviciate of the Hearts of Love) Talk after rosary in the evening.

Even if it is not written in the Constitutions: Our Sisters of the Hearts of Love shall learn as many languages as possible, at least English and German, at least a basic knowledge. All shall be open for the other culture and language, we shall develop interest in it, so that we can integrate others. [...] We shall enjoy the international character of our Congregation, not bearing it: Rejoice in your sister! [...] If you would have seen the face of Jesus, when one, whom God called to follow him, rejected [the rich, young man in Mk 10, 21-23], then you would know how Jesus suffered. That is how I felt with Christa ... [a young woman who left as an aspirant.] Everybody shall uphold vocations from God, mothering them, supporting them!

27.11.2000, Monday (Okigwe, Noviciate), Vigil

A small boy was carried by his mother every Saturday to the rosary, 15 decades. It was too much for him, and after few decades he used to curse his mother in his heart! He had to be a good boy,

kneel, fold his hands... The rosary became occasion for sin to him! But it was the grace of this prayers which made him to become a priest; later he was grateful to his mother. [...] When I understood how important the Holy Mass is for Jesus, I began to love it. [...] Jesus must be received with love in the Holy Eucharist.

28.11.2000, Tuesday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Evening Mass for the few sisters who had no morning Mass.

Here is the most holy place of the Hearts of Love. Everybody who comes to this place, by his mere coming he receives the seal of the Hearts of Love. Jesus has chosen this place. [...] This place is holy! That means that we have to keep it holy! [...] Somebody asked me today: "Why are the angels no longer heard here?" There was a time when one heard the angels singing here every evening! The Anthem of the Hearts of Love is not from this world. I have learnt it, heard it! It is a song of the angels.

29.11.2000, Wednesday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Vigil Mass for many Brothers and Sisters.

Once I was reflecting on it, on a 15<sup>th</sup> of August: How many people are there in the world – and how few of them know and honour Mary. Jesus told me: "That is the reason why I have called you."

Morning Mass:

We need especially the Holy Spirit: Without him we can do nothing. All: the Immaculate Conception, the Incarnation, the preaching... all was done in the power of the Holy Spirit. And our service cannot be done without his help and power. We have to open first our hearts. The Holy Spirit does not live in the dirt or in a sinful body. You are temple of the Holy Spirit! We have to allow the Holy Spirit to take control: Do, say, think nothing without first asking him. Always ask first, and do nothing until he gives an answer. You will see that you will not do much, because all for what we used to waste our energy is useless for the Holy Spirit. But all you do will be so good that nobody can improve it! The Holy Spirit will be very active in you.

Let us begin here to be holy. The spirit is strong, but the flesh is weak. Only if the Spirit takes control and the body obeys, when the latter is being forced along like a heavy load, we can do the work. E.g. during prayer the body wants to rest, but the Spirit wants to pray! This tension is always there.

1.12.2000, Friday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Vigil Mass for Brothers and Sisters.

God promised me to form souls, who will have great love of Him and who are willing to work with me. "To work with me" means that they do what I do, having the same intentions, living as I live. There are many who love God, but they cannot work with me. I have a special mission, clearly defined. This mission of the Hearts of Love was given to me – all others can only work with me. When I see somebody whom God has prepared to sacrifice all, his/her life, strength, time, and who is ready to work with me – I say it, even if it may give a misunderstanding: I worship such a person! [...] I love all Sisters, Brothers and Priests of the Hearts of Love with the same love, and it is a greater love than I have for other people. [...]

After the Vigil Mass:

The Holy Trinity is a Unity of Love, and we shall unite ourselves with this Love. Love is our work, or means and our reward. Money is not our work! Judas began to love money more than Jesus. The bad sign was it when he criticized somebody, who made Jesus to be the Centre of her life and "wasted" money. Whoever is here [on the Holy Mountain] shall pray or do a service. This is not a place for taking a walk! The rule of the 6-o'clock-fasting is very strict here. Whoever cannot keep it, e.g. because of sickness, shall go away from here. It shall help us for prayer. Not even fruits after 6pm, only water! The Brothers and Sisters – this rule binds us everywhere, but here it binds all: the sick, non-Catholics, all! This rule shall be kept with love outside this place. The Kola of welcome

can be accepted, if the person cannot understand our fasting.

The “angel-field” did not always have that name. People called it like that, because they met and heard angels there. The angels are there, but if you don’t give them room, you will not hear them.

2.12.2000, Saturday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Vigil Mass for many Brothers and Sisters.

Our brothers and sisters are all here: The angels and saints. They listen carefully to the readings, they participate in the songs, and, worst, they listen to the preaching. [...]

When God opened the eyes of the prophets in the OT, and when they saw the holiness of God... He shouted: “Woe to me!” If only God would allow some of you to see His holiness in your midst, and his glory! If you could have a glimpse on what happens in this chapel! You would be kneeling and prostrating in the whole convent, never standing again. And you would understand that despite your good will you do many things that are against your vocation. How you carry wounds in your hearts and you don’t want them to heal. Allow Jesus now to heal all your wounds.

Morning Mass:

Mary had always the attitude “behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me...” When someone is so humble, she can never be disappointed. Who lies already on the ground cannot fall.

I am always fascinated by this Gospel [Lk 1,26-38]: What a wonderful angel must this Gabriel be! He brings the impossible message and makes it possible. If he would not have succeeded, he himself would have been forgotten. But Gabriel has done his charge wonderfully well. He has used all his knowledge, all that he is: We shall do the same.

4.12.2000, Monday (Okigwe, Noviciate) Vigil.

The promise of Jesus is: Everybody, who prays this Prayer regularly will be turned into a fire of divine Love. After you have prayed it for 8 years, if you are not yet a fire of love, something must be wrong with you!?

8.12.2000, Friday, Immaculate Conception (Orlu, Holy Mountain) 9am Morning Mass.

In the Annunciation, Mary did not know what it means to be the mother of Jesus. Me also – it was to my greatest surprise in a midnight Mass when God told me: That is, what it is. I never thought like that. [...]

Can we remain sinless? If you say No, then you are no Christians! For not only we can, we must! “Be you holy – for I am holy!” In the Church, all were born immaculate. You are all born immaculate, as Mary! The difficult thing is to remain immaculate. This is possible only on the way of Mary: “Behold, I am the handmaid [...]”

9.30pm, Mass in Okigwe with reception of two new novices. He comments the “promises” in the sermon:

When we become nothing, we will be filled with God. To be nothing means not to reject any mission because of external reasons: You have no colour of skin, no [i.e. neither pointed nor big] nose, no fear of sickness.

9.12.2000, Saturday (Okigwe, Noviciate) Vigil

One does not become a sister when you tie a big rosary, but when one has mercy on souls, and says: We have to work!

13.12.2000, Wednesday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Private Vigil with Brothers and Sisters

Jesus said that our greeting of peace shall be done with the same awe and respect as the sharing of Holy Communion: We share ourselves to each other, then we share God to each other.

19.12.2000, Tuesday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Private morning Mass for Brothers and Sisters.

What are you doing to bring joy to others in this Christmas season? You do not need to make costly gifts. Little, little things bring joy. I want that Ugwu Nso shall be a place of joy and happiness. Anybody who bears a sad face shall go away from here! This Ugwu Nso - when we were poorer, when we were sleeping with mats under the trees we were more happy than today, when we have built houses. That time our worry was prayer, teaching, ... today it is cement, stones, sand, money. Jesus knew what he did when he was born in the poorest place. Was anyone of you born so poor? In a goats' house! If only we would understand what it means to be humble. The joy of Christmas is his invitation: Be poor, be humble like Jesus. Poverty is a virtue. It opens you to dependence on God.

20.12.2000, Wednesday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Private Morning Mass for Brothers and Sisters.

Through the Incarnation alone the world was already saved, no more condemned, but divinized. Anyone who touches Jesus, sees Jesus, is being divinized, all was intimately united with the Creator. All became supernatural: Water got the power to wash away sins, bread and wine could become the Body and Blood of Jesus, oil and salt got the power to bring about supernatural changes: All was divinized. We became able to lift up our thoughts to God: Every man became a god-man. Everybody who remains here and works here must have the spirit of Mary: The spirit of self-sacrifice. Nobody will catch you and victimize you: You have to sacrifice yourselves. Here things shall be in a way that the whole world will find their home here.

24.12.2000, Sunday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Hilke, a German girl visiting the Holy Mountain, tells the author what Father Montfort told her about his First Holy Communion:

Er war 8 Jahre alt, es war auch Weihnachten, und er war sehr gut vorbereitet. Ein Weihnachtslied auf Igbo gefiel ihm sehr gut, es ging ca.: „Ich bin der Sohn Gottes, der Mensch geworden ist um für die Menschen zu sterben.“ [Amuru Nwata nke Chukwu] Er hatte eine große Liebe für Jesus, und als er Ihn empfangen hat, da hat er ihn ganz nahe gespürt und konnte drei Tage lang mit Jesus sprechen. Und Jesus fragte ihn, was er sich an diesem Tag wünsche, alles würde ihm heute gewährt. Er antwortete: „Mache mich zu Deinem Priester!“ Dann hatte er große Sehnsucht nach Jesus, und er baute in seinem Zimmer einen „Tabernakel“ und beschwor Jesus, nun da zu sein. Und dann fiel er immer auf die Knie wenn er sein Zimmer betrat und blieb dort auf den Knien – bis er nach drei Tagen erschrak und meinte, er hätte Götzendienst getrieben.

25.12.2000, Monday (Okigwe, Noviciate) Mass by 1pm.

On a Christmas day, I had my first Holy Communion: this unrepeatable moment! This day gave me clarity of my vocation. He consumed me and I consumed him. He no longer spoke with me from far, but very near: My God, my Lord – and my best friend. From there I had the wish to have Him always with me. I built a “tabernacle” in my room, and asked Jesus to be there. Whenever I entered my room, I fell on my knees. Then I got a shock, fearing to have committed idolatry, since I adored what was not God. I felt very sad, and for three days I did not eat. Then Mary herself came and gave me back the joy. I have confessed my sin to her and begged her to appease Jesus, and he smiled. If you tell Jesus after the Vigil: “Now I was three hours with you – now you please come with me in my room and stay with me till morning!” Jesus is the most obedient person I know. He loves it if someone is stubborn with love, if one requests. Once I told him: “I want to kiss you!” He said: “You have my statues and pictures!” I remained stubborn: “No, I want to kiss you yourself, appear to me!” These little signs of love, childlike requests... If you want to become a sister, a priest, out of love, then go to the seminary. Telling Him stubbornly: “I want to be like you! What you do, I want to do; wherever you go, I follow you!”

6.2.2001, Tuesday, Schönaun near Eichstätt, Vigil

Warum hat Jesus sich das Herz durchbohren lassen? Damit er uns dorthinein aufnehmen kann.

9.2.2001, During Vigil (Given only to members present in Neunkirchen, typed by Father Montfort.)  
“[...] Habe keine Angst, hierher zu kommen und hier zu wohnen. Sei hier, denn Ich bin hier. [...] Sei bereit, alle, die hierher kommen, zu empfangen und bringe sie und schreibe sie ein in Meine Liebe, in Meine Herzen der Liebe. Du bist es, der die alleinige Verantwortung hat, Personen anzunehmen, die hier leben werden. Alle, die hier leben werden, werden das Leben der Keuschheit, der Armut, der Gemeinschaft, des Gehorsams, der Liebe, des Gebetes, der Buße, des Apostolates leben. [...] Alles, was in dieses Zentrum gebracht wird, soll gemeinsam besessen und gemeinsam benutzt werden. Alles gehört den Herzen der Liebe. Alle, die hier mit Dir leben, sind Sachverwalter von allem, das den Herzen der Liebe in diesem Zentrum gehört. Meine Ordenspriester, Meine Ordensbrüder, Meine Ordensschwwestern und Meine Laiengemeinschaft, alle bilden die *eine* Familie der Liebe, die *eine* Familie der Herzen der Liebe. [...] Dieser Ort ist nicht ein Ort der Individualität, sondern ein Ort der Gemeinschaft. Das muss betont werden. Alle sollen für das Wohl aller arbeiten, für die Herrschaft Meiner Liebe, Meiner Herzen der Liebe. Ich segne euch alle.”

12<sup>th</sup> February 2001 (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort)

“Meine Liebe, bringe alle Meine Kinder Meiner Liebe [...] dazu, jeden Tag den Rosenkranz zu beten und jeden Tag den Rosenkranz der Herzen der Liebe zu beten. Lass den Donnerstag (oder Samstag oder Sonntag) oder irgendeinen anderen Tag ihrer Wahl der Tag ihrer Zusammenkünfte sein. Bringe sie dazu, die Gebete in den Familien täglich zu sprechen. In den Zentren, lass sie sich wöchentlich treffen; in den Familien – Kreisen, lass sie sich monatlich treffen. Die Zusammenkünfte sind hauptsächlich zum Beten da, und zur Erfahrung Meiner liebenden Gegenwart in ihrer Mitte, und dass sie diese Meine Liebe teilen und zueinander zeigen.“

Ca. 2002 (not yet published, typed by Father Montfort)

“My son, I want to establish a special inner circle of victims of the Love of God, victims of the Hearts of Love, victims of my Love. These are to live the life of absolute and constant prayer and constant penance especially fasting. They are to eat only what is necessary to keep the body and soul together and are to wear only what is necessary to cover the body. They are always to be at prayer and penance, contemplation and teaching. They are to serve the needy in prayer and counselling. They are to be always at prayer at the Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love, being seen always at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament doing perpetual adoration, and around the Shrine of the Image of the Hearts of Love and the Chapel of the Hearts of Love. They are to see to the cleanliness and tidiness of these places. They may leave Ugwu Nso – the Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love – only when they are going to Mass or to sacraments. They are men and women. They are to live a life of exceptional purity and holiness in love – being exceptionally pure and holy in body and spirit, in thoughts, words and action. All their thoughts, words and actions are to be directly centred on the Love of God in the Hearts of Love. I mean to pour my blessings, graces and inspirations on them in abundance and through them on Ugwu Nso – my Universal Centre for the Two Hearts of Love.”

*The following are excerpts of preachings of Father Montfort from 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2002 till 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2002, written by hand by Sr. Maria Steidl, without the help of a recorder, almost all translated by the author from English into German while noting it down. In messages, the missing of parts is indicated, else it is not indicated. These texts are not yet published.*

10/8/2002, Saturday, St. Lawrence, Oyun, Ilorin, Nigeria, Vigil

Unsere Kriegswaffe ist die Waffe des Gebetes. Und wir sind in einem sehr ernsten Krieg, ohne Feuerpause, gegen die Kräfte und Mächte. Sie tun alles, um die Herrschaft der Herzen der Liebe zu verhindern. Aber das ist unmöglicher, als die Sonne vom Scheinen abzuhalten. Was Gott von



Ewigkeit her geplant hat, niemand kann es verhindern. Der Herr sprach „O, mein Herz muss triumphieren.“ Aber wir müssen beten. Unsere Feinde sind unsichtbar. Wir beten für die katholische Kirche, den Papst der Herzen der Liebe, Bischof Ayo-Maria, dass Gott ihn stärkt, für alle Bischöfe und alle Mitglieder. Mögen alle Widersacher sich bekehren und Apostel der Herzen der Liebe werden!

Wenn jemand ins Noviziat kommt und nach Mrs. Komfort sucht, muss sie enttäuscht sein. Es gibt nur Baracken. Ein Trainings-Camp. Und die Leute sollen hart erzogen werden; sie sollen dazu erzogen werden, auf Bäumen und auf Bänken zu schlafen, nicht auf Betten. Meine Kraft liegt im Gebet! - Bin ich überhaupt stark? Jemand wurde verklagt, er habe den Namen eines anderen zerstört, verunehrt. Sein Verteidiger begann zu beweisen, dass der Kläger nie einen guten Namen hatte... Aber nur wer stark ist, wer stärker ist als der Teufel, kann in dessen Haus einbrechen. Wir sind stärker durch unsere Einheit mit Jesus. Das Beste, was dem Teufel getan werden könnte, ist es, dass seine Existenz beendet wird. Denn jede seiner Sünden erhöht seine Strafe in der Hölle. Und er sündigt weiter. So wie der Eifer der Heiligen ihre Stellung im Himmel erhöht. Lasst nicht nach! Nicht in dieser Welt! Nicht in dieser Diözese! Hier hat Gott uns jemanden gegeben, der bereit ist, für uns zu kämpfen, und der Herzen der Liebe als sein Leben ansieht. Wen Gott in dieser Zeit zu uns ruft, muss bereit sein zu leiden. Die Schönheit eines Hauses liegt nicht am Fundament. Das sieht man später nicht mehr. Für ein Fundament braucht man starke, raue Leute, die viel aushalten. Wir sind in diesem Stadium von Schaufel und Zement, von Grundsteinen, nicht von Ziersteinen. Unsere Waffe ist Gebet. Benützt nicht die Waffen des Teufels. Ihr könnt ihn in seinem eigenen Bereich nicht schlagen.

Die Katholische Kirche begann nicht gestern. Sie hat eine lange Erfahrung, und sie hat ein System entwickelt, um neue Gründungen zu testen. Wir müssen getestet werden! Es gibt keinen Ausweg daraus. Herzen der Liebe – „Was ist das?!“ Ein Bischof in Deutschland sagte mal, er wüsste nicht, wer oder was das „Unbefleckte Herz“ ist. Er meinte, es muss erklärt werden: „Unbeflecktes Herz *Mariens*“. Und „Herzen der Liebe“: Es könnte auch ein Liebespaar sein. Sind sie nicht zwei, und in der Liebe? Wir müssen diesen Namen vereinnahmen und erklären, festlegen. Wenn wir sagen: „Dreifaltigkeit“, dann ist es klar dass wir Vater, Sohn und Heiliger Geist meinen. So müssen wir auch klar machen: „Herzen der Liebe“ ist Jesus und Maria. Die Leute müssen diese Interpretation von euch bekommen, von euch, die ihr das Wort benutzt.

Das Schlimmste, was geschehen kann ist, dass der Bischof aus Rom den Befehl bekommt, diese Kongregation zu schließen. Wir sind in einem Stadium, wo unser Bischof aus Rom einen Befehl bekommt – entweder, diese Kongregation zu schließen, oder weiterzumachen. Ich sage euch das, weil hier das Power-Haus des Gebetes ist. Jetzt schaut Rom auf uns. Was für Leute wir sind. Und der Erste, der überprüft wird, ist wer? Ich. Bin ich getauft? Gefirmt? Geweiht? There was a man who came to us in the block-rosary-prayer. He said he was a priest. He was not able to say the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and at the end, he stole several things.

Weiter wird untersucht, wer eng mit mir arbeitet: die Novizenmeisterin, die Profess-Schwestern. Dann das Noviziat: Das Leben dort, das Programm, die Leute. Jemand, den ihr kennt, oder den ihr nicht kennt, kann kommen, um dann Bericht zu geben. So ist es die Zeit, in die Knie zu gehen und zu beten, dass Gott unseren Bischof stärkt.

Nun wird unsere Kongregation entweder kanonisiert oder entlassen. Und viele, aus Nigeria und aus Deutschland, kämpfen für unsere Entlassung. Das ist normal. Man nennt sie „Anwalt des Teufels“. Ihr Werk ist nicht zu zerstören, sondern aufzuzeigen was falsch ist, um es auszureißen. Sie suchen die Fehler. Und Leute suchen nun meine und eure Fehler. Sie tun es, weil sie denken, sie helfen so der Kirche. Das Schlimmste, was gegen uns geschrieben wurde, wurde von einem Generalvikar geschrieben, der alle vor Herzen der Liebe und vor mir warnte: „Er hat einen Doppelnamen; er ist ungeheuer reich, will große Klöster kaufen, und er macht deutsche Mädchen zu seinen Sklaven! Er benutzt Voodoo-Magie!“ Sie sagten es offiziell. Sie können nicht verstehen. Sie tun alles, um Herzen der Liebe zu zerstören. Wir können den Kampf nur auf den Knien gewinnen. Wir sollen

schreiben, erklären... aber als erstes beten. Es gibt Heilige in der Kirche, die von der Kirche verbrannt wurden. Alles kann uns geschehen, auch wenn wir von Gott gesandt sind.

Wisst ihr, worum ihr täglich betet? Was ist der Unterschied zwischen Durchbohrung, Opfer der Liebe – und Martyrium? Bischof Ochiagha sagte mir einmal: „Jene, die du liebst, bringst du um?!“ Das sagte er in Verbindung mit diesem Gebet, als ich Imprimatur erbat. Er sagte, ich kann es verbreiten, aber nicht mit seiner Unterschrift! Was ist das für eine Liebe, die andere sterben lässt?! Aber der Vater ließ den Sohn sterben, aus Liebe zur Welt. Und selbst die Mutter ermutigte ihn: zu sterben. Lasst uns jener Liebe treu bleiben, und wir bitten um Verzeihung für alle Gelegenheiten, wo wir untreu waren, ärgerlich...

Meine Mutter vergoss ihren letzten Blutstropfen für die Herzen der Liebe. Ich kann mir keine bessere Mutter wünschen. Sie war nicht verwundet, aber sie blutete, blutete, und es konnte nicht gestoppt werden. Sie blutete aus geistigen, aber wirklichen Wunden.

11/8/2002, Sunday, Ilorin, Vigil

Die wichtigste Eigenschaft einer Novizin ist Belehrbarkeit. Openness for formation.

Aus Nächstenliebe muss jeder weggeschickt werden, der die Keuschheit oder den Gehorsam nicht halten kann. Wir schicke in den Herzen der Liebe niemanden weg. Jesus kam, um alle Seelen zu retten. Aber er machte nicht alle zu Aposteln. Nicht jeder kann Ordensmensch werden.

13/8/2002, Tuesday, Ugwu Nso, Orlu, Nigeria, Vigil with members and three German aspirants

Hier ist der Ort, wo alles begann, die Geschichte der Herzen der Liebe, die Bitte Jesu um Trost. Er weint, nicht nur, weil sie nicht zu ihm kommen, sondern weil jene Seelen, die Ihm fern bleiben, verloren gehen! Ich betete: „Jesus, Maria, ich liebe euch. Rettet Seelen!“ Er wollte, dass “be appeased” hinzugefügt wird: Biko ndo! [Igbo: Please, I am sorry!] “Seid uns barmherzig!” Jesus will, dass wir ihn bemitleiden. Wir müssen bedenken wie Jesus in seiner schlimmsten Stunde drei seiner liebsten Jünger mitnahm, und er erwartete Hilfe, Ermutigung, Trost von ihrer liebevollen Gegenwart. Er schwitzte Blut in seiner Entscheidung, für uns zu sterben, aber sie schliefen. Er bekam nicht die kleinste menschliche Hilfe! In seiner Liebe weckte er sie auf, bat sie um Gebet... das will Gott von uns hier am Heiligen Berg, wenn alle schlafen. Der beste Weg, ihn zu trösten, ist das Gebet der Herzen der Liebe. Es ist Wort für Wort von Ihm gegeben. Wenn ihr es betet und ihr seht dabei nicht Jesus in der Agonie, am Ölberg, am Kreuz, dann ist der Geist noch nicht sehr aktiv in euch!

14/8/2002, Wednesday, St. Maximilian Kolbe, Ugwu Nso, Orlu, Vigil

Es gibt eine Inkulturation, aber die Kultur kann nicht die Botschaft übernehmen. Kultur ist nur das Vehikel. Unsere Sprache ist die Sprache der Liebe. Jeder kann sie verstehen. Jeder muss sie lernen. Wo immer wir hinkommen, lernen wir jene Sprache. Und die Sprachen, die in aller Welt wichtig sind, wir sollen sie kennen. Aber ich warne euch: wir sind anders als alle anderen Kongregationen. Anders in der Struktur, im Ziel. Es gibt viele Ähnlichkeiten, wir sind in der gleichen Kirche. Aber jene sind nicht unser Modell. Was uns zu dem macht, was wir sind, lässt sich in keiner anderen Vereinigung finden. Jesus war Jude, aber was das Christentum zum Christentum macht, ist für das Judentum fremd. Er ist dort nicht zu Hause. Joseph war der Erste, der Ihn wegwerfen wollte! Jesus sagte: „Vögel haben ihre Nester...“ Er sprach nicht nur von Armut, es geht um Unsicherheit, um kein Zuhause. Wir haben unser Mutterhaus in den Herzen der Liebe. Wer ein Amt in den Herzen der Liebe hat – Jesus hat diese Worte geprägt: Vorbereiter, Spendengeber, Fußwäscher... Diese Dinge müssen ausgeübt werden, es sind nicht nur symbolische Begriffe. Herzen der Liebe müsst ihr lernen, wie es ist, und leben, wie es ist. Es war vorher noch nie da! Und es muss so angenommen werden!

15/8/2002, Thursday, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ugwu Nso, Orlu

(Departure in the early morning with the old Jeep to Ilorin. On the way, short before Auchi, a tyre bursts, the driver loses the control and the Jeep ends up on the side. Father has a broken bone in the right shoulder and a deep wound of one or two centimetre radius, caused by the broken glass of the window, in the middle of the back of the right hand, bleeding profusely. Also three sisters are wounded. They receive first aid in a near hospital, after a priest-friend who works in the area guaranteed to the hospital for the payment. The priest gives the unction of the sick to Fr. Montfort, who rejoices to receive the last sacrament. Then the journey continues to Ilorin, where they receive further treatment. The accident forces Father to stay long in Ilorin.)

18/8/2002, Saturday, Oyun, Ilorin, Vigil

Ich fragte Jesus: "Warum das alles?" Er antwortete sehr einfach: "For every soul to be saved, there *must* be sacrifice. For every progress in this work of the Hearts of Love, there must be sacrifice." Ich fragte Jesus: "Ist dein Kreuz nicht genug, muss da ein neues sein?" Er sagte: „Kein neues, aber ich will, dass ihr eures mit meinem vereint.“ Für jeden kleinen Fortschritt, für jede neue Kandidatin in Deutschland bekomme ich so viele Schläge, Beleidigungen... Wir haben Sicherheit für nix, wie es weitergeht... nur dass Leiden immer da sein wird, weil es zu uns gehört. Wie viele werden uns beitreten wollen? Jesus sagt: „Keine einzige Träne, kein Schweißtropfen, kein Blutstropfen, kein einziges Wort der Liebe, kein Akt der Liebe geht verloren.“ Alles hat unendlichen Wert, wie die Passion Jesu. Das ist die Bedeutung des Teiles: „Durchbohre mich mit deinen Pfeilen...“ Alles wird vergöttlicht, alle unsere Wunden und Schmerzen werden von Jesus zur übernatürlichen, göttlichen Ebene erhoben, vereint mit seinem eigenen, so dass es Seelen retten kann. Ihr seid die am Meisten Gesegneten! Jedes kleine Leiden von euch ist sinnvoll, weil es mit Jesus vereint ist. So viele Menschen leiden das ganze Leben lang, und es bringt nichts! Eures bringt die Rettung von Seelen, vereint euch mit Jesus, erneuert die Kirche, erhöht eure Herrlichkeit! Sucht nicht nach Leiden und Opfern. Das tun wir nicht in unserer Kongregation! Gott gibt uns die Opfer.

19/8/2002, Monday, St. John Eudes, Ilorin, Vigil

Jesus' großer Schmerz ist es nicht, wenn er gekreuzigt und durchbohrt wird. Das ist ein kleiner Schmerz! Sein Schmerz ist es, wenn eine Seele in die Hölle geht: Er kann es nicht ertragen, sein Herz bricht! Wir sollen ihn trösten. Trost für ihn ist, wenn wir uns bemühen, alle zu ihm zurück zu bringen. Wenn wir einen Sünder von seinem Weg abbringen können, oder ein Volk zu Jesus zurück bringen können, ist es der größte Trost. Viele Heilige arbeiten dafür noch im Himmel. Maria arbeitet am Meisten. Sie erscheint, sie weint, sie mahnt, sie ruft, weil sie weiß wie ihr Sohn leidet. Jesus ist Gott, er kann nicht sterben. Aber um Seelen zu retten legt er sogar sein Leben nieder! Heute ist ein nicht gebotener Gedenktag, der für uns aber sehr wichtig ist: Johannes Eudes. Es war nicht leicht für ihn, Anerkennung von Kongregation und Fest zu bekommen. Die Kirche verzögert lieber als dass sie überstürzt handelt. Sie handelt mit Bedacht und Erfahrung. Der Heilige Johannes Eudes ist ein Pionier für die Verehrung der Herzen der Liebe. Gott ließ ihn sehen, dass die zwei Herzen intim vereint sind.

20/8/2002, Tuesday, St. Bernhard, Ilorin, Vigil

Wo immer wir hingehen, sollen wir Herzen der Liebe verbreiten. Diese kleine Diözese mit 19 Pfarreien und 15.000 Katholiken: In zwei Monaten kann man alle besucht haben! Worauf warten wir? Wir verhungern schon, aber wir können noch ein wenig mehr verhungern, damit wir Gebetszettel drucken lassen können.

23/8/2002, Friday, Ilorin, Morning Mass

Drei Monate vor der Profess soll jeder geprüft werden. Jeder soll die Geschichte der Kongregation kennen, sein Charisma, soll jedes Wort der Konstitution kennen und erklären können, soll alle

Gebete der Herzen der Liebe auswendig kennen – die Verheißungen der Herzen der Liebe sind Gebet! – und erklären können.

26/8/2002, Monday, Ilorin

Vigil

Manche nennen es den Größten und letzten Akt der Barmherzigkeit Gottes: Jeder, egal welcher Religion, der auf das Herz Jesu *schaut*, ist gerettet.

Morning Mass

Pünktlich zum Gebet sein. Bewusst arbeiten. Die gemeinsam bekannte Sprache sprechen: Englisch ist für alle hier Fremdsprache, alle lernen es. Seht die Bedürfnisse der ganzen Gemeinschaft. Haltet alles hygienisch, damit andere sich wohlfühlen. Der andere ist nicht die Sr. XY, sondern Gott, der in der Mitschwester auf mich schaut. Ihr betet für die Rettung aller Selen, deshalb dürft ihr niemanden von eurer Liebe ausschließen. Wir sind nun hier, aus Igboland in diesem Ort, umgeben von Moslems. Jeden Morgen hört ihr das moslemische Gebet. Mögt ihr es? Wir beten für alle. Christus segnet alle. Ihr sollt Gott füreinander danken. Gott hat euch durch eure Schwestern bereichert. Take nobody for granted!

Was war das Evangelium heute? Nur „Wehe!“ Sünder gehen nicht in die Hölle, nur jene, die ihre Sünden segnen und taufen. Manche können keine Stille halten und sagen, das ist unnötig. Oder schlimmer, können nicht keusch sein und sagen, Unzucht ist nicht böse. Sie schließen das Reich für andere, entmutigen, nach Vollkommenheit zu streben. Jede kleine Regel in den Herzen der Liebe ist wichtig. Wer euch lehrt, eine davon zu missachten, wer euch entmutigen will im Kampf um Vollkommenheit: Das ist ein Feind für euch.

27/8/2002, Tuesday, St. Monica, Ilorin

Vigil

Das Beispiel Jesu selbst: In der Nacht betete er, am Tag arbeitete er. [He is convinced that Jesus prayed every night at length.] Wann schlief er? Es gibt ein höheres Bedürfnis. Schlafen ist nicht schlecht. „Wer schläft, sündigt nicht.“ [German saying] Aber zu wachen und zu beten ist noch besser. So wie heiraten gut ist, aber wer für Christus jungfräulich bleibt, tut Besseres. Wer isst, tut etwas Gutes. Wer fastet für Gerechtigkeit, tut etwas Besseres. Noviziat ist Schule. Nichts, was ihr lernt, ist nutzlos. Lernt kochen, fahren, schreineren, nähen, sich um Kaninchen kümmern: schaut, was andere Leute tun und lernt von ihnen. Jede Kenntnis wird gebraucht für das Werk.

Morning Mass

Einmal sagte Jesus: „Komm in mein Herz!“ Es war schrecklich. So ein Strom von...! So ein Leiden! Sünden von Ungläubigen, von Andersgläubigen, von Gläubigen... Jesus sagte: „Du wenigstens, tröste mich!“

28/6/2002, Wednesday, St. Augustine, Ilorin

Vigil

Das Himmelreich ist auch ein Schleppnetz. Die Kirche ist nicht nur Kirche der Heiligen, sondern auch der Sünder. Ebenso die Vereinigung. So wundern wir uns nicht, wenn in der Vereinigung auch Leute sind, die nicht so leben wie sie sollen. Aber es endet nicht mit dem Fang. Am Ende setzt sich der Fischer und sondert aus. Er isst nicht alles! Diese Aussonderung von dem, was in einen hineingeht... das gehört zur Funktion des Königreiches. Es gehört zur Funktion eurer Meistern, auszuwählen, zu trennen. Gott ist barmherzig, aber Gott kann nichts Unreines in sein Reich einlassen.

## Morning Mass

Zwischen Islam und Christentum kann keine Einheit sein, die Liebe kann sie nicht vereinen! Es ist nicht Gottes Wille, es ist nicht möglich. Bischof Ganaka von Jos war glücklich: „In meiner Stadt ist Frieden zwischen Moslems und Christen!“ Und eines der schlimmsten Massaker geschah jetzt dort. Die Lösung ist „Jesus! Maria!...“ Wie damals in Lepanto, Europa, als gebetet wurde zu Maria. Wenn wir genug beten, geschieht hier dasselbe: Bekehrung der Moslems. Für Bekehrung muss aber Opfer gebracht werden. Sie kaufen manche jungen Christen, mit Geld, mit Bildungsmöglichkeiten, mit Druck... aber Jesus wird den Krieg gewinnen. Im Sudan ist seit 19 Jahren Krieg. Christen werden versklavt, Missionare kaufen einige wieder frei... Nigeria und Deutschland sind die am Meisten gefährdeten Länder, um islamisiert zu werden. Die moslemischen Staaten pumpen Geld und Leute hierher. Die Gefahr ist wirklich, real!

29/8/2002, Thursday, beheading of St. John the Baptist, Ilorin

## Vigil

Ihr müsst bereit sein zu bleiben, wie lange es auch dauert, um den Bräutigam zu empfangen. Wie viele von euch könnten warten, wenn ihnen gesagt würde, ihre Profess ist 2008?! Und wenn es morgen wäre – wer wäre bereit? Seid ihr bereit, heute Nacht zu sterben? Meine beste geistige Verfassung war wohl während meiner ersten Heiligen Kommunion, als ich trotz Krieg täglich zur Messe ging, bereit zu sterben. Aber es ist ulkig: Je älter man wird, um so mehr hängt man an der Welt. Meine beste geistige Verfassung hatte ich auch im Seminar. Wenn ihr etwas an euch seht, das nicht in Höchstform ist: wartet nicht bis morgen, eure Unvollkommenheiten oder Bosheiten zu entfernen! Es ist sehr gefährlich, sie mit sich herum zu schleppen. In Fatima fragten die Kinder nach verstobenen Bekannten. Ein Kind, die Muttergottes sagte, es werde bis zum Ende der Welt im Fegefeuer bleiben, weil es nicht vergeben wollte.

Manche beten ohne innere Beteiligung, aber im Gehorsam, und dann betet der Geist Gottes in euch!

## Late Morning conference to Novices

Wenn jemand krank ist, in manchen Fällen kann man erlauben, nach 6 Uhr zu essen.

Wegen der echten Probleme, die durch den Klimawechsel kommen, geben wir Zeit sich anzupassen. Am Anfang werden jene, die von Europa nach Afrika kommen oder umgekehrt, viel Zeit brauchen um zu schlafen, und sie sollen es tun dürfen.

30/8/2002, Friday, Ilorin, Vigil

Für einen vollkommenen Ordensmenschen: Sie bittet nicht um Dinge [what she wants], sondern empfängt, was sie braucht: Nicht für sich selber, sondern für das Werk. Sie sagen mit kindlichem Vertrauen was sie denken dass sie brauchen, und mit kindlichem Vertrauen akzeptieren sie es, dass sie es nicht brauchen, wenn nein gesagt wird.

Ich kaufte mal Akara [Beans, grinded with onion, and fried] für einen hungrigen Bub, und bat ihn dann, mir was davon zu geben. Er sagte Nein! Ich war so schockiert über seine Dummheit. Wenn Gott uns um etwas bittet, dann nur, um unsere Hand zu öffnen um mehr zu empfangen. Wie war es mit Elija und der Witwe von Sarepta? [1Kg 17,8-24] Im Refektorium: Die andere Person zuerst, egal wie wenig das Essen ist. Wenn nichts für dich bleibt: Ihr werdet nicht verhungern! Niemand, der Gott gibt, wird elend. Wer alles gibt, ist der Glücklichste. Ich war mal wo [im Seminar?], wo keine Möbel waren, keine Fenster, kein Salz, kein Öl... ich musste betteln. Als wir nach einigen Tagen fähig waren, Matratzen zu kaufen: Wir waren glücklicher als jemand, der ein Flugzeug kauft. Wenn ihr zu Tisch kommt, dankt Gott als erstes, dass Essen überhaupt da ist. Und wenn nichts da ist, sollt ihr auch danken! Wenn ihr Gott für alles dankt, dann erfahrt ihr schon Himmel auf Erden. Undankbare, grummelige Ordensleute sind das Schlimmste.

1/9/2002, Sunday, Ilorin

Morning Mass

You can call each other with pet names, but nicknames are not charitable!

Jeder, der Ernst macht mit seiner Berufung, wird sie bitter sehen. Man muss sich überwinden. Als ich gerade geweiht war, wurde ich ins Seminar geschickt, um Latein zu lehren. Der Rektor fuhr mich an, weil ich im Unterricht Soutane trug. Er sagte: „Weil wir hier jemanden haben, der die Kleider wäscht!“ Ich sagte: „O.k., ich werde meine Soutane selber waschen.“ Und das, obwohl ich, wenn ich nicht jung gewesen wäre, täglich in Ohnmacht gefallen wäre. Ab 8 Uhr früh hatte ich Unterricht, und ich setzte mich total ein. Mittags war ich so k.o., dass ich für das Mittagessen kaum aufstehen konnte. Aber am nächsten Tag wurde ein Mitarbeitertreffen einberufen, mein erstes und letztes im Seminar. Das Thema war Ich. Sie redeten und redeten [über die Soutane]; wollten, dass auch ich was sage. Ich wusste nicht, was. Schließlich schlossen sie die Sitzung. Ich habe meine Berufung nie bereut, aber es tat mir sehr weh. Wir sollen einander ermutigen in dieser Berufung, wie Maria Jesus ermutigte, wie Johannes Jesus ermutigte.

After 6pm Angelus

Auch wenn ihr Medizin nehmen müsst: das ist nicht unbedingt ein Grund für Ausnahme vom 6 Uhr-Fasten. Krankheit kann ein Grund sein, aber damit meine ich: Operation, oder eine Ganztagsreise ohne Essen und mit Klimawechsel, oder sonst etwas wirklich Schwerwiegendes, wo man befürchten muss, dass derjenige sonst zusammenbricht! Wenn ihr aber wirklich das Leben der Herzen der Liebe führen wollt, dann haltet ihr immer das Fasten.

2/9/2002, Monday, Ilorin

Vigil

Gottes rettende Aktivität ist ewige Aktivität, die in die Zeit gebracht wird. Gott lebt ohne Zeit im Himmel: Es gibt keine Mitternacht, kein 5.30 Uhr. Aber wir leben in der Zeit. Und in der Sphäre der Zeit findet das Heil statt. Paulus sagt: „In der Fülle der Zeit...“ Was wir tun, hat ewige Konsequenzen, hat ewigen Wert, aber wird in der Zeit gebetet. Zeit wartet auf niemanden! Zeit ist Gnade, ist Möglichkeit zur Liebe. Liebe ist ewig und göttlich. Bitte, verschwendet keine Zeit! Wir haben so viel zu tun und so wenig Zeit!

Ihr könntet jetzt schlafen, aber Gott weckte euch auf: „Steh auf!“ Und ihr sagtet: „Hier bin ich.“ Tut alles mit Freude, gerne! Kommt mit einem Lächeln, die Heilige Kommunion zu empfangen: wunderbar!

Wo anders könnt ihr noch den Himmel erreichen, aber wenn ihr hier murt, könntet ihr auch das Fegefeuer verpassen. Jesus sagte: „Ich bin euer Himmel, ich bin alles, *alles* was ihr braucht!“

10 am conference for the novices

„Mein Sohn, du musst stark sein und meine Vereinigung führen. [...] Keine Entscheidung, die die Struktur der Vereinigung betrifft, etwas Wichtiges, etwas, was mehrere andere Mitglieder, oder ein anderes Mitglied betrifft, kann von anderen getroffen werden. Mein Sohn, dies ist meine Vereinigung, deine Vereinigung! [...]“

Manche von euch sind durcheinander über die Struktur der Vereinigung. Alles ist *eine* Familie. Alle Kreise haben ihre Quasi-Autonomie, aber nie völlig. We are interdependent. Im Zentrum der Herzen der Liebe werden die Schwestern, die Brüder, die Laien je ihr eigenes Haus haben. We do not want confusion.

Jesus sagt: „Du musst stark sein, du musst die Vereinigung führen! [...] Niemand, keine Person und keine Gruppe, kann wichtige Dinge ändern. [...] Korrigiere die Fehler! Wenn du sie unkorrigiert lässt, werden sie denken, es ist richtig. Das Richtige muss aufgezeigt werden, und kann nicht überbetont werden. Diese Vereinigung der Herzen der Liebe, meine Familie, muss immer von einem Priester geleitet werden.“ Frauen sind so: Sie lassen den Mann vorne stehen und stoßen ihn, wie sie wollen. Als es das erste Mal geschah, war es der Fall des Menschengeschlechtes. Maria ließ

Jesus frei. Sie half ihm, aber ließ ihm die Entscheidung, auch in Kana. Nach einigen Tagen sagte Jesus weiter: „[...] Wenn ich dich bitte, etwas zu tun, dann meine ich: sofort! Wenn ich meine: später, dann sage ich es dir. [...] Jeden Tag sollt ihr Zeiten des Fastens und der Stille beachten. Ich bin dein Vorbild. In jedem Zentrum der Herzen der Liebe ist die Fastenzeit 18-6 Uhr, und die Stillezeit 20-6 Uhr. Lass niemanden mit den Zeiten Unfug treiben. [...]“

Two days later: „Du wirst mehr Versuchungen haben und viele Siege. Sei streng mit dir selber! Strahle immer meine Heiligkeit, meine Herrlichkeit und meinen Sieg aus.“ Gott ist so: streng, und zart liebend. Zärtlichkeit: Wir tun alles aus Liebe, und wir bringen niemanden um. Aber streng: *Jeder* Fehler wird korrigiert. Der Vater zeigte dem Sohn seine zärtliche Liebe, als er ihm das Kreuz gab. Er litt mit, wie eine Mutter mehr leidet als das Kind, wenn das Kind krank ist.

3/9/2002, Tuesday, St. Gregory, Ilorin, Morning Mass

We remember that bishop Gregory is still holding documents of the Hearts of Love; we pray that God may touch his heart, so that he will bring them out.

My first accident with my own car, a brand new car after the ordination, was because of two crying women. I did not want to help them, and my rector used to warn us to beware of crying girls: We shall ignore them, they only want to arouse pity, they can cry on demand, pressing a button, and often they are in the wrong... Because they cried like that, I went with them – and had accident.

Our superiors are preparers: Not dictators. They prepare the place: Wash the floor, the seats, the table... The Vice is the footwasher. She washes the feet of the members. It is her real work, not just symbolic. She shall do it with happiness! The secretary has to care for the sick. If you really live, as God wants it, than others will come to learn from you. And the priest is a servant; he serves as so other can serve. Jesus served... when he was hungry, he did not do anything for himself, no matter how much the devil talked. But when the people were hungry, he multiplied bread. And then he gave himself to eat! Can one serve in a way that one gives oneself? Heroic service. As cooking with headache... Jesus serves us. He gives himself to us every day. Into the mouth. And after, he washes plate and spoon. To strive to be the greatest in service, is good. You shall challenge each other! Who has the honour to dish out the food. Who is fastest to clean the toilet. It will not make you less beautiful. What nobody wants to do: do it, happily! It shows that you are baptised. To serve those who have AIDS, who have leprosy.

4/9/2002, Wednesday, Ilorin, Vigil

Satan is very insecure. He is afraid of the name of Jesus. He fears holy people, he shivers before them. Because of the holiness of God, which you irradiate. The devil is a lie. He does not want to be discovered.

Don't greet anybody with "Good morning!" Greet with "Peace and Love!" "Alafia ati Ife!" [Yoruba]

9/9/2002, Monday, Ilorin, Vigil

XY, how many of your sick sisters did you visit? How can you know who is sick, if you do not care? Why are they sick? The rule, which Jesus gave us, and which you have to keep, if you want to be a sister of the Hearts of Love, is, that the needs of your sister are more important than your own needs.

God shall always be on the first place. He is sick, alone, hungry in the tabernacle. On the second place the others. On the last place you yourself. You shall be served last. When you are made superior, and you sleep in a better bed than others, have better clothes than others, your body is better nourished and more healthy than others, then you are no superior! The superior is the last! A preparer! I cannot go to heaven without the other person. One does not go to heaven alone! Whoever is sick is a source of grace, but also a trap, a trap for those, who do not care. As preparer you are judged according to the health and orderliness of those in your care. Nobody is permitted to have a private kitchen, neither hot nor cold. Biscuits and other things must be brought to the

refectory, for all. Your love must be universal, not selective: only for those who greet you, who helped you: that would be egoism. Your love must be a circle, complete.

10/9/2002, Tuesday, Ilorin, Vigil

DDL stresses the incarnate Love. We stress the pierced Love. If your love has not yet been pierced, you are not yet initiated in this congregation. Whoever is pierced, his blood will flow into the Immaculate Heart; his love, his life flows. Thus there is union with the two wounded and bleeding hearts. He pierces us, and he will pierce us. Do not run away, when it happens. Do not be angry. Let it happen... When I was pierced through an offence [4/9/2002], I was so furious that I had a terrible temptation, to give up all about Hearts of Love. Even from there?!?! It was my most terrible day. But then I said: "Lord, let your will be done." This is the piercing: One day you will be so pierced, that you will like to throw away all, even your faith, and to destroy yourselves. Because on that day, you will not understand, why this suffering. You overcome it by saying: "Father, may your will be done." You continue going, even if it seems to have no meaning. There is only one reason for such: God wants it. There is no success, only that the will of God be done. If you overcome a small temptation, God prepares a new one. They are steps to sanctity.

14/9/2002, Saturday, Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Ilorin, Morning Mass

I want you to be aware that you have the status of people who consciously chose suffering, who share in the suffering of Christ. For the salvation of souls. Me, too, I have chosen it, when I was small. And he asked me, whether I will accept leprosy. I will die of broken heart. Some die already in the scourging of Jesus. Some die, when they see the cross, or when they carry it up the hill. I want you to unite your sufferings with Christ. In union with Christ, it is Christ who suffers in you. If you really love Christ, you must be *willing* to *suffer* with him! Love is suffering! For souls. There is no salvation without sacrifice. He needs victim souls. Christ will not give stigmata to anyone, unless the person says clearly, that he is ready. Stigmata are very painful! Pain until dead faint! Very, very painful. Christ gives only what you can bear. Whatever you offer up will not be less painful, but Christ carries it with you. Whoever suffers physically or spiritually, draws millions [of people] to God. The more you suffer, the more you become like Him. Life without suffering is useless. Do not look for sufferings! God sends enough of them. But do not waste any suffering. The worst wasting of suffering is complaining and murmuring. If someone cooks with murmuring, the murmuring enters the food, and the stomach of those who eat will be murmuring also... it is no longer nourishing. My grandma was not a great cook, but with joy! With singing! And she taught us many things. We loved going to her. Once she allowed me to cut onions...

31.3.2003, (not yet published, typed by Fr. Montfort)

"My son, write what I tell you about My Pope, My cardinals, My bishops, My priests and servants in My sanctuary - My Church. I love My Pope. He is the Pope of My Hearts of Love. I love him and care for him. He is My beloved. I love My Pope, My cardinals, My bishops, My priests and My servants in My sanctuary - My Church. I love them all. You servants and princes in My house, My sanctuary, please remain faithful to your vocation. Princes of My Church! I have given you the power to serve, to guide, to free, to save. Whatever you bind is bound. Whatever you loosen is loosened. Never forget, this power is to serve and save. Salvation of all souls! That is My eternal plan."

16.7.2003, Thursday, Neunkirchen

Evening-Mass on the day before his 20<sup>th</sup> priestly jubilee (Recorded with tape or video, typed by Bro. Pascal Rodary SHL, not yet published.)

Liebe Schwestern und Brüder, die Fußwaschung gehört zum Dienst der Liebe. Die Fußwaschung im Johannesevangelium steht genau da geschrieben, wo die anderen Evangelien über die Eucharistie berichtet haben, also ob Johannes die Eucharistie mit der Fußwaschung umgetauscht



hätte. Viele, die darüber geschrieben haben, haben nicht verstanden, dass Eucharistie und Fußwaschung verbunden sind. Eucharistie ist Dienst der Liebe wie die Fußwaschung. Es ist klar, dass nach der Fußwaschung die Eucharistie kam. Wer Eucharistie feiert, muss auch die Füße waschen. Liebe, Selbstentäußerung, Erniedrigung. Jesus ist Gott, aber er hat solchen Dienst geleistet, die nur Sklaven tun. Wenn Er Gott unser Sklave ist, dann müssen wir einander die Füße waschen. Meine Gemeinschaft ist eine Gemeinschaft der Fußwaschung, nicht schmutzig machen: Einander helfen, damit wir rein und heilig sein können. Ich danke euch, dass ihr mir die Gelegenheit gebt, euch die Füße zu waschen.

Dass wir am Sonntag die Memorial-Mass gefeiert haben im alten Dom von Orlu, weil der neue geschlossen war, ich glaube es war von Gott selber so gefügt, denn da war ich getauft, hatte Erstkommunion, Firmung, Diakon- und Priesterweihe. Alle Erinnerungen an meinen Weihetag kamen mir hoch, was da passierte während der Allerheiligenlitanei. Als ich da lag, hat der Teufel mir die schlimmste Versuchung als Seminarist auf dem Weg zum Priestertum gegeben... Von Kindheit an war es mir klar wie Tageslicht, dass Gott eine Mission für mich hat, aber wo, wie, wann? Aber genau an dieser Allerheiligenlitanei sagte der Teufel: „Was tust du hier? Weißt du nicht, dass nachdem der Bischof gebetet hat du besiegelt bist auf ewig? Steh auf und renn weit, weit weg.“ Ich habe mit dem Teufel gekämpft. „Nein.“ Da sagte die Stimme des Versuchers: „Warum gehst du nicht weg?“ „Meine einzige Sicherheit bei dem was ich tue ist, dass Gott mich liebt. Alles was Gott mit mir tut bis in Ewigkeit ist nur aus Liebe.“ Da war die Stimme verschwunden, vernichtet. Der Teufel hat keine Waffe gegen die Liebe. Wenn er dich versucht, sollst du immer mit Liebe antworten, Liebe zu Gott, zu Jesus und Maria! Ich habe von Kindheit an Gottes Liebe erfahren. Ich bin ein Kind der Liebe. In der Schule von den Lehrern und Kameraden sehr geliebt. Das heißt nicht, dass ich keine Schwierigkeiten gehabt habe, aber im Ganzen hatte ich immer mehr Liebe. Jesus hat mich so auch gelehrt und geführt.

*22/7/2003-27/7/2003: Retreat for priests and lay-people organized by the Society of the Hearts of Love in Ars/France, and given by Fr. Montfort. (Recorded with tape or video, typed by Bro. Pascal Rodary SHL, not yet published.) The texts give a good impression of the ordinary length of the sermons of Fr. Montfort.*

22.7.2003, Wednesday, St. Mary Magdalene, Ars  
Vigil

We welcome all of you to this week of retreat, of blessings, a week of graces, a week of encounter with God. And it is very correct that we begin at 12 o'clock in the middle of the night. It is the time when day begins, and we are beginning very, very correctly. And also beginning with this great sign of readiness to make sacrifice. Many of us have not yet slept for up to one or three hours. But still we have all assembled here to offer sacrifice. God has already accepted our sacrifice, because our sacrifice is in obedience with his most holy will, and is united to the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. It is also one with the sacrifice of the Most Immaculate Heart of Mary our mother. So God cannot reject himself.

And the theme of this week, which is a retreat for priests and those, who are closely working with priests, those who love priests, those who pray for priests and make sacrifices for priests, the theme of this retreat is sacrifice. Sacrifice not with animals or with food or with drinks, it is sacrifice of ourselves, of our love. We are offering our love to God as a sacrifice and God, who is love himself, cannot reject this sacrifice. I don't need ask you whether you are prepared to offer yourself as sacrifice to God, because your very presence here at this time is a clear sign of your readiness to offer yourself as sacrifice to God. By being here you say to God: "Here I am Lord! Do with me what you want." It is exactly what our Lady herself said, when the angel came to her and told her what God wants to do with her, to become the mother of Jesus, to become the mother of the son of

God, and she said: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, that it be with me according to your word."

We have come here to offer ourselves to God, so that he may do with us what he wants. We want to give God the freedom to use us as it pleases him. Anywhere he wants to draw us - OK! He wants to use us, eat us - OK! He wants to kill us - OK! He wants to burn us - OK! Whatever he wants to do. But let me tell you, God will do only one thing with you, if you allow him to do everything he wants. He will unite you to himself. He will make us one with him. And this process of making us one with him is sometimes very painful, because he will first of all purify us. And this purification can be very painful. But you see, if you allow God to purify you, at the end you will be like God. After purifying us, he will consume us. So that we shall no longer exist for ourselves but in him and for him and the light in us no longer be an ordinary human light to be a divine light. The love in us no longer be ordinary human love but divine love.

We give God the chance, before the end of this retreat, we shall be able to say like Saint Paul: "I live, yet not I, but Jesus lives in me." By this change, which is unification with God, you will not be spared for it. If we give God the chance, it is only when we constitute some obstacle, when we want to have our own will our own way, then the purification will be painful. If you allow God to do with you what he wants, like the piece of bread, which we offer in the sacrifice, God will change it to himself, so will you not suffer but enjoy this change. It is only sin, wickedness, hatred, which makes this process of purification and change difficult. So let us now cleanse ourselves of our sins, of wickedness, of hatred, so that we can celebrate this mass in full union with Jesus. Also remember, we are not here for ourselves and our glory, we are here for very many other people, for family members in our whole society, for the church, for the entire humanity. Bring all these people in our hearts in union with Jesus and his sacrifice of the mass. Before this mass somebody brought me a list with persons asking for prayers, we bring them all with their problems in union with the sacrifice of this mass.

Dearly beloved brother priests, dear sisters and brothers, my dear beloved God. The priest, who worked here, lived here and died here made this place a holy place. It is he, who invited us to come here for this retreat. He poured his self, his life as a libation, as a sacrifice to God, completely. When we hear the history of his life then we will remember that he spent 13 hours every day hearing confessions, and he had very few time to sleep, only about 2 or 3 hours of sleep, and he had very few to eat. He spent his whole life serving the people of God. And he had very few time for himself, but he had all the time for God, for the people of God. It is this holy man, who gathered us here in this holy place. When we arrived here yesterday evening, we went to the basilica and there he waited already for us, but his presence is not only there in the basilica, he is everywhere here and even beyond this place. I felt his special presence all the way along this pilgrimage from Germany to France, from Neunkirchen, and even at the time I was in Nigeria and everywhere we go he accompanies us.

What is the secret of the holiness, the secret of the success, the secret of the greatness of this simple priest? This secret is the secret of Mary, it is the secret of the heart of Mary. It is the secret of Jesus in the holy Eucharist, the secret of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. The first place, when we went to the basilica last evening, where we knelt and prayed in a group, was the small chapel, where is the statue of our blessed Lady. There this holy man consecrated, wrote all the names of his parishioners and gave them to the Immaculate Heart of our blessed mother Mary. And that was the secret of his success in this hidden place. After consecrating all his parishioners to the Most Immaculate Heart of Mary, the heart of Mary took all and drew all, the whole world to this simple priest.

He is the patron of all priests. The priest leads the church, and it is he, who offers sacrifice for the people of God. The holiness and salvation of the people of God, you can say, is in the hands of priests. It is the priest, who forgives the sins of the people in the name of the church. It is the priest, who breaks the word of God to people, so that they can feed on the word of God. It is the priest, who breaks the bread, the body of Christ, to the people, so that they will eat and live, who prays

for the people day and night, the breviary and all the prayers he prays are not for himself but for the people of God. The priests are champions in the church. And this holy man, we can say, as patron of the priests, is champion of champions. He was a very simple priest, but through his attachment to the holy Eucharist and to the sacraments he is an example of life of total sacrifice, total self-forgetfulness. That is why the Church made him the patron-saint of all priests. So we are proud to have him as our patron-saint, as our champion, as our example, as our model, we praise God for him. And we pray God that we can share in his total self-sacrifice, his life of pouring everything he is and has for God, the people of God.

[...] The secret of his success is the secret of the heart. His heart was full of love. It is due to this love that he was capable to immolate himself for the people of God. After praying in the chapel of our blessed Lady with her heart exposed, it dawned on me that it was because of his special devotion to the heart of Mary, Mary obtained from God a special blessing for him and for us. This grace is his heart, which did not decay. And if I may ask you one by one, who are here this night, what part of your body would you like to have preserved? Not decayed. It is almost unanimous, everybody said heart. If you want your heart to be preserved, preserve your heart now in the heart of Jesus and Mary. And not only preserve your own heart, but bring the heart of other people and preserve them in the heart of Jesus and Mary as the Father from Ars did.

Jesus himself made it clear to me, I was still very small, that the surest place you can preserve yourself or preserve other people is in the heart of Mary. He showed me his heart, this heart cut almost into two parts and bled and bled and lost all his blood. And he showed me the Immaculate Heart of Mary with so many wounds, very deep wounds, these wounds are not as big as the wounds of Jesus, but almost everywhere on the Immaculate Heart there are wounds, very deep wounds. And he said, "Unite yourself with these two wounded and bleeding hearts." He said, "The only solution for the salvation of the world is to unite yourself with these two wounded and bleeding hearts." And he made this assurance: If you enter into the wounded heart of Mary, because these wounds are deep and not wide, you will never fall out. You will remain in it. And this is exactly what this our great patron saint did with his own heart and with the hearts of his parishioners and those, who came to him. He took them and put them deep into the heart of Mary and they remained.

He had a lot of temptations. The devil did not allow him even to sleep. When he tried to sleep the devil came to attack him and to disturb his sleep, but because he was in the heart of Mary he had always peace. [...] The life he lived, he had a lot of very strenuous work, but whenever you look at his face there was serenity and peace. Why? He drew strength from the blood of the love, the blood of our blessed Mother Mary and of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. And we ourselves draw our strength from the Holy Eucharist, from the mass we celebrate, adoration we do, from the holy hours, which we hold, from the prayers, which we say we draw strength direct from the love of God and his heart.

It is very difficult today to be a priest. They are targets for attacks not only from enemies of the church, but even from those, who are inside the church. Many people, many Catholics have even begun to ask: "Why do we need priests? What the need of having priests? Can't we do without them?" There are people, who have decided that laics should take over the work of the priests. In some places the priests...people try to determine the priest, try to determine what he is going to do. Some people begin to question: "Why should our priests remain a celibate, why don't they get married, get children?" So many useless questions, which go to destroy the priests.

Ars is a place for the priests, for the Hearts of Love. Yesterday in the chapel, we were still looking around and admiring, adoring Jesus, praying, then came the sisters and they asked us, if we would like to pray with them the Vespers. Someone noticed that the sisters carried around their neck a cross, where there is a predominant heart. Someone wanted to know to which congregation the sisters belong. And the answer was: "Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus." All these things are not accidental. It is God, who is telling us the direction he wants the Church to go. Through the Hearts of Love God wants to renew his Church. To renew his Church God wants to renew his priests! The

renewal of the priests means the renewal of the Church. The renewal of the Church means the renewal of the entire creation.

In this time God wants to renew us, renew his priests, and renew his Church and his entire creation. Let us give God the chance to renew us. [...] What I am telling you is not an idea I myself cleverly conceived, it is what God has revealed, the secret of his Love, the secret of the renewal of his Church, the secret of the renewal of the world, the secret of the salvation of all souls. This is what I have received, what I have seen, what God has given me and I can no longer hide it, I must openly show it, expose it.

22.7.2003, Wednesday, St. Mary Magdalene, Ars

Morning-mass

Today the church is celebrating the feast of the apostle of the apostles. Somebody because of her great love of Christ was able to dump all consequences and go to the grave looking for the body of Christ and she received, demanded from Christ, to go to the apostles and tell them that he is risen. We don't need to stretch our imagination far to see that it is love that gives us a mission. I know there are some of you, who did not lay on their bed even for one minute after the midnight mass and they are here now for this mass and prayers. What and who gives them this strength? This love? It is the love of God. The love of the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. The love to the Holy Eucharist. The love for the church. The love for souls. Love is the greatest power that exists. God is love. With love we can do all things.

Remember, this woman was the very woman, who did not fear all consequences to come openly to Jesus and show to Jesus love in a very intimate special way, when Jesus was still alive. Many identify her with the woman, who came, when Jesus was invited for a meal, and used her tears to wash his feet, her hairs to wipe it and use very costly ointment to anoint Jesus. This woman was not let alone, she was attacked by two people. By the Pharisee, who said: "Jesus, if you are a prophet, how could you allow this woman to touch you?" The woman had a bad name in the community. She was almost ostracized by the community as a social leper, because of the way she lived. She was also attacked by one of the apostles of Jesus, who said: "What a terrible waste! We could have sold this oil and use the money to feed the poor. She wasted it on Jesus!" But for this woman, there is no other thing that exists in the world but Jesus. Jesus is her all. That is why she gave Jesus all her heart, all her love, all belongings, the best and all she has. Jesus defended this woman in a very clear, special way.

On the side of Simon he said: "Simon, Simon, since I came into your house you never gave me water to wash feet or to anoint head, but this woman has been doing that since I came into this your house." And he said: "Who loves more? He, who is forgiven a little sin or who is forgiven a greater sin?" He said: "Wherever the gospel will be preached, this woman will never be forgotten." And against Judas he said: "You have the poor always with you. But I'm not always there. Allow her to do this service, because I'm not always there. My body is already anointed."

And you remember Jesus asked Peter this question: "Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you really love me?" Before he reinstalled Peter and gave him the power to feed his lambs and tender his sheep. The same thing, he saw this great love in this woman that is why he made this woman apostle to the apostles. So I am asking you this morning to let all the love you have flow for Jesus. Don't reserve even the smallest particle of it; let the whole of your love flow for Jesus. Don't be afraid or ashamed to show Jesus that you love him. This woman was not afraid even of the soldiers, who were guarding the grave. She went there in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus again.

And this holy priest here in Ars venerated this saint Mary Magdalene a lot. For here we have the authority, we have the audacity, we have also the invitation to love Jesus as Mary Magdalene loved him by pouring all our tears using our body to worship Jesus, using all we have to worship Jesus. Don't be ashamed, don't set any limits to your love, let your whole love flow for Jesus. Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist. Jesus in the sacrament of the altar. Jesus in the church. Jesus in the person of the priest. Let your love for Jesus be shown in all these ways. So to prepare ourselves for this

celebration, this Eucharist we shall celebrate with special love today, let us call to mind our sins and ask God to forgive the times, when we have not allowed our love to flow for Jesus. God has planned to give us this woman today to be part of our retreat for priests. She served the priest of priests with all her love. She loved the priest of priests with all her heart. She wept not because Jesus was killed and buried, but because she didn't find his body anymore.

In the Jewish culture as well as in the Igbo culture and many cultures of the world, the desecration of the dead body is one of the worst things you can do to the family and to those, who loved that person. There is a saying that, if you want to know, who owns a goat, a goat that continues walking about the whole village, you kill it, and when you kill it you know those, who are the owners of the goat. And another one says, if you want to know how people react, you come to where the body of their brother or sister is lying, you take a stick and flog it, flog the dead body. If you flog the corpse, it doesn't feel it, but the owners, the parents, brothers and sisters, they will attack you, even kill you. So you can imagine the situation of Mary of Magdala, when she came there, the body was no longer there. So all the anger, all the annoyance, all the disappointment say: "They have killed him, and it wasn't enough for them, they must have taken away his body!" So she couldn't control herself anymore. She was prepared to fight anybody or to go anywhere to recover the body of Christ. She was even prepared to die to defend the body, the dead body of Christ. And all this because of her great love for Jesus. In life she showed her love for Christ without hiding, defending Christ everywhere and dead she was prepared to fight again for Jesus. And you see the role people can play to help the priest in his work, the role of Mary Magdalene, who helped Jesus, when he was alive and stayed with him, when he was dead. The same way with those, who help the priest in his work in the Church. It is also said in the scriptures, Jesus and the apostles were about preaching, but there were women, who followed them and supported them with their means and cared for them. So we will not be surprised that Jesus raised some of these women to be on the level of apostle, even apostle of apostles. We know the Holy Father - his personal secretary, who is taking care of his whole household, he made him archbishop, and if he likes he can make him cardinal.

Last month, when we were there in Rome, the mass of Saint Peter and Paul, we saw how the Holy Father in spite of his weak body, but strong spirit, celebrated mass. He needed help of these people that he could appear in public and celebrate mass as it was impossible without the help of those people, who are very close to him and are almost carrying him. Jesus needed the help of people to do his work. He needed help to become a human being, his incarnation, he needed the help of Mary to become incarnate in the world. He needed the help of people to do his work as Christ here on earth, he needed the help of people to preach, to go about doing his work, he needed the help of people. He is God! He is a priest, priest of all priests. The pope needs the help of people, the bishops, the priests, we need help to accomplish our work as priests for you, for the Church, for the whole world, for all souls. They need this help of people, but there are a lot of people, who will pull them down, there are other people, who will really help them, raise them, support them. Don't allow them to fall.

As seminarians, there was a small joke I cracked, I said: "Who can tell me, why a priest doesn't marry?" Well, I said: "The reason is because, if you count the rips of a priest, they are complete, there is no missing rip. And because Adam was missing one rip that's why he married Eve. The priest is a complete person, there is nothing missing in him." That's only a joke. The priest needs help, not because something is missing in him. It is not because he is feeling alone, but because of his work. So the help, which we render to priests should be help for their mission, for their work, not because we want them to be attached to us or to pull them down that way. No. It is because of their mission.

So today Mary Magdalene will help us to think more about the great love we should have for the priest of priests, Jesus Christ himself, great love have also for priests, all priests, the great love we have also for the priests to help them to fulfil their work as priests. When God gave me this work of the Hearts of Love and I saw how big this work is, I prayed to him: "Please, my God, give me people, who will help me in this work." He didn't answer this prayer immediately, but after a week,

he came, appeared and said, "I heard your prayers. I am preparing souls, who will have great love of me, and who will work with you." So great love of God is the condition for helping us and also willingness to work, to suffer and even to die with us. Please, love the priest, work with the priest and suffer with the priest and for the priest. Especially with your prayers and your sacrifice.

23.7.2003, Thursday, Ars

Vigil

Jesus did not say: "Do this in order to remember me", but he said: "Do this in memory of me." What means, what is being done is greater than memorial. Memorial is only an aspect of the understanding of what is being done, and what is being done is very, very much more than memorial. It is a re-enactment. Whenever the mass is celebrated, exactly what happened, that first mass of Jesus with the apostles is repeated. The only difference is difference in time, difference in place and that is now sacramental.

So, my dear brothers and my dear sisters, it is good that we are here this middle of this night, so that we shall renew in union with our priests the new bond of love with our Lord Jesus Christ. Before the Jews came to the Mount Sinai, where they renewed their bond, their covenant with God, God asked them to prepare themselves with a retreat. This retreat involves not only the avoidance and removal of moral sins, but also of cleaning themselves physically, so that they were cleansed physically and spiritually so that they could come near to the mountain of the Lord. Even after they had prepared themselves and came towards the mountain, God told them the limit they could come near, they should come near to the mountain, but they should keep some distance. [...] And even after that, when he came to the mountain in order to speak to them, there was a lot of fear, earthquake, thunder, lightening, they couldn't bear his presence. They cried and begged God: "Please, don't speak to us directly. Speak to Moses, he will come then and speak to us." The same God comes on this altar, the same God. No difference. The same God is with us. The same God speaks to us, but doesn't frighten us. He has shown us, who He is. He is Father, he is Love, he is a Heart of Love. [...] But all the same He remains the Holy One and nothing impure will come to Him.

I said at the beginning of the mass that this night is a night of the covenant. It is a night of love. It is a night of the commandment, of the covenant of love. As we heard in the first reading was his telling the people of Israel, why God chose them to be His own special people. The whole creation belongs to God. All mankind, they are all creatures of God, they belong to God. All peoples, all nations, all cultures, all belong to God. And God loves all he created. There is no creature of God that is hated by God. If God hates anything, it is an impossible thing, God cannot hate, God does not even hate the devil, for in God is no atom of hatred, God is love. He loves all! Even those, who hate him, even those, who turn away from him, even those, who are clearly against him. He loves all. If God were to hate anything, he would no longer be love, no longer be God. Love is the very being, nature, essence of God, if we can use these words, if we can apply these words to God.

But there are people, there are people or persons, whom God loves with special love. He loves all, but there are people or persons, whom God loves with special love. The people of Israel in the Old Testament, they were chosen by God to be a special people to Him. And they began to ask themselves: "Why God loves us like this? What's the reason that God has chosen us to be His own people, His own special people? He is the God of all creation, but He has chosen us to be His own special people." And Moses tried to answer this question, he said: "You are a people, this people does belong to God in a very special way. You are holy to the Lord. You are separate from other people. You are distinct, you are special to God. You belong only to God. He has chosen you from other peoples of the world to be His own personal special people."

Like somebody, who is a builder, he builds houses for people, he designs and builds houses. Then he decides to build a house for himself, where he is going to live. His own personal house. Somebody, who produces cars, he makes thousands of cars, but then he decides to make a special car for himself, his own car, the car he is going to ride. Somebody, who works in a restaurant, he

prepares food for people, what they will eat so that they will be satisfied. He decides to cook something for himself, what he himself is going to eat. Has he the right to prepare a special food for himself? Has the motor producer the right to build a special car for himself? Has the architect the right to build a special house for himself? So God has the right also to choose a special people, to prepare a special people for himself. This people will carry His name, a people, who will bear His name, a people, who will be very, very close to His heart. So what makes this people special? It is not what they are, but because they belong to God in very special way.

And I tell you, the most special people, the most special group of creatures of God, who are they? We know that our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the creator, through Him all things came to be, were created, He chose a special person to be His mother and He preserved this person in a most special way and put all the qualities, all the graces, all the blessings, all in her, the most specially created and chosen virgin Mary. But Mary is a mere person. And the Church. Christ chose the Church to be His special bride. The Church, He made the Church pure, holy, beautiful with His eternal presence. The Church is His body, the Church is His body. When Saul was persecuting the Church: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He identifies himself with the Church.

But I see a group of human beings in the Church, whom Christ has chosen and loved, identifies himself with them in a most special way. We hear what Jesus himself said in a message: "My son, thank my priests, my priestly sons, for their love and willingness to work for me and with me, to care for my children, my sons, my daughters in the Church, in the world. All my sons and daughters in the Church are to love and care for my priests, my priestly sons. My priests, my priestly sons are to love and care and offer their lives for my sons and daughters in my Church.

Tell my baptized and confirmed sons and daughters they are not to try to control or dictate my consecrated sons and daughters, and tell my baptized and confirmed and consecrated sons and daughters they are not to try to dictate, to control their rector, dominate my ordained sons, my priestly sons. My priestly sons are precious gifts of Myself in the person of My priestly sons to My Church. Tell my ordained sons to be responsible, to know, to be sufficiently aware of their responsibility of leadership and teaching and sanctification and sacrifice and purification and preservation of my entire people.

Every priest is priest of my entire people, his love and prayers and sacrifice, even when concentrated on a specific group of community, assigned to him by his superior, or bishop, his whole heart and love and prayers and sacrifice and concern should extend to the entire people, my Church, all my children. In this way will he realize the full splendour and attraction, responsibility of his priesthood, which is mine, it is my priesthood. I am the universal and eternal High priest.

My priestly sons are My very special children of My Hearts of Love. I love them very, very tenderly. I care for them with all My Heart of Love. I am in them and I unite myself permanently with them. Let them never weaver. Any and all of them, who remain true, steadfast to his priestly commitment and duty will never, never be led astray by any person or force. He will certainly reach his goal of eternal union and happiness in Me in heaven.

I thank all My priests, I love all My priests, I revere all My priests, I praise all My priests, I honour all My priests, I cherish them, I draw them deep into My Heart of Love, I cover them with the blood of My love. I am in them, I am one with them. I continue My work of teaching and salvation and sacrifice and sanctification and glorification and union with My eternal loving Father in My Holy Spirit through My beloved priests. My beloved priests are special children of My Love, of My Hearts of Love. All in My Hearts of Love are to pray for, care and have special concern for My priestly sons. Anything done to them is done to Me directly. Anything given to them is given to Me directly. I am one with My priestly sons. Let all love, care and honour them. Let all listen attentively to their preaching."

So, those, who are tired... Jesus wants you to listen attentively to the preaching of His priests. So wake yourselves up and help those around you, who may be dozing, to wake up.

"Come and see, I will show you the splendour of My priests. [He let me have a glimpse into heaven and said:] See, nearest to Me and higher than all My angels and saints are My priests. The trunk of

My beloved saintly priests are all next to me, surrounded in indescribable splendour. My saintly priests are the joy of My Heart of Love. They are the glory of My Church on earth and in heaven.”

Our dear priests, Jesus said we should thank you. Thank you for your love, for your service, for your decision to work as priest in His Church. You are the most beloved on earth and even in heaven. You are the nearest to Christ here on earth and there in heaven. Your saintly life is the glory and the joy of the Church here on earth and there in heaven. You are the embodiment of the glory of God here on earth. You are another Christ here on earth. Jesus identifies Himself with you in the way he does not with any other group.

Please, remain strong and steadfast in your service, in your work as priest. Never be discouraged, never be tired. Remain strong in your union with Christ, in your love for His Church, in your care for all children of God. All the members of the Hearts of Love love you, care for you, pray for you and make sacrifices for you. Without you, without your service we shall not have the benefits of salvation, which Christ already won for us. Without you the children of God will all faint and die from hunger and thirst. Please, feed us, the children of God, with the word of God and with the sacraments. Even when your service is not respected, not loved, even when the people don't cherish you, remember you are very, very dear to the Heart of Christ.

His love for you is enough for you. Your position in heaven as saintly priests is higher than that of all the angels. Remember, you have entered the covenant of love with Christ, with His Church and with us, please, don't abandon, don't break this covenant. Your priestly work, service does not end in this world. You are priest forever and ever. Remain in the love of Christ, remain priest in every situation and the glory of God will shine in you and through you to the whole world. The promise of Christ, of His love, of His steadfast love for you is enough to carry you through all difficulties in life. Remain forever united with Him as His most beloved saintly priests. We pray for you always, all in the Hearts of Love pray for you, all the angels of God guard you and pray for you, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of priests, carries you in Her Heart. She loves and cherishes you the way Christ Himself loves and cherishes you, the way She Herself loves and cherishes Christ. You are the most precious gifts of the Heart of Jesus to His Church, to the world. Remain our priests.

23.7.2003, Thursday, Ars

Morning mass

My dear sisters and my dear brothers, look at the priests. They are your priests. Yesterday night, the vigil mass, we spoke about the love, which Christ has for His priests. The respect, the esteem, the tenderness, which Jesus has for His priests. And after the mass, when I went into my room and continued the prayer adoration there, the Lord said something to me. “My son, My love, you have to teach My children in the Hearts of Love to love and respect the priest.” We must love and respect the priest. I wonder why he didn't say “respect the priests”. He used the singular. Who knows, why he used the singular and not the plural? [...] “You *must* teach My children in the Hearts of Love, My people to love and respect the priest.” The love and respect for the priest is love and respect for the Holy Eucharist. The love and respect for the priest is love and respect for Jesus Himself. The love and respect for the priest is love and respect for the Church itself. The love and respect for the priest is love and respect for your own salvation, your own soul.

One priest told me a terrible experience he had. In some countries there is still this practice of public execution of criminals, especially armed robbers. They were about eight of them who were condemned to death, and they should die by firing squad. So these people, they were brought to the stadium, a public place, so everybody would come and see how they are being killed. It is terrible. They were tight to the poles, very strong poles, [...] Some of them are Catholics, some are Protestants, some are other religions. So those in charge invited the ministers of their various religions to come to meet the condemned, before they would be killed. So the priest told me that, when he came there, he was himself terribly touched by the situation of somebody, who had to die in the next 5 minutes. He approached, two of them were Catholics, and came to the first person and said: “Please, you want to go to confession? You want to be anointed?” And the person said “yes”.



So he heard his confession and anointed him. And then he came to the second person, that was a terrible experience. This person asked him: "Come, come nearer." And when he came nearer, as if to hear what he is saying, what did he do? He spat on his face. And the priest didn't know what to do. The very last chance he had to repent, to confess, to be anointed and to prepare for eternity. And the priest told me that he knelt down and began to cry. What this person did to the priest, is what he did to his own soul! He did it to his own salvation! And you can also say he did it to Jesus, did it to God. So this priest didn't know what to do until the soldiers came and said: "Please, give us way. It is now time to kill them." He was then taken away, but before he left he looked at the person's face again and the face was full of hatred. Hatred for himself, hatred for everybody, hatred even for the priest! For his own soul! However, he blessed him all the same and then immediately he left. The soldiers: "Left! Right! Left! Right!" The wounded man cried: „I wouldn't die! I wouldn't die!...", and he died. All others died quietly, but this person not: "I wouldn't die! I wouldn't die!..." But still he died. Anybody, who doesn't love and respect the priest does not love and respect Jesus. He does not respect the Church. He does not love and respect his own soul. He does not love and respect eternity. When you look at the priest, he is not just a person, he is there as a personified symbol of eternity, of the glory of God, of the presence of God, of Jesus Christ Himself. We pray God in this mass to give us all the grace to love and respect the priest. We pray for all Catholics, for all Christians, for the entire humanity so that they will learn to love and respect the priest, respect Jesus.

At the beginning of the mass I asked you a question based on the revelation, or mission, or work, which Christ gave to us to do: "Please, My son, My love, teach My children in My Hearts of Love, teach My people to love and respect my priest." [...] And you gave many answers and all answers were correct. [...] But it is in the gospel now that I found the most exact answer. This answer comes from Jesus Himself. And the answer is, "*I, Jesus, am the true wine.*" And he is the true priest and other priests are branches. And the Father is the wine dresser. So, in the work of the priests, the Most Holy Trinity is completely there.

So, my brother priests, this gospel is meant for us. Jesus is the priest and we are His branches. The life in the branch is the same as the life in the wine. And you can even say, without the branches, the stem, you won't even know the stem, no fruit, no flowers, no leaves! So without the branches, without the priests today I don't know what would happen to Jesus. Who would have been celebrating masses today without the priest, who will be forgiving sins, who will be anointing people, who will preach the word without the priest? And Jesus said, "*Every branch that does bear fruit, My Father prunes to make it bear even more fruit.*" And we see it even in this patron of priests here, because he was bearing fruit, the Father pruned him, and he continued to bear more and more fruit. His parish began to increase more and more, his parish became almost the whole world, his parish became all the priests of the world. They are now his parishioners.

A priest, who does his work as a priest well, gives the people the attention, hears the confession with attention and feels with them, strengthens them, purifies them, even scolds them, when they sin, but leads them on the way of salvation, you see, God prunes him and he continues to bear more and more fruit. The people come to him from everywhere. That's what Jesus said. A priest, who preaches the word of God, not himself, preaches truly the word of God, gives time to prepare his homilies, preparation doesn't mean reading books, preparation means in the Holy Spirit praying, asking God: "What do I teach Your people?" He himself is being taught by Christ in teaching the people, who prepares himself very well, prepares his homily and preaches to the people with the word of God. [...] We saw that in the life of Saint Padre Pio. He has so many spiritual children all over the world, and somebody said: "What did Padre Pio really do? What was so wonderful about Padre Pio?" He only celebrated, and celebrated, and celebrated and then...that's all. He celebrated the sacraments. He celebrated and that's all! So, the life of the priests is a life of celebration. Celebrate Jesus! Celebrate Him, that's all! And then He will do the rest. But the other side, which is sad, Jesus said: "*Anyone, who does not remain in Me is like a branch that has been thrown away, he will wither. These branches are collected and thrown on the fire and they burn.*" And there are

many priests, who are dry, very dry. They don't find joy anymore in their ministry as a priest and for these priests Jesus cries and weeps and he struggles to revive them. Why are they dry? The answer is very simple from the gospel: "*As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, it must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in Me.*" A priest, who tries to create his own priesthood, lives his own type of life, no longer listening to Jesus nor listening to the Church, doing his own thing his own way, he dries. If he doesn't listen to the pope, doesn't listen to his bishop, doesn't listen to the community, what they need, he doesn't say his prayers anymore, forgets his breviary, he doesn't go to confession himself, doesn't clean himself...he dries! No matter what he does, he can be wonderful in any other thing, but he is dry! Dry! [...]

And then this wonderful promise: "*Whoever remains in Me, with Me in him, bears fruit in plenty.*" Ars was a very small village, what is here? There is nothing wonderful about this place! The only thing about this place is the priest! The presence of a holy priest in a place transforms the whole environment! He remained completely united with Jesus, with Mary, that is why he bears such fruit, even until today he is still bearing fruit, more and more fruit! [...]

So our work as priests, our work is simple. The simplest thing we shall do, the simplest work is what? To remain always in Jesus, that is all! And celebrate Jesus. And like Mother Mary taught, as the mother of priests: "Just do what he tells you, that is all!" In Lagos I met a priest, in the parish, where he worked, he has transformed the whole place in a very short time, and he has built edifices, which cost millions! He wanted some of our sisters to be there, to be in his parish, so when he was asked the secret of his success, he said: "I pray and I follow the rubrics and God does the rest." Father Tansi<sup>1461</sup> said: "Father, please come!" He wanted our sisters to take up a convent there to run the place. The first time he saw our sisters, there in Lagos, he was completely happy with them. Why? Because of the spirituality of prayer, adoration, Holy Eucharist. This man, he has told me, for over, I don't for how many years, he has never missed Holy Hour. [...]

Jesus said: "*Remain in Me! If you remain in Me and My words in you, you may ask what you will and you will get it.*" You will get it for yourself, priest, for your parish, for people, who come to you, who request your prayers, request your blessings, and who will bring their problems to you. You may ask what you will, you will get it. [...]

In all that you have heard in the last sentence in the gospel today is very, very beautiful. Very, very beautiful. "*It is the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit.*" I think this is the link to what he asked me to do last night: "Teach My family of the Hearts of Love, teach My people, you must teach them the love and respect of the priest." The honour, the glory, the respect given to the priest does not take away from Jesus. The honour of the priest is the honour of Jesus. It is for the glory of God that the priest should be honoured and respected. There are some...I don't know how these people think, totally wrong, who think that we give Jesus too much respect and we forget the Father! A few times Jesus showed his surprise and disappointment with His apostles. One of the times was, when His apostle Philip asked Him: "Show us the Father. Then we shall be satisfied." Jesus was surprised and disappointed. "How can you ask 'show me the Father', if you have seen me?"

The same way, if you have seen the priest, you have seen Jesus. If you have seen Jesus, you have seen the priest, because Jesus and the priest are one. That's why he said: "*Teach them to respect the priest.*" The priest is one, the priesthood is one in Jesus. To have seen the priest, is to have seen Jesus, to love the priest, is to love Jesus, to respect the priest is to respect Jesus, and to respect Jesus is to respect the Father, the Trinity.

In Nigeria, when we celebrate mass, every man brings his offering, not only money, he brings food, items, yam, goat, cow, eggs, every type of things he has he brings to God. The priest in Nigeria he doesn't receive any salary, so he depends on what the people bring. Sometimes they bring big things, bags of rice, bags of garri [grinded manioc], they bring all these things to God. Somebody observed: "Why do we bring all this to God? What will God do with them?" One man answered:

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<sup>1461</sup> This may be a slip of tongue; the name of the priest in Lagos, who would have liked the sisters to come work in his parish, was Father Edmund, a European, Jesuit priest, who propagated much the devotion to Blessed Father Tansi.

“We give them to God, but somebody eats them in the name of God.” And that is also what the priest does at mass. He takes the place of God. The mass is a feast, a meal with God, a bond with God. When Moses celebrated the bond with God and the Israelites, after killing the animal, he brought the blood, he shed it into a pot, and out of the pot he poured it on the people. The priest, after the consecration, holy communion, he eats in the name of God, so the people will then eat and there is then this bond between God and the people. [...] Last night, when I didn’t really finish reading that message, Jesus said: “My son, I want people to have the highest respect for My priests.” The highest respect, the highest respect! These are words from Jesus. “They represent me in very personal ways. They are loving symbols and signs of My presence. They are living symbols and signs of My presence. They exist not for their sakes, but for me and for others. Their life is service. Their life is holiness. Their life is purity and sacrifice.”

The priest is not a priest for himself. There is no priest, who says: “I bless me in the name of the Father...” There is no priest, who says: “I baptize myself...”, he doesn’t do that. There is no priest, who says: “I absolve myself, my sins in the name of the Father...” Even when he is dying, he cannot anoint himself. All he does is for God and for the people. He lives and he dies in service for the people. Why can’t we love and respect the priest? Jesus says: “My son, love My priests. Love all My priests. Pray, care for and be concerned about all the priests, all my priests. No matter how old, no matter how weak, no matter how even sinful the priest is, love and respect him.” He said: “I love them and bless them all. All priests, love all priests. Pray for all priests. Care for all priests.” Jesus loves them and blesses them all. If you love and respect them, you will receive the same reward. May God bless you with all the blessings of His priestly heart.

24.7.2003, Friday, Ars, Vigil

My dear brother priests, very much loved, cherished and revered by Jesus Christ Himself, dear reverent sisters and brothers, beloved lay apostles and everybody here present. It is my great joy to welcome you once again to our midnight celebration. One of the secret of the success of the Father of Ars is his midnight vigils, prayers, adoration. [...]

We asked ourselves the question after the rosary prayer, why there are very few parish priests canonized. Some have even said he is the only canonized parish priest. That doesn’t mean that there is only one parish priest in heaven, it doesn’t mean that. But to be canonized means that somebody has lived an exemplary heroic life and the Church brings this person out as a model for us to follow. We saw that there are a lot of dangers, terrible dangers for the parish priest in the parish everywhere in the whole world. Even among his own parishioners the parish priest has always many enemies. And not only that he has many enemies among his parishioners, there are terrible temptations, which remain for long time, trying to pull him down. And in the parish the conflicts, the controversies, different interests, even problems of the parish, all of them are weights, all of them weigh the parish priest down. He cannot remain untouched by these problems, that is impossible, he must be touched by the problems of his parishioners, the problem of his parish.

The priest is so to say immersed, immersed in the problems of the parish, wherever he is sent. It doesn’t mean that he himself will be personally involved, if he goes to a parish, for instance, where the people there are not at peace with one another, so that it affects his work. The place where the people there are drunk, it affects his work. The place, where the people there are harlots, they go to sex shops or the children there, the girls and the boys there they mess themselves up, it affects him. He cannot be independent of their problems. In his own parish, where the people there taken to satanism, they are many today, who read satanic books, listen to satanic music, they spend their time for all this rubbish, where they take drugs, or where they don’t even go to Church, where nobody cares about God’s commandments, all these things must weigh on the parish priest, he cannot but be touched by these things. The level of faith of the parishioners also weighs on the faith of the parish priest.

So our beloved great priest, St Maria Vianney himself, was terribly afraid of being a parish priest, because of the responsibility of every single soul in that parish. He has to give an account to God

for every single soul in that parish. And then for his own soul, he has to give account for his own soul and for every single soul, even if that soul is not a catholic. Even if this person belongs to another religion, he has to give account for every single person in his parish. As a shepherd for all the sheep entrusted to him, all around him, he has to feed them, he has to care for them, has to bandage them, has to carry them to hospital, has to care for their souls and their bodies, he has to care for them. He must do that. And the way he did his work, the way he cares for them will be the way he himself will be judged.

I remember, when we were in the seminary, everyone had a daily function, a part of the seminary, where you take care sweeping it, cleaning it, flowers - watering it, or the sacristy – mobbing it, library or everywhere a seminarian had a particular function. And the rector told us: “You are not yet priests, but the way you do this your function shows the way you are going to take care of your parish. This your function is your parish. It is not enough that you read, study and pass your exams well, or pray well, you must also show that you can take care of your parishioners. There now your function is your parish.” And there was a very good seminarian, very intelligent. He had the function of taking care of the flower garden. During the dry season these flowers died, and he was told: “Your vocation has died.”

To be a parish priest, caring for souls, their sickness is your sickness and how can you be a parish priest in a parish, where the people suffer from pest, from influenza, and still remain a healthy person? How could the Father of Ars, when he came to Ars here? Ars was a terrible place, people weren't wonderfully praising their religion, they got themselves to young girls, to young boys, dancing, living the life they wanted and felt boring coming to Church as such. How did he succeed, in spite of the terrible situation in his parish, to remain a holy, saintly priest? The secret is the secret of Jesus Christ Himself. The life program of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself was prayer – work. He spends the day working for the people, spends the night in prayer. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself lived that way. And the day he was about preaching, curing the people, the night he will go to a lonely place to pray, to be in communication with his Father, the one, who sent Him doing this work.

Jesus Christ Himself, when he came into the world, he took all our sins on Himself. St. Paul says he was made sin, *he was made sin* for our sake, but he remained and remains one with the Father in prayer. That was the secret of his success, this oneness with His Father nobody could disturb it. No temptation could disturb it. He remained one with the Father. This oneness was clearly seen in the prayers, which he spent the whole night praying to the Father.

Somebody made a terrible joke of one of our beloved saints, Saint Theresa. Saint Theresa was sent from heaven to go to New York to spend some days of holidays there. So, when she was sent there to spend a few days of holidays, after one month nobody heard of her, there was no more communication with heaven. So they began to wonder what has happened to her. One of the angels was sent, Gabriel, to go and look for her. So, when Gabriel came, he began to look for her, he couldn't find her, she had already removed her habit and was putting on jeans and started smoking cigarette. And when Gabriel found her, he found her in a disco. And he said: “Hello, Saint Theresa, what are you doing here?” She said: “Hi, Gabi! Please keep that your high saintness, here is New York.” And she was taken up by the life in New York. And when Gabriel wanted her to come back to heaven she said: “Gabi, let us dance!” It is not a true story, it is a stupid story. But such a thing has happened to many parish priests.

A parish priest, after the burial of a man in his parish, the wife of this man could not stop crying, because of her love for the husband. So, to comfort this woman, the parish priest was visiting this woman more often, and how did it end up? Marrying that woman. Another parish priest with a couple, who were coming for marriage instruction and was preparing for marriage, how did it end up? It ended up running away with the woman to America. And one young priest told me the story, these are not fables, but real stories, that somebody, whom he was preparing for marriage, marriage instruction – he has to do that, this young girl told him: “Father, I love you. I want my first baby to be from you.” Temptation with money, with power, with different calls, who will be there in the

parish to fight against the priest. Some priests, when they begin to live the life and preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as it should be preached, they will be attacked with all different types of weapons, even spiritual weapons from human beings and then worse the devil himself will appear. The devil did attack the Father of Ars. Most of the times these parish priests are alone. He has to fight alone. And almost nobody cares, whether he eats or not, whether he is sick, people don't know. Nobody cares. He is alone. Suffering. The parish priest is the person on the battle front, warfront. There are priests who are more in research, teaching, lecturing, and some, who have other areas of assignment, but the ones who receive all the bullets, all the bombs, all the attacks from the devil, from human beings, from other forces, they are more the parish priests. It is more in the parishes, where the salvation of souls is wrought, where people are dying to be anointed, where people are being born to be baptized, where people are being brought to holy communion, being brought to confirmation, being wedded. There is where the greater work of saving souls is, and there is, where the devil and all other forces fight more against even the priest, who tries to save these souls. You see, some months ago, in America it was a terrible thing, attack against priests. Priests are not angels, they are human beings like every other human being. Their weaknesses, whether true or false, were so exposed in the radio, television, newspapers, they were so attacked from all sides, they were made a caricature of, made enemies of the Church. And some of them went as far as even committing suicide. And Jesus said, "My son, My enemies are destroying My priests. Please, defend My priests, please pray for them, please make sacrifices for them. My enemies are trying to destroy My priests." So, we want to offer this sacrifice of our vigil, our keeping awake this night till 3 a.m., offer it for our priests. Offer the sacrifice of the mass, this vigil mass, for the priest, adoration we are going to do this night, we are going to offer it for the priest to defend the priests, to protect the priests with all those, who are being terribly attacked by the enemies of Christ, enemies of the Church.

It is very important to underline what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said: "I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the clever and the learned and revealing them to mere children. Come to Me and learn from Me, from My Heart, because I am gentle and humble in heart and you find rest for your souls." This secret is secret of the heart, the secret of the heart, which Jesus Himself has revealed, which the Father has shown to little children, the secret of the heart, the secret of love, the secret of prayer. This secret the Father of Ars learnt it from the Heart of Jesus and from the Heart of Mary. So, when he came to Ars and saw the situation, he consecrated his parish, wrote their names in the Heart of Mary. That is the secret of his success, this consecration of his parish to the Heart of Mary, to the Heart of Jesus, to the Two Hearts. And today, Thursday, we shall do this consecration to the Two Hearts, so prepare for it.

Another secret, which is a difficult one, is the midnight prayer, adoration. It is in the middle of the night, most people die in the night, most sins are committed in the night. Saint Peter warned of the enemy, the devil, roaring like a lion, looking for someone to devour in the night. Jesus Himself spent the night in prayer, in adoration of the Father. The same way the Father of Ars spent the nights in adoration, in prayer. And the strength he draws from this adoration would carry him to spend up to 13 hours sitting at the confessional. And we as our society, we have also this vocation of vigil, every night vigil, from 12 midnight to 3am or 4am every night. Somebody said to me yesterday: "Father, please, allow your members, the sisters, the brothers to sleep." According to our program, anyway, we should sleep at least 7 hours every day, or 6 hours at least. So we have enough, at least one quarter of the day to sleep, but the middle of the night we should wake up to pray. The Lord wants this sacrifice of our prayers for the whole world. And what he does with us, when we say these prayers, he gives us more rest, more refreshment, more energy than what people get from eating and sleeping and taking sleeping tablets.

This vigil is also a sign of our covenant with God. We are a reparation family, we make reparation, we make sacrifice for the whole Church, for the whole world. I remember, some time last two years, Jesus said he wants people, at least 100 people, who will make this sacrifice of getting up between hours of 12 midnight and 3am to pray, to save the world. This thing was given us in May

2001, and when we sent the letter of the message to the people, we received not less than 900 answers, people, who were ready to make this sacrifice. And without knowing it, at the end of the year, somebody wrote me a letter and said: "Father, do you know, this sacrifice, this prayer request, this prayer action has saved the world and still will even save the world. Look at the history of the world, what happened between this May 2001 and today?" [...] This prayer of the Hearts of Love Jesus revealed to us is very, very closely united with the Holy Eucharist. It is the prayer of the renewal, prayer of the new time, prayer of the new era of the reign of the Love of God in the whole world. Through this prayer God renews the souls, renews the families, renews the Church, renews the world, renews the entire creation.

25.7.2003, Saturday, Ars, Vigil

God's love has brought us together in this night from Thursday to Friday to celebrate the mass of covenant of love with God. This night is a very holy night. It's a night of the covenant with God. In the midnight mass we now celebrate with the sign of this covenant, the sacrament of this covenant. And Jesus Himself asked us to be celebrating this mass in memorial of Him. We want to thank Him in a very special way for bringing us into the covenant of His love. He has brought us into the covenant of His Hearts, His Hearts of Love. He Himself is the heart of God, the heart of the Most Holy Trinity. And He is the Heart of Love, He said, "I am a heart of love and so is my mother, we are Hearts of Love, we are one. We are ever united in love." And He has asked us: "As the Father has loved me so I have loved you. Remain in my love. The same love in the Trinity, the same love with which the Father loves me, with the same love I have loved you. This love should be in you. Love one another with my love."

In the same way He showed the only solution to the problems of the world. It is, "Unite yourselves with these Two Wounded and Bleeding Hearts, the Two Hearts. Come, unite yourselves to these Two Wounded and Bleeding Hearts." It would have been impossible for anybody to think of the Most Holy Trinity without the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "Nobody knows the Father, except the Son. Nobody knows the Son, except the Father." And you can touch somebody maybe at the head or the feet or at the skin, but you can't enter anybody's heart, unless this person opens his heart for you. He has opened His heart and asks us to come to live in His heart, to dwell in His Heart, and to enjoy the splendour and the life, the glory of His Heart of Love.

How do we enter into this Heart of Love? By prayer and the sacraments. Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and prayer of the Hearts of Love. So, this night, we celebrate this mass with the greatest love we can, we have. Let us celebrate the Hearts of Love with all the devotion we can have. We heard in the afternoon the message of Christ Himself, saying: "The worst sin of my Church, the worst sin of my priests is to sin against the Holy Eucharist, neglect of my love, celebrate the mass without love." The worst sin. And can you imagine that, that Jesus will receive the worst wounds, the worst beating, the worst spitting at His face, the worst flogging, the worst nailing on His cross from His own Church, from His own priests. Terrible. The worst sin. He said: "Any mass celebrated without love, any unworthy communion is worse than all the sufferings, all the pains, all the beatings I received during My earthly life." Why is that so?

There is one little story that in a country people were drawing laws how the country is to be ruled, laws, which the people are to follow. Anybody who beats another person, anybody who cheats, anybody who offends the traffic, anybody who steals, people began to write punishments for these things. And about the person of the king, [...] they said that anybody, who pulls the king at the beard, what shall we do with this person? And they asked the king himself. "What shall we do?" And he said: "Anybody, who pulls the king at the beard, [...] what for a punishment will we give him?" And many suggested, he should be burnt alive, he should be cut into pieces, ... so many types of terrible punishment. But the King himself said: "Anybody, who pulls the king at the beard shall be given chocolate." They said: "Are you mad? What do you mean? How can this person be given chocolate? Somebody insults you by playing at your beard, chocolate?" "So there is chocolate, not only chocolate, but he also shall be given a lot of sweet and kisses." They say:

“What!?” He said: “Who can pull the king at the beard but his own child? Who can come so close as to pulling at the beard but his own child he is carrying on his own arms? Nobody can come so close.”

The same way, who can touch the Heart of Christ, who can give Him a beat in His Heart? Who can bite Him in His Heart? Only somebody, who is inside His Heart, who is allowed to come into His Heart. He said, “The sins of those, who are close to Me they touch Me most.” Those, He has allowed to come into His Heart, to celebrate the Holy Eucharist. There is another story that Cesar, the day he should have been acclaimed as Cesar in Rome, his enemies planned to kill him. And when the time came, [...] the first conspirator stabbed Cesar and the other conspirators came also and were stabbing him. And Cesar was fighting back, defending himself, he is a strong man, but when his closest friend, Brutus, was coming, he told Brutus to come to defend him, but what did Brutus do? He drew his own dagger and also stabbed Cesar. He said: “And you? Brutus?” He couldn’t fight anymore. Then he died. So all other injuries he could withstand them and fight against them, but the very sword and injury from Brutus broke his heart. It finished his energy, his strength, then he fell down and died.

So our injuries to Christ, our insults, our sins against Him are the most fatal, are the most wounding, the most painful. The sins of His Church, the sins of His priests, the sins of those, who belong to His Heart of Love. He expects from us that even, if other people don’t know Him or respect Him, even keep away from Him, when even they insult Him and beat Him up and flag Him and send Him away, we should always love Him, always honour Him, always defend Him, Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist, Jesus in the Hearts of Love, Jesus the God of Love. That is why this midnight mass, this vigil, this adoration, it is for Jesus very, very important. The time we come to Him to do reparation, reparation for the sins of the world, for the sins of all the people in the world. We are a reparation family, a family to make reparation for the sins of the world, to say Jesus: “Jesus! Mary! I love You. We love You. We love You. Be appeased. We love You. Save all souls. We love You.” [...]

26.7.2003, Sunday, Ars

Vigil

This is a night of counting our blessings and thanking God for all of them. I thank God more especially for His invitation to be part of His Heart of Love, to take part in this celebration that is love in the Holy Eucharist. We thank God for the gift of the priesthood, we never thank God enough for this, for you, my brother priests. We know that the Holy Eucharist is at the middle, at the centre of our life in the Church. And there is something Jesus said about this prayer of the Hearts of Love, which he gave us as a great gift of His Love. He said: “I am this prayer.” This prayer is very, very close to the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Eucharist is Jesus Himself, His person. And He said: “This prayer is Me, My presence.”

So I want us deep in this night to look at this prayer, at what Jesus Himself wants us to do, what He is doing through this prayer of the Hearts of Love: Just like your heart never stops beating even before you were born already in your mother’s womb your heart continues beating and beating and then you are born to the world, it continues beating. The moment your heart stops to beat, what is happening? The person is what? Dead. The prayer of the Hearts of Love has no end. It continues to beat in you forever. It’s love. Love has no end. Anybody is made to the likeness of God, if he stops living in love, he stops receiving love, he stops giving love, he stops living in love, that person does not really exist, he can only exist in hell.

Hell is the situation or the place, the condition of total absence of love. And heaven is the fullness of love. Where love lives, where love reigns is the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God. The love we talk about is the pure and holy love, the love of God, divine love. “*Hope may end, belief may end, but love never ends.*” And the prayer of love is a prayer of heaven. In heaven only the prayer of love will be said. We shan’t say anymore: “Thy kingdom come” in heaven. We won’t say it anymore in heaven. We shan’t pray anymore: “Give us today our daily bread” in heaven. We won’t pray anymore: “Forgive us our sins.” We shan’t pray anymore for health, job or for children,

you don't pray anymore for these things. But still there will be praying in heaven, the prayer of love. The prayer of love: "Jesus, I love you. Mary, I love you. God the Father, I love you. God the Holy Spirit, I love you." It never ends, forever and ever.

But not only human beings pray, not only angels pray, God prays also. Does God pray? God does not only pray, God is Himself prayer. The Father prays, the Son prays, the Holy Spirit prays. And this prayer forever and ever. The prayer of love. The Son prays: "Father, I love you. Holy Spirit, I love you. Father, I love you. Holy Spirit, I love you. Father, I love you. Holy Spirit..." it never ends, the prayer of love. And the Father prays: Son, I love you. Holy Spirit, I love you. Son, I love you. Holy Spirit..." it never ends. The Holy Spirit prays: "Father, I love you. Son, I love you. Father, I love you..." This prayer never ends. The prayer of the Hearts of Love, which Jesus taught us, is a version of this eternal prayer, which is said even in and by the Most Holy Trinity. If we continue saying this prayer of love, we shall become prayer ourselves.

There was an old woman, this woman belonged to the society of the Most Holy Rosary, and she says the chaplet I can't say how many times a day. In Igbo "hail Mary" is said "ekene Maria", and so her name was changed and became "Ekene Maria" in English "Hail Mary." People were calling her "Hail Mary" in her town. She becomes a personification of "Hail Mary." You see, children saw it that somebody can become what? Prayer. The secret of this prayer of Hearts of Love is God wants us to become this prayer. And he wants also our age, our environment to change and become the reign of this prayer, of this love. He said, "With this prayer I want to bring you into the new time of love. The time of the reign of the Hearts of Love. I want to bring you into the depths of the secret of life. The depths of love, the depths of life. I am love. I am life." People, who say this prayer regularly, they discover, even when they sleep, when they lie down to rest, their heart continue praying it, they are no longer being conscious of that their heart continues saying it. And you see, everywhere you go, you carry this prayer, you spread it just like what we heard in the gospel. Our Lady carrying Jesus in Her Heart, in Her womb and going to visit Elisabeth and as she came to Elisabeth: "Good morning Elisabeth", what did Elisabeth receive? The Holy Spirit.

I have told often people this my childhood dream, it is a wish, when I received this message, prayer of the Hearts of Love. I began to wonder: "What I am going to do to spread it everywhere?" I began to dream I went to ask shoemakers to make shoes for me, and under the shoe I will write "Jesus! Mary! I love you. Be appeased. Save all souls." I wear these shoes and I walk everywhere, and wherever I step my foot that place will be stamped. I walk the whole town, the whole country, if possible the whole world. And then everywhere will be stamped: "Jesus! Mary! I love you. Be appeased. Save all souls!" This childhood dream, God even has fulfilled it more. [...] God wants this prayer to be spread and He has made it possible that "anybody, who gets in contact with you, anyhow, anywhere, anytime, anybody, who sees you, anybody, who hears you, anybody, who touches you, anybody you touch, anybody you see, anybody you hear, even people, who react violently and even against you, all of them they will be blessed with the blessing of the Hearts of Love."

It is wonderful. Why is that so? Because of the graces, of the blessings, which God has given, He has given it. "Look at My Heart. It belongs to you. I bring you in My Heart. This is what has taken you completely up. It is also what you possess and what possesses you. My Heart, My Heart, My Love, you are in My Heart, you are in My Love. No matter how they attack you, no matter how they insult you, no matter how they throw you about, no matter what they say about you, no matter what they do to you, I have enveloped you in My Love, you are completely in My Love. Nothing and nobody can separate you from My Love. Nothing and nobody can separate My Love from you. You are My Love. And your only preoccupation, the only to occupy you, the only business you have in this world to do is to love Me and to love all with My Love and to bring people to the Love of Me. Anybody you love with My Love, you win this person back to My Love. Anybody you love with My love, you bring this person into My Love. Win all to My Love, bring all to My Love. Go and meet everybody, embrace everybody, and bring everybody to My Love. Go and love everybody



with My Love. And this way you win everybody back to My Love. Anybody you love with My Love you win this person back to My Love.”

Why is the salvation, which Christ won for us on the cross, for everybody? Even before He dies on the cross, from Adam to the last person, who will be born and exist in the world, the salvation is complete, total, universal. Why? Because His Love is complete, total, universal. He didn't say: “I love only those, who are here now, only those in Palestine.” His Love is for everybody. And because His Love is for everybody the graces He won for us is for everybody's heart. It is possible. He said: “My son, it is possible to save all souls.”

We know that stupid story of one king, who was so much in love with gold, golden things, and he went to one demon, who had the power to change many things, this demon gave him the power whatever he touches will become what? Gold. So, when he touched his throne or his table they became gold. Within a few minutes his whole house was changed into a golden house. Then his car. But when he became thirsty, he wanted something to drink. The water changed also into what? Gold. And then his child came to him: “Papa, papa, papa!” „Come my child!“ And the child became also gold. It was sad, because gold is not everything. But you can change everything into love! Everything into love, your table is table of love, your shoe will be a shoe of the Hearts of Love, your water drink will be water of the Hearts of Love. You can change everything! You will not suffer any disadvantage, but you will have all the advantages.

And we can do that by this prayer, we change our whole selves, change our town, change our families, change everything we do into what? Love. And that is what God wants to do by changing first of all our hearts, they will become Hearts of Love. Everything we see, everything we touch, everybody, who comes around us will change then, like what fire does, into Love. The reign of the Hearts of Love, everywhere in every heart in every home comes through this prayer.

“Tell all the members of my Hearts of Love that they are members of My Love. They are members of My life. Tell them that I belong to them and they belong to Me. I am in them, they are in Me. Tell them pure and holy love is very, very important. Tell them to remain in Me, I remain in them. It is My will that they remain all in My Love and grow in Me. I in them, they in Me.”

What is happening now is what God has planned even before the creation of the world. He wants His Love to reign everywhere. That's why He created the world that the world be full of His Love in every heart, in every home, in the whole creation, in the earth, in the sun, in the moon, in the stars, in the seas, in plants, in animals that everywhere His Love will reign. And He is now doing it. He wants His Love to reign: “I will pour out my Love on the whole world not minding the obstacles.” The eternal plan for the creation and salvation of all in My Love. So, what God is doing now is what God Himself is. God is love, and He wants that all His creation will show His Love. His Love will reign in everybody. May God continue this work with these people, who are prepared to give themselves completely and He will use as instruments of bringing His Love everywhere, and you are here now. May God bless you in your decision to follow Jesus and Mary, the Hearts of Love. He needs people, who give themselves as instruments as victims of His Love. He wishes His people then to spread His Love everywhere and you are here now. Thank you and God bless you for following Jesus and Mary in the Hearts of Love, for giving yourselves to be used by God to spread this prayer, His Love everywhere.

When we had the Feast last year in Rome, the bishop [Ayo-Maria] during the last mass he recommended...what did He say? What he said was similar to what Jesus said to His apostles. “Go to the whole world and spread this.” The same way Jesus is telling us now: “Go to everybody and love everybody with My Love and teach everybody this prayer of the Hearts of Love. And you see the world will change.” Jesus said to His apostles: “*Go to all creation and spread the good news. Make all My disciples, baptize them.*” That is what He commanded to His apostles. God commanded us also to go everywhere and spread the prayer of the Hearts of Love and to teach people to pray this prayer and then to love everybody, everybody and everything with His Love, with the love of Jesus. So, at the end of our retreat we see that is a time we try to become perfect. “*Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” And how? Love everybody with the Love of God.

Love everybody with this prayer and then you see you yourself become perfect. Everybody you touch, everybody you meet will be touched with this fire of the Love of God.

26.7.2003, Sunday, Foyer de Charité, Châteauneuf-de-Galaure  
Sunday Mass in the sanctuary

What we see here is the splendour of suffering. Marthe Robin is the treasure of this place. Victim souls, they are the glory of the Church. The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity. We are called also to be victims of love. Was this woman a sister or a priest? The vocation to be a victim of love is for all. She has suffered and suffered and see what happened. Are you prepared to be victims of love? When we came into that room where she lived 60 years, 60 years she lied on the cross, some people were even afraid to touch that bed. Because that bed is an altar of sufferings. But God told me – you must lie on this bed – the bed of suffering. And when I laid down there something happened.

We thank God for every victim soul in the world. The first victim soul is Mary. She offered God everything and she never complained. Well, the highest victim soul is Jesus Christ himself. Someone said that Christ suffered only once, is it true? What this lady suffered, she suffered in union with Christ. So every time she was in passion, Christ was suffering with her. Christ suffers in every member of his body. He is still today the suffering Christ and even suffering more than in the past. Every part of his body is persecuted – Saul, why do you persecute me? Now let us unite our heart, our soul, our bodies with Christ and suffer with him as victim souls. Somebody said to me: This prayer “pierce me with your arrows”, it’s too difficult for me to say. In every mass you should let your heart be pierced and let your blood flow to be united with the blood of Christ. But you can’t be a victim of love, if you are dirty, if you are not pure and holy. Let us now prepare ourselves to be victims of love and unite ourselves with Christ.

A meeting with such a person, even though she is dead and buried, but her spirit is still alive and a great inspiration on our way of Christian life. Don’t look for glory in this world, you are making a mistake. Don’t look for pleasure in this world, they are shadows. Don’t look for satisfaction, you will be disappointed. Rather look only for and do only the will of God. Ask God: My God what is your will for me? What do you want me to do for you? What do you want to do with me? And then offer yourselves to him as a victim of love and tell him: Do with me what you want. [...] Through the consecration we have wedded ourselves to Jesus. Now is the time to live the life of Jesus on the cross. We sing with joy: Oh Jesus, oh Mary, you are the Hearts of Love...I am your victim of love. This song I heard it being sung not by human beings but by angels at the holy mountain, everybody was shaking. It was very majestic. Uncountable angels were marching, singing and in joy, they were all victims of love. What did St. John in the Apocalypse see? He saw uncountable peoples before the throne of God, who have washed themselves clean in their sufferings, in the blood of the lamb. Please, don’t murmur, don’t complain, if you have to suffer for Jesus, for salvation of souls. Why does God need victim souls to save other souls? Marthe Robin would tell us that the greatest vocation God can give you in this world is to share the sufferings of Christ. Don’t make any mistake about it, sufferings are not sweet. It is painful and you will cry. That is the greatest you can receive in this world. It is available to Popes, Bishops, Priests, Religious, Laity, children – everybody can be victim of love. And look at it: She lived only from the Holy Communion how long? 50 years! She couldn’t even swallow a drop of water but she lived from the Communion.

Please my dear Christians, allow God to manifest his glory in and through you. Allow him to manifest his almighty power in and through you. If only you allow him to do it and give yourself completely to him, you will see, he will do things nobody could think it is possible. Look at what he did with our blessed mother Mary. She said: I am your handmaid, do with me whatever you want, and she remained in this attitude always and never went even one step backwards – see what God has done with her! We are still tiny persons, little human beings, not great saints, because we put limits to God. You use your free will: What I want I will do, your doubts, your complains set limits to God. If only you listen and do what God wants, you would not only walk on water, you would

walk on fire. Why are you afraid? If you die, you die in Jesus, if you live, you live in Jesus. The only thing you have to be sure of is that you are doing the will of God. Go ahead and don't look aside.

God called each and every one of you to be a great saint. Look at our pope, with such great pains he comes to celebrate mass and he is still travelling. Is he not mad? This is madness of the victims of love, that's why he is able to achieve so much, more than the others – totus tuus. The greatest light shining in the world today is not the sun – it's the victims of love. Even if they are not alive anymore their life is still shining. I saw this light of this great person and it encouraged me very much to go ahead, to suffer and die. I'm the person, who received the most blessings today here. Depend only on the love of God – that is the meaning of the Holy Eucharist. If a common, who never celebrated mass could live from the Eucharist, how much a priest, who celebrates every day mass? If God calls you to such type of life, please accept it, if God wants you to live in total self-sacrifice, please accept it.

27.7.2003, Monday, Ars, Vigil

Saint Paul said: "I beg you. Live the life worthy of your vocation." What is my vocation? Victim of love. The most risky and at the same time the safest. Why? The second victim of love. What did Mary do? "Fiat" is the riskiest thing you can do. At the same time it is the easiest thing you can do! When you say: "Fiat. May your will be done," God does everything! If he says come, you come, stand, you stand etc. I said victim of love is not what you do, but what God does with you. Look at our mother Mary, Mother of God. How could she become Mother of God? It is perfectly impossible! For anybody. For any angel. For any human being. To be the Mother of God, it's not possible. So that was why Elisabeth was praising her: "Who am I that the mother of my saviour is coming to me? When I heard your voice the child in my womb rejoiced." Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, because he has looked at His handmaid. I am nothing, but he has done great things for me. And because of this all generations will call me blessed. What have I done? God has done with me."

And we priests, what we do in each mass. Who can think of someone taking a piece of bread and saying a few words and the bread becomes God? It's not possible. Nobody can do that. At the prayer we say for the consecration who does it. Who does it? [... He quotes the Epiclesis in German.] Who does it? God. Holy Spirit. The priest only says and does what he should do and God does the rest. So if all the Reverent Sisters in the whole world, all the Reverent Brothers in the whole world, all the lay people in the whole world, all the deacons in the whole world, they gather, how many are they? And they fast and fast and fast and pray and pray and pray and bring a bread that is bigger than this house and say: "God, please change it, let it now be changed into the body..." nothing will happen, even for one million years. It will not change into the body of Christ. Why?

But a simple poor priest like myself, if I take a piece of bread in these my poor hands, tiny hands, and use my dry lips, my dry tongue and say the words of consecration it must be changed. God does it! [...] Why? Because He has taken me as His victim, priest. He has ordained me. A victim. And He will never withdraw His blessings, His power. But He ordained me for you. Not for myself. So don't worry, I am your victim of love. I am victim for you. That is the power of the victim of love.

God uses this victim of love as it pleases God. That is the risky thing about it. Look at Peter; he wanted to become a victim of love: "Lord, if it is you tell me to come." And Jesus said: "Come!" And what did Peter do? He stepped into the water and began to walk. On top of what? Water. But he began to look at himself, then he began to sink. Then he cried: "Lord save me!" And Jesus saved him. A victim of love forgets himself completely, don't look at yourself. You look only at Jesus, what he wants. And do it. And when you look at yourself you sink! A victim forgets himself completely. And when the victim is suffering, what does God do? God gives the victims of love special graces when they are suffering, they are in another place altogether, because of ecstasy what God is showing them. They will be flogging you, burning you, like they have done with Steven,

when they were stoning him, what did he see? God opened heaven. He wasn't here anymore, because he saw the glory of God. So the pains are nothing. And he died, his whole mind was there. Look at Saint Laurence, they were grilling him. What did he say? He told them: "This side is well done, please turn me." Because the sufferings of this time are nothing compared to the glory, which God gives His victims of love. The little you suffer as a victim of love will save many souls. And God will show you these souls, he will show you those souls you have saved through your sufferings. And what a great joy! [...]

25.8.2003, Monday (Holy Mountain, Orlu), private Vigil Mass. Sermon followed in handwriting by the author, later in excerpt typed by her; not yet published.

Two times I had been scolded, once by our Lord, once by our Lady. Once I was depressed, I went to the chapel, looking for consolation. I narrated all, but He said: "You are neglecting My messages. You are not preaching My words. See the consequences: Souls are getting lost. Shame on you!" It was terrible. I asked for mercy. "Your sin offends Me more than that of any other person. You are not carrying out what I bid you! Shame on you!" The other one was on our pilgrimage to Lourdes. Our Lady asked Me: "Are you now ready to die?" I was astonished. "For 40 years you have delayed the triumph of my Heart! I began to talk to you when you were three. Are you now ready to die???"

27.11.2003, Thursday (typed by Fr. Montfort, sent in May 2004 to the personal secretary of Pope John Paul II.)

"If I ask you to do something or to say something, please do it and say it. But if My Church, My bishop prohibits it or orders you not to do it or to say it, obey My Church, obey him, your bishop (superior). Obedience is Love. By obeying My Church, by obeying My bishop you are fulfilling what I have asked you to do and say very well."

28.11.2003, Friday (typed by Fr. Montfort, sent in May 2004 to the personal secretary of Pope John Paul II.)

"My son, the Pope is the Pope of the Two Hearts of Love. I love and will care for him till the end of his life and unto eternity. He is your intercessor. He is praying for you. You must help him. Please, my son, act fast. You do not have much time left.

This Pope is the Pope of My Love, the Pope of My Hearts of Love. Tell the world that I love him, that I am pleased with his work, and will bless him for ever and ever. Tell My children to follow him, imitate him, follow his footsteps and love and respect him and venerate him. He is venerable because of his oneness with Me, because of his faith, hope and charity, because of his attachment to Me, because of his great love for Me and My Mother, My angels and saints, My Church, the entire humanity and My entire creation. He is a good shepherd, a shepherd after My Heart - My Heart of Love. But please tell him, he has still this work to do - My Hearts of Love to proclaim for the whole Church, for the whole world. This will be the summary and completion and crown of his pontificate. To proclaim the union of the Two Hearts of Love - My Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of My Most Blessed Mother Mary. We are one for we are united in Love. We are the Two Hearts ever united in Love. I want him, the Pope of My Hearts of Love, to proclaim this union to the whole world in and throughout My entire Church. [...] Let him establish the feast of My Two Hearts of Love on the day I have already appointed, which is the day many peoples, many dioceses and many countries are already celebrating it. I have prepared this for many centuries. [...] I want him to do Me this honour and to have this honour and blessing which he will call upon himself and upon the whole Church and the whole mankind. I leave him with his free will. It can only be done out of Love and the fullness of Love. [...] Let My Church proclaim My Love to the whole world. Let My Church proclaim My Hearts of Love to the whole world. [...] Let My Church honour this son of My Hearts of Love [Pope John Paul II]. [...] Please, keep praying for him and making sacrifices for him. Through him I have blessed his parents and relations, I have blessed his land and its peoples, I have blessed My whole Church, I have blessed the whole world.

He is My blessing for all, even for those who find it difficult to believe in Me and My gospel, even for heretics and schismatics, even for atheists. [...] Come, faithful soul, come and receive your crown which is prepared for you in heaven for all eternity. [...] My son, mark this, whether he proclaims My Hearts of Love and establishes the feast or not, I will still give him the eternal glorious crown I have prepared for him. [...] My son, My Love, tell My Pope, My Pope of the Hearts of Love, tell all My Popes that I have given him authority and jurisdiction in the whole world. I have given him authority in the whole world over every soul, to care and love, to teach and to lead all to salvation and union with Me. Let him not relinquish his authority to any person. [...]"

29.11.2003, Saturday (typed by Fr. Montfort, sent in May 2004 to Mons. Stanisław Dziwisz.)  
"Come! My beloved, My Love! I will tell you something more about the Pope. [...] Through him a lot of light and joy and salvation has come into the world, especially at his time. But his influence will last for ever in this world and in the world to come. [...] He is My living saint now, he is My saint for ever. He is a saint of My Hearts of Love. My Hearts of Love reigns in him and through him."

*The following till 25/12/2005 are excerpts of sermons and comments of Fr. Montfort, followed by the author, Sr. Maria Steidl, in handwriting, without the help of a recorder, later typed by her. Due to the velocity of the talk, errors and omissions can be there. They are not yet published.*

18.5.2004 Tuesday, Via Lagnasco, Rome

Morning Mass:

The apostles prayed in the night, kept Vigil, even in the prison!

God talked about prostration last night. If you prostrate, do it like Jesus on the cross [At the moment when they turned the cross after nailing him, to bend the endings of the nails coming out at the other side from the wood]: The legs together, hands extended, heart and face on the ground. It is the highest adoration, because it is the lowest.

Jesus could have come in a family of 20 children and be one of them: It would not have disturbed his divinity and mission, but He wanted Him to be the *only* one of his mother.

[20.5.2004: He leaves to France for meeting the members.

26.5.2004: He comes to Rome for an opportunity to see Archbishop Sarah]

27.5.2004, Thursday (Via Lagnasco, Rome) Morning Mass.

Two days ago, Jesus said: "After the Holy Eucharist, the greatest I give to My Church, to the world, is this Prayer". Please, let us never say this Prayer carelessly.

In the Office, before even you start to say "Glory", you stand. If you are in the wheelchair, you bow profoundly; if you kneel, you bow to the ground, you bend your body. The "Glory be" is the highest expression of honouring the Holy Trinity.

In the evening, we celebrate foot-washing; apart from the Gospel of John on the washing of feet we read Dt 6,1-18 and Acts 2, 42-47.

29.5.2004, Saturday (Via Lagnasco, Rome) Vigil

Tomorrow, Pentecost, is the new beginning of the Church. The outpouring of the Spirit is connected with the pierced side. From the pierced side of Jesus, the Church was born, like Eve from Adam: The Church is the spouse of Jesus... it is a poor expression! From the pierced side comes also the Spirit... To be completely in the Hearts of Love means to be completely in the Church. The sign of the new and everlasting covenant is the Holy Eucharist. It cannot be replaced, it is perfect. It is

covenant of Love. We are not laying a new foundation. But God means to renew His Church and the world through this Prayer. It flows from the Holy Eucharist, from the pierced side, like a river from the source. Without the Holy Eucharist, the Prayer does not exist. They are one like the Father and the Son. You can't compare them, they are all Love.

When Jesus announced the Holy Eucharist, He showed that it is a mystery which will not be changed, whether they believe it or not. What one is called for is not understanding, but acceptance, and loving it. Mary said: "I never understood anything in the world." The pregnancy from the Holy Spirit, she did not understand, but she accepted. Jesus is God, but he allowed the Holy Spirit to direct Him...

18.6.2004, Friday, Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart (Via del Trullo, Rome) Vigil

Who wants to pierce the Heart of Jesus?! ... Those who are not ready to pierce Him have the love of Peter, when he tried to keep Jesus from going to the cross. We have to allow ourselves to be pierced and we have to pierce the Heart of Jesus: He wants it! We are here to pierce the Heart of Jesus: With Love, with Masses and prayers.

20.6.2004, Sunday, Feast of the Hearts of Love (Via del Trullo, Rome) Vigil

Today is the Feast of Feasts, not because this Feast would be more important than Easter, but because it is the aim of all feasts!

He leaves Rome on 20/6, comes back end of June

1.7.2004, Thursday (Via Lagnasco, Rome)

Vigil

Every Thursday, nothing should keep you from being in the convent for Holy Hour, Agape, eating together, readings about love and washing of feet in John, and the washing of your feet. Oneness!

Morning Mass:

Ugwu Nso is partly built on my Father's land, and as a priest I am well accepted in Orlu. But I left my home for Ilorin because of you: Where my Brothers and Sisters are not received, there I am not. In Germany we have problems because we have vocations there. Church cannot teach you to go against your Founder. Only devil does so. They [various Congregations] are weak in Europe because they threw away some of the things which their founders put. Now they have no more attraction. Be completely faithful to Hearts of Love, to the Church, to me. I am faithful to you: You are my only business in the world.

3.8.2004, Tuesday (Ars, in the retreat-house connected to the former orphan's house of St. Vianney)– retreat for priests and lay-people held by Fr. Montfort.

Vigil

Jesus said: "Tell my priests, they shall be conscious of their responsibility to teach, to strengthen, to sanctify; responsibility of leading, of sacrifice, of preservation of souls. [...]"

Morning Mass, 7am:

Yesterday, at Holy Hour, God asked: "If I want you to be present with Me in the Holy Eucharist ... I want people to see you united with Me in the Eucharist."

5.8.2004, Thursday, Ars, retreat for priests and lay-people held by Fr. Montfort.

After washing of feet on Midday he reads a message:

"I want that on Thursday, Agape, Holy Hour and Mass are there. Agape has to be combined with the washing of the feet. At the Agape-feast all eatable things can be used: no discrimination! At the

washing of the feet, there shall be readings of the OT and NT about the commandment of Love. At the Agape, it is forbidden to take and eat. You shall take and serve others. It is a Love-feast. I will renew My Church on the basis of the Eucharist and this Prayer. Go and start it today.”

After the short reading of Vespers he reads a message:

“Every Mass should be celebrated as it should: It is the wedding feast of the divine Lamb. Unite yourselves with Me in My passion, so that you will be united with Me in heaven in joy. [...] Let all unite with the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts. Let all prepare well for the Mass and do not rush the Mass. [...] The Mass is never to be rushed. The preparation of the wedding is as important as the wedding, and what comes after the wedding is as important as the wedding itself. Like this it is also with the Mass. Before Mass, let all gather and prepare themselves with songs and especially with the rosary, to contemplate My life. In every Mass all the mysteries are united. After Mass, let them not rush away but take time to reflect, to give thanks, for prayer of praise, to love. Let them give time to give themselves. Let all unite with Me and with the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts. The Prayer of the hearts of Love is ideal for all at the end of Mass. Let all unite themselves with Me, with My Father, My Spirit, with Mary and all the angles and saints. Let them love ME with all their heart and all their soul, all they are and all they have. I am with you forever and ever, Amen! Let all draw the most graces from every Mass by preparing very well, [...] to offer themselves as a holy and pure sacrifice, with Me. After Mass, let them stay as long as they can. Let them carry this union wherever they go. I am with them, till the end of time. [...] After Mass, the living of the ‘life of Mass’ [...].”

5.9.2004, Sunday (Banneux) – retreat for members held by Fr. Montfort.

Vigil

Können wir wie Maria sein? Maria ist unbefleckt, aber jemand der getauft ist, ist auch unbefleckt. Wenn du zur Beichte gehst, bist du unbefleckt. [...] Maria hat Jesus empfangen. Wir etwa nicht? Was tun wir in der Messe, in der Eucharistie, dann?

7.9.2004, Tuesday (Neunkirchen) private Vigil.

Ich war sehr positiv überrascht vom letzten Gespräch mit Marie-Pascale, in Nigeria, bevor sie in Koma fiel: „Ich habe meine Berufung entdeckt – am Heiligen Berg für die Armen zu sorgen, für sie betteln zu gehen.“ Aber die Entdeckung der Berufung ist nicht wichtiger als was danach kam: „Ich bitte Dich, gib mir diese Aufgabe.“ Sie will nicht eigenständig handeln. Sie will gesandt sein. Sie hat diese Vollkommenheit erreicht: Nicht mehr eigenwillig handeln. Auch im Himmel fragt sie um Erlaubnis, Gutes zu tun.

8.9.2004, Wednesday (Neunkirchen) private Vigil.

Während der Predigt, als ich die Augen schloss, sah ich Gesichter... Das Gesicht der Muttergottes. She turned, and I saw the face of my mother Cecilia. Then the face of a sister, the face of a brother, the face of a lay-member... Maria hat sehr deutlich gezeigt, wo sie zu finden ist.

14.9.2004, Exaltation, Tuesday (Neunkirchen) private Morning Mass.

Die Menschwerdung geschieht aus reiner Liebe, nicht aus Zwang der Sünde. Gott hat schon vor dem Sündenfall beschlossen, Mensch zu werden. Das Kreuz selbst hat mit Sünden-Erlösung nichts zu tun. Jesus hat von Anfang an gewusst, dass er am Kreuz sterben wird, und er hat das Kreuz erwählt. Jesus hat die Sünder zu seinen Freunden gemacht, sie zu sich geholt.

Das Kreuz, das Gott uns gegeben hat, ist schon verherrlicht: Weiß, strahlend, aber blutend, mit Kreis. Diese zwei Kreise. Reinheit und Heiligkeit, Reinheit und Herrlichkeit, Zeichen der Unendlichkeit. Kreuz und Kreis, Zeichen der Dreifaltigkeit, der Ewigkeit. Zeichen der Herzen der Liebe.

Jeder, der Medien zur Verfügung hat und sie uns zur Verfügung stellen will um das Gebet zu verbreiten, dessen Hilfe werden wir sofort annehmen. Nur, das Gebet darf nie verkauft werden.

15.9.2004, Our Lady of Sorrows, Wednesday (Neunkirchen)

Private Morning Mass

Maria hat all die Wunden Jesu unsichtbar getragen, und am Ende auch die Durchbohrung. [...] Man kann ohne Schmerzen ein Kind empfangen, austragen, heute kann man auch ohne Schmerzen gebären. Aber das Kind zu erziehen, zu begleiten bis zum Tod, das kann nie ohne Schmerzen geschehen. Die Geißelung ... Maria hat alles mitgelitten. [...] Sie hat ihre Rolle verstanden als Hilfe, den Weg zu gehen bis zum Ende und zu sterben. [He saw „The Passion“ of Mel Gibson and meditates on the compassion of Mary.]

Als S. mir ihre Entscheidung verkündete zu gehen: Es war schlimmer als der Tod! Ich konnte nicht mehr aufstehen! [He did not come for lunch that day.] Einmal sah ich das Herz Jesu, und von allen Seiten: Pfff! Peng! Jede Sünde... und es war ohne Unterlass... eine Sünde wie ein Bombeneinschlag. Jesus bat: „help me to bear it!“ Meine eigenen Sünden verletzen Jesus am Meisten: “You are neglecting My messages!”

[Someone asks whether Mary suffers in heaven for the souls that get lost.]

Leid im Himmel?! Das ist nicht zu vergleichen mit dem Leid auf der Erde. [...] Unser „Ergänzen was an den Leiden Christi noch fehlt“ ist sehr wichtig, wie der Schalter, den man anmachen muss, damit das Licht brennt, obwohl der Strom immer da ist. Jesus und Maria haben schon alles gemacht, die Eucharistie ist eingesetzt – aber wenn der Priester nicht Messe feiert, oder wenn niemand zur Messe kommt, empfängt sie heute niemand! Unser Beitrag ist sehr wichtig.

After short reading of Midday Prayer (Sach 9,9):

Maria hat wirklich Schmerzen, sie weint wirklich, sie ist Mutter der Schmerzen, weil sie mit uns zu tun hat. Aber sie ist glückselig, weil sie mit Gott vereint ist.

Holy Hour:

Der Mensch hat die Kapazität, von anderen Kräften übernommen zu werden, von Drogen, von Doping-Medizin, ... Andere werden vom Teufel besessen. Was uns besitzt ist die Liebe Christi, der Geist Gottes. Diesen Geist müssen wir brauchen, um die Mission zu erfüllen: Mit den eigenen Kräften geht das nicht. Manche nehmen Kaffee, Kaffee, um wach zu bleiben. Das ist tödlich, Sünde! Man braucht den Heiligen Geist. Lass den Heiligen Geist dich leiten, dich übernehmen! Das ist die Bedeutung von Taufe, Firmung, Eucharistie: er lebt in uns, Er ist unsere Speise. Aber wir blockieren Jesus ständig! Liegen im Gebet heißt sterben, aufstehen heißt, Jesus lebt nun in dir!

In the Vespers:

Wenn ich sagen kann: „Nur bis dahin, hier ist die Grenze!“ dann habe ich keine Liebe. Liebe ist grenzenlos. Jesus und Maria waren bereit, mehr zu leiden.

16.9.2004, Thursday (Neunkirchen)

private Morning Mass.

“You draw from my Blood and pour it on sinners”. “Pour this prayer like rainfall!” Dies ist das Blut des Lammes, Seiner Liebe: nichts reinigt besser, es reinigt die Welt. Das Blut des Gebetes!

Meeting with members, 11am. Father said among others:

Ein Zentrum der Herzen der Liebe ist nur da, wo Priester, Brüder, Schwestern *und* Laien sind.

Holy Hour, he reads a message:

“[...] Ich werde Meine Familie der Herzen der Liebe nicht nur zur größten Familie in der Kirche machen, sondern zur größten Familie in der Welt, im Himmel und auf Erden. Ich werde alle Engel und Heiligen bringen. Alles, was Mein ist, ist dein. [...]“



Evening Mass:

We thank God that at Ugwu Nso a priest – Fr. Joseph – comes every Thursday and celebrates Mass.

17.9.2004, Friday (Neunkirchen) private Vigil Mass.

“I accept this tiny little bread you humans produced and change it into Me, not only into Mine. Equally, I accept your adoration and change it into divine adoration: It is God adoring God, it is my personal adoration of the Father. [...] This chapel is your heaven. How do you behave in your heaven? I myself am your heaven. I am here with my humanity and divinity, with all my angels and saints in heaven. [...] I am communicating with you always. I was never separated from the Father, so you are never separated from Me. What do I do with this my family of the Hearts of Love? I was looking for a person in whom I will live. I found this in my mother. She gave me all she has and is, and I gave her all I have and am. We are one. The clearest representation of the oneness is the oneness of the heart: One heart. I remain forever grateful to My mother. Now I was looking for a person in whom this union will live and shine out like the sun over the creation. And I found it in you. I sent you into the world just for this reason: To love and to live and to pray and to preach this union of Love. As you prayed, asking Me for helpers, I chose people who have great Love of Me and who will work with you. From this people I mean to form a family, a stable and solid family, who will form the foundation for the renewal of creation in Love. [...] I am always beginning little. I am always renewing My Church and My creation. This family will be an unflinching support in your mission. They are your co-workers, they are my family, they are your family, the Family of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. [...] The family is small, but I have planned great things for them. If they live My Love [...]. All who see them will know that they are a blessed family. They must know that they are special unto the Lord, but they must also remain simple, pure, immaculate. Their will will have to be united with My holy Will. And they have to be one, as I am one with My mother, as I am one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of oneness must live in them. One in heart, one in soul, one in body, one in works, one in prayer, one in apostolate. My son, make them one! Make sure that they are one! They must be one to fulfil my purpose. [...] Through their oneness they will be universal. They must always be one with you, their father and love. They must always be one with My mother, their mother, their love. They must be one with Me, their Lord, [...] I mean to pour My glory into them. Therefore I required this adoration from them. During the adoration I pour My Love steadily into them. I transform them [...] My workers, My instruments of Love. [...] I let My blood flow into them, I let them flow into Me. [...] They now live a life in union with Me. What I do with them in adoration is what I do with My angels in heaven. [...] Devil will bring storms and quakes to disturb them. Reassure them that they are perfectly protected. [...]”

18.9.2004, Saturday (Neunkirchen)  
private Vigil Mass.

Which experiences had you yesterday in the convent of St. Hildegard in Eibingen? In Rüdesheim wurde es [2001] ganz klar gesagt: “Leave Limburg and Orlu diocese“, und ganz überraschend: „Never abandon Deutschland, My Hearts of Love must reign here.“ [...] „Pray for those who persecute you. One day, they will invite you in Limburg to preach.“ [...] Die Botschaft gestern war von Hildegard: “Thank you for coming to my feast. I am a servant of Hearts of Love. Count me among the defenders of Hearts of Love. Do not be afraid of coming out and proclaiming Hearts of Love. They will attack you, but it will bring only triumph. [...] Deutschland must be a land of triumph of the Hearts of Love. [...] Pope, Bishop, noviciate of Hearts of Love have won! [...] Remain calm and humble. The best way of celebrating the victory is to live the life of Hearts of Love to the full. The next fight will be from inside the Society. Anyone who is not ready to live the life, should be sent away. [...] The greatest blessing for Germany is your coming and living here. It will not be in vain. Don’t go without establishing the Reign. [...] Send the message to all the

leaders: Church leaders and political leaders.” We were thinking of packing out from Germany and going to France... I was thinking of going back to Nigeria. Now I received: “Fight!” [...] The time Propaganda Fide sent the letter to the Nuncio in Nigeria, and to Germany, was May. What we shall do now, is to live the life – like people fighting for God, not people who are afraid. Propaganda Fide wrote: “Wir haben alles untersucht und entschieden, dass sie weiterleben und das Noviziat wiedereröffnen dürfen.“

#### Morning Mass

There will be some [lay-people who are visiting or living in a Centre of the Hearts of Love] who live more active lives; they take the minimum of vows and obligations, they organize their lives on their own. We will also have consecrated virgins [or widows], living on their own, but attached to the Centre. Those who live the contemplative life [both lay-people and religious SHL, adding Divine Office and evening-rosary to the minimum of prayers in the Hearts of Love] are the heart of the Centre. The minimum of prayer is: 1 Holy Hour by day, 3 hours vigil by night. The minimum of obligations is: Chastity [according to their situation of life]. Poverty – this does not mean what they possess, but what they give. [They can possess a house, a car, a good computer, and use it all for the apostolate.] Obedience: They must consult and ask for permission for all they do. Those who live the life of contemplation will hardly leave the Centre, only for life-reasons [or sacraments, or when being sent]. The lay-members will be given a strong sense of belonging. They will be taught, then they make the commitment and they receive their special clothing; they [the non-contemplative members] will be more active outside. Die Botschaft ist, dass wir alle möglichen Stände erlauben sollen, damit jeder fähig sein kann, sich uns anzuschließen.

In the middle Jesus; the two circles, white and red: the Trinity enabling the Incarnation and the Redemption on the cross. The Trinity made the union of the Two Hearts of Love possible. “People will not see it, but My Holy Spirit and My Father were active – more active than ever – at the cross, as at the Incarnation.”

Gestern wurde so viel [Botschaft] gegeben, von Anfang bis Ende. Als wir zurück kamen ging es weiter, bis Viertel vor 12. Wir müssen uns öffnen, dann sehen wir, was Gott tut. Endgültige Änderung, die die Welt total ändern wird. The principle of original sin will be falling away completely. Devil shall be destroyed, not only driven away. Die Kinder Gottes werden frei bleiben, aber frei zu wählen zwischen gut und gut. Man kann nicht mehr Mord oder Untreue wählen, was die Freiheit beschränkt, sondern die Freiheit wird erhoben sein.

Das Abbild: Gott der Vater und der Geist umgeben Jesus, das Kreuz, der in der Mitte ist: Brennend, blutend. Maria ist mit Jesus vereint.

21.9.2004, Tuesday (Neunkirchen)

After short reading of Midday Prayer:

Gott will, dass seine Kapelle in Polen gebaut wird. Wie? Durch Gebet und Fasten, prayer and sacrifice. Some wanted to write letters, to the president, to bishops.... I said No.

Holy Hour, he reads a message:

“My son, my Love, I am with you till the end of time. Tell all My members of My Hearts of Love that I am with them. [...] Prayer-time is moment of union with the source of life. A moment of purification for them and all around them. All My priests are to pronounce My blessings; if none is around, the members are to call upon themselves the blessing of the Hearts of Love. They are to touch all around them, at least with their hearts, they are to touch all creation with their hearts. You are to be a blessing. [...]”

18.11.2004 (Neunkirchen)

private evening-Mass

Der Titel „Immaculata“ ist weniger als „Mutter Gottes“, aber der Titel Mariens „Herz der Liebe“ ist größer der Titel „Mutter Gottes“. Sie ist Herz Gottes ohne Gott zu sein und teilt diesen Titel mit Jesus, der es von Natur aus ist, während die anderen Titel immer eine Unterscheidung machen. Herz der Liebe. Ihr größtes Geschenk, das sie bekommen hat, ist ihre Einheit mit Jesus. Die höchste Offenbarung Gottes in der Welt ist, dass Gott Liebe ist. Der höchste Titel Mariens ist, dass sie Herz der Liebe ist. Den Willen Gottes zu tun ist größer, ist gesegneter als physisch die Mutter Gottes zu sein.

25.12.2005, Christmas Sunday, Ilorin (Sisters' noviciate)

10 o'clock-Mass, sermon: [He reads a message of 2005]

“I want a city of Love, of Hearts of Love, a holy, pure city, where all who live in it will live the life of the Hearts of Love. I will establish it at the Universal Centre. [...] Make it an autonomous city, under the control of only the Church. It will be a catholic city [...]. Membership is not by birth, but by vows, by spiritual birth.” God wants the whole world to be populated by people who love him and receive him. But he starts always small.

Holy Hour:

The purpose of coming to Holy Hour is to listen to Jesus. Today he tells us: “My incarnation is for you – for you to know what you are.” [...] Every member has the vocation to be a personification of Love. Every Sister shall be a Maria. [...] Our crime is that we never show enough love. In the Holy Hour, God pours not only blessings on us, He pours Himself on us.

Lord Jesus, you are the incarnation of the Spirit, the Spirit of Love; you are the incarnation of peace. [...]

*22/8/2006-2/2/2008: excerpts of sermons of Fr. Montfort recorded with tape or video; typed by Bro. Pascal Rodary SHL, not yet published. Bro. Pascal not always annotated the place.*

22.8.2006 (or 2007?), Germany, Queenship of Mary, Mass

Heute am Fest Maria Königin schauen wir auf Maria wie sie sagt: „*Siehe, ich bin die Magd des Herrn, mir geschehe wie du gesagt hast.*“ Bis wir die totale Hingabe erreicht haben: Nicht was ich will, sondern was du willst. Wie Jesus am Ölberg. Er hat den Kampf gewonnen. Als Mensch hat er Todesangst gehabt, aber er siegte, indem er sagte: „*Nicht was ich will, sondern was du willst.*“ Wie geht man sicher Gottes Willen zu tun, zu vermeiden was er verbietet? Gott sagt: Um 12.00 Uhr da sein, Thérèse sagt 15 Minuten vorher da sein. Gott sagte zu Adam und Eva: Fasst den Baum nicht an. Engel sagt: Schaut überhaupt nicht hin.

Wir möchten Maria als Königin unseres Geistes, Leibes, Lebens annehmen, damit kein Gedanke, kein Wort, keine Aktion in mir geschehe ohne Zustimmung Mariens. Ich werde nichts tun, was Maria nicht approbiert hat. Das ist auch die Bedeutung der Vereinigung mit den Zwei Herzen der Liebe. Wie vereinigen wir uns mit Gott? Durch Maria. Sie reinigt unser Blut. Wenn du direkt zu Jesus gehst, wirst du ihn vergiften. Wir wollen heute die Weisheit Mariens lernen: sich weit, weit von aller Gefahr halten, denn wir haben eine gefallene Natur.

Maria weiß genau was Gott gefällt, was sein Wille ist, sie ist das beste Geschöpf. Wenn du sie zur Königin erwählst hast du die beste Wahl getroffen. Maria wird nie ein Fehler unterlaufen. Der Teufel versucht dich zu Fall zu bringen. Maria weiß, dass wir eine verwundete, geschwächte Natur haben mit Neigung zur Sünde. Maria baut eine Mauer. Nicht nur zwischen dir und dem Teufel, sondern auch zwischen einem heiligen Mann und einer heiligen Frau. Daher muss es eine Trennung geben zwischen Brüdern und Schwestern.

Maria wusste, was es heißt von Gott beschützt zu sein. Sie hat von Gott Regeln bekommen, was verboten ist, was sie nicht anfassen sollte. Sie war kein Roboter, sie folgte streng was Gott ihr sagte, so konnte sie sich unbefleckt bis zum Ende bewahren. Wir sind wie der Garten Gottes, Maria ist die

Gärtnerin. Nur die, die sich Maria bis zum Ende unterwerfen sollen in der Gemeinschaft angenommen werden.

Jedes Wort Gottes ist wichtig. Wenn Gott gesprochen hat, musst du dir alle Mühe geben darüber nachzudenken. Wenn ich Botschaften empfangen, muss ich sie genau so schreiben wie ich sie höre. Später verstehe ich die Botschaften oft besser.

Heute ist der Tag, an dem wir die Herrschaft Mariens und daher Gottes anerkennen und wir uns ganz ihr unterwerfen. Maria du bist meine Königin. Jesus war der erste, der sich Maria unterworfen hat. Bis er 30 Jahre alt war hat er alles getan, was seine Mutter gesagt hat. Jesus war die erste Person, in der Maria als Königin herrschte. Maria ist schon Königin für Gott. Wenn wir sie zu unserer Königin machen ist das keine Ehre für Maria. Manche sagen wir geben Maria zu viel Ehre.

Sie wird kommen, wenn wir sie darum bitten. Wir müssen ihr volle Autorität über uns geben. Gott gehorcht sogar Maria, kann man sagen [He refers to Cana, John 2]. In Fatima und anderswo heißt es, dass die Hand Gottes erhoben ist und die Welt schlagen will. Maria bittet ihn einzuhalten. Dann kommt sie und ruft uns zur Umkehr auf. Maria ist das Zeichen der Erfüllung der Zeit. Marias Krönung ist auch die Krönung ihrer Kinder. Maria sagte: „Alle meine Feste sind auch eure Feste. Alles was Gott mit mir getan hat, hat er für euch getan. Ich bin Mittlerin aller Gnaden, ich behalte nichts, ich verteile alles.“

26.12.2006, Mass and Holy Hour

[...The Lord said:] “Devote much of your time on all your priests, brothers, sisters and lay apostles to be what they are and should be, victims of love like Myself. I am the victim of Love, they are all called to be victims of love in union with you. It is only through Love that I created the world. I need victim souls and nobody can quench the fire of Love in them, not even death, for Love is stronger than death. These are my victims of love ready to make any sacrifice no matter how small. There is no call higher than being victim of love. Let them cherish and preserve their vocation, so that it will flourish. I want my victims of love being cherished and loved in my whole church, this is living martyrdom. Hunger and thirst for the Holy Sacrifice of Mass and of prayer of the Hearts of Love. Their zeal for the prayer times is signs of their love to Me. It is in this simple, splendid way that I plan to establish the reign of my Love. All I need are victim souls. This martyrdom is primarily manifested in the burning fire of Love in their precious soul, in their hunger for Mass, prayer, where they unite their blood with my blood. They can't live without this prayer, it is their burning zeal to offer themselves through this prayer of the Hearts of Love, especially in the times I have revealed to you. They keep the prayer times perfectly, absolutely. Let them know what these prayer times represent for Me and the entire creation. It is in this simple way that I want to establish the reign of My Love. This plan cannot be defeated. All I need are victim souls. I am the eternal victim soul, my mother also, we are the victim souls ever united in Love. All I need are victim souls who unite completely with these victim souls (the Two Hearts). They are already there through adoration, I am consuming them with My Love and I will ever be consuming them.

So is My eternal plan of salvation. I have revealed it to you and your children, let them follow it with all their strength. Traces have never lacked in history from Adam and Eve till this time, but never so clear as I revealed it to you. You are at the centre of this plan. I have come to act decisively for the salvation of souls, this is the appointed time to end the reign of Satan, no matter their fewness. I have decided to establish the reign of my Love. ‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven’. My Church is praying it since thousands of years. Am I deaf? My Son prayed it on earth all the time. The glorious time has come *now*. This is the time for the reign of Love. Are you ready? [...] These are my victims of love ready to make any sacrifice no matter how small.”

1.7.2007, Sunday Ilorin, Morning Mass

Some sisters are worried about what to eat tomorrow, so they look for work to earn some money. Jesus said: "Tell them no. I have a work for them." To spread the kingdom of God. We have a special work for which we are existing.

17.7.2007, Ilorin, 24 years priesthood of Father Montfort, small jubilee mass at Oyun (Sisters' noviciate)

"You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours." That is the summary of all relationship between God and human beings and of what we are celebrating now: "You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours." That is the summary of the Holy Eucharist: "You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours." That is the meaning of the priesthood: "You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours." That is the meaning of victimhood of love: "You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours," says the Lord. That is the covenant we have made with God: "You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours." "I am yours, you are my people, I am your God." To be His. They are His and He is theirs (Israel). They belong to God and God belongs to them. "You are my Son, today I have begotten you."

What we heard from the first reading (Isaiah 2:1-5) "*In the days to come the mountain of the temple of the Lord shall tower above the mountains and be lifted higher than the hills.*" This being lifted has nothing to do with inches, yards, metres, kilometres. It has to do with dignity. God's presence, God's dwelling. It has to do with marriage. You can compare it with marriage. When a king marries a peasant girl, what happens? Automatically that poor girl becomes the Queen, the First Lady, because the king has chosen her to be his wife. This being wife of the king does not add any inch to her height before, but her dignity has been lifted up above all women. So, when the Lord chooses a person to raise him to the height, it means what Isaiah said about being lifted higher than the hills.

Our Lady sang the Magnificat: Not to us, Lord, give the glory, the glory belongs to God. "My soul magnifies the Lord." When we praise her, she will not refuse, but will pass everything to Jesus. "You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours." Your degree of holiness depends on how you belong to God, how He has consumed you, transformed in himself. Is there something remaining in you, then you are not yet a saint. You must shed all your blood. Send *all* your blood into Mary, into Jesus, the wounds of the Two Hearts, *all* my blood.

Do you love anything that God does not love? Then your love is still not transformed into God's Love, you are tantalizing God, telling Him "yes", but holding back. One man came to me one day: "Please, Father, my wife does not accept me." I did not know how to enter the problem. Later I discovered that she refused to sleep with him. Externally she was his wife, but she refused to sleep with the man. With my meagre knowledge of family problems, I was then able to tell the woman that she has to live together with her husband.

Some of us are like that even to God. God wants to take you, consume you, change you into himself, and you would refuse. Those who give God conditions are like that. If you are really God's and he is yours, there should be no condition. You tell God lies. "You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours." It is God who says it, it is a statement of God himself, this is the topic of this homily. "Without limits you are entirely mine and I am wholly yours." Therefore, you will never look at any other thing or person but only Jesus. "Your will is mine, what I will is what you will." Still looking at marriage, there are unfaithful wives and husbands. Faithfulness means: no other man will touch me. You alone are my God, there is no other whether I am swimming or sinking. "You are mine, I am yours, yours alone, entirely yours, no part of me is excluded, even my hair, fingernails, speech, voice, odour, appearance belongs to you. My sleeping, lying down, everything according only to your most holy will. Therefore, I am not worried whether I am alive or dead, because 'You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours.'" "Nothing will ever happen to you what I (God) do not want." This means wherever you are going you have absolute confidence, trust in God. "You are entirely mine, and I am wholly yours." And God will never deny you, turn His back against you.

You possess God wholly: “Take my heart, it is yours! Take my mother Mary.” It is a gift, you cannot snatch it. You must be called, chosen and ordained. The same for the Sisters. The vocation you have is not your making, it is from God. If you miss your vocation you will always remain a counterfeit, minus, loss and never enter the kingdom of God, because you are no longer what you are.

12.9.2007, Orlu, Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love, Morning Mass

“Rejoice when people denounce you as criminals for the sake of the son of man.” The auxiliary bishop of Cologne called me a criminal. This was promotion in heaven. *“Rejoice and be glad for your reward will be great in heaven.”* I don’t want comforter here on earth, they are thieves, they steal from you your future glory. Your real friends are those who allow you to suffer, who call you criminals, for without knowing they increase your joy. If you are wise you will have special love for your enemies. Those who do the will of my Father are my mothers, brothers, sisters, but those who hate me and persecute me are my best friends.

14.9.2007, Exaltation of the Cross, Orlu, Holy Hour

In order to benefit from the cross you have never to complain. Every cross is painful, and God has given me the best of crosses. The sweetest cross, the cross of the heart of Jesus and of Mary. I am happy although it brought me many, many tears. But this pain is the means of transition into glory. Bread must be baked in the oven, it needs fire. I am not afraid or ashamed of my cross. There was a time I used to hide myself. But if there is an apparition, there must be someone who says ‘I saw it’. And he will have to undergo very painful, humiliating, excruciating tests from the Church, but he must endure this for the sake of God and the message.

The Lord said: “My son, be prepared for adversity.” The brigands who were crucified with Jesus refused the cross, but Jesus embraced his cross, because the cross is the will of the Father. I will carry my cross of the Two Hearts of Love when I am sleeping or when I am awake. The cross is God’s love for you. It is a sign of love, therefore never complain against it. But you must differentiate between your cross and the punishments for sins. Your cross is what the will of God is for you, he does not give you useless sufferings. There are too many useless sufferings in the world.

15.9.2007, Our Lady of Sorrows, Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love in Orlu, Nigeria, Vigil

Where did Mary give birth to us? Not there in Bethlehem, but there in Calvary. This is our birthplace. If we are born there at the foot of the cross, why then are we afraid of the cross? We are born there at Calvary, it is our maternity, birthplace. Watch the face of our mother, when she was giving birth to us. Her face is full of sorrow, pain. You need constancy in order to serve God. Until the love of God reigns in all hearts we will not relax, we will continue praying, fasting, climbing steps. Do not get weak until the end, only then you will be able to say: “It is consummated!” It is only at last that they will realize that I came from God.

There is need for you to persevere; it is there at the end that the clarity, proof will come out that what we are doing is really from God. We have a long, long way to go, a hard way to travel. Be wise virgins and take many flasks of oil with you, a lot of endurance. The only solution is to unite ourselves to the Two Wounded and Bleeding Hearts of Love. You must be wounded and bleeding or else ask yourself: “Am I living the life really?”

18.9.2007, Nigeria, Vigil

Why many of us cannot do wonders is because we lack compassion. Compassion compels you to help, to go beyond your limits. Have pity on the suffering poor souls in purgatory. It was not a dream on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, I went still to school, I passed the burial ground. I heard them rushing to me, a very big mob, all pleading. I stopped instead of going to school. And you could hear the change from wailing to alleluia praise. They did not want me to go home, so I continued praying. I

was very, very exhausted. It is very painful to hear the souls being roasted, thrust up and down in the fire. My God, give me a compassionate heart. Give me the grace of great love for you.

13.10.2007 Saturday, Anniversary of the last apparition of Our Lady of Fatima, Universal Centre of the Two Hearts of Love, Orlu, Holy Hour

How can you have a mouth and a tongue and not praise our mother Mary? She is the woman who brought us everything. I want to tell you that there is no other way to Jesus, to God except through Mary. Mary is the way through which God chose to come to us. Her majesty is beyond description, the only appropriate description is: If you saw her once, you would like to die just to see her once again. This means there is nothing in the world to compare with Mary...

20.10.2007, Vigil

People coming to you come for God, not for you. You are signs of the kingdom, not the kingdom itself. The religious does not have anything for himself; he is flowing, pointing at God. "The distance I enjoined on you towards all is to pour yourself on them most meaningfully and profitably." Holiness means that you are separated from other things, because you are for God. God has made you that way to be for him alone. That is why you have to keep your distance from all men and women alike.

8.11.2007, Thursday

Vigil in the Sisters' noviciate

The rich banquet of the word of God can be destroyed by poor conveyance. Those who serve the Lord must be decent, pure or else you offend the Lord. One woman said, "Sorry, the noise of your life does not allow me to listen to what you are saying". God in his wisdom in order to become man chose Mary, uncontaminated, who could not defile the Word of God. You should endeavour with all your strength to keep yourself pure and holy, avoid all that can spoil the efficacy of the word of God. God was searching for a person in whom his presence will be shining out like the sun, it was in Mary that he found it. She carried no other thing than the Word of God, no mixture with her own words, own character.

Thursday - meditation before the washing of the feet in Nigeria

Let us reflect on the washing of the feet. What does the Lord want us to teach by washing of the feet? What is the difference between serving and loving? There is no difference. Look at the Eucharist. John wrote about the washing of feet where the other gospel writers wrote about the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Mary Magdalena was a teacher of washing of feet using her tears and her hair. The real washing happened at the cross with his own blood. We must be washed, there can be no reign of the Hearts of Love without purity and holiness. Fornication is the worst sin we can commit it is excommunication.

The mass is the highest prayer, because it is God who gives himself in sacrifice to God. Therefore, it must be an ordained minister, by the ordination he is no longer an ordinary person. The priest is another Christ, this is why his prayer is so effective. You sisters are called to be another Mary. You are washing one another's feet, just what Mary Magdalena did and what Jesus did and really did on the cross. He shed his body and blood, what he did sacramentally before at the last supper. Jesus uses the same words to stress the importance of washing of feet and of the Eucharist. "If I don not wash you, you have nothing to do with me." "If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you." While washing think of the distribution of the Holy Eucharist.

Holy Hour, Sisters' noviciate Ilorin

Are you really happy? What is the source of your happiness? I rejoice because God is love, and not just love there, he is my Love and he loves me. I call you my God, my Love, my All. This our God

has revealed himself to us. If I said I don't know him, I would be a liar. He keeps revealing<sup>1462</sup> himself to me every minute and second. He made me also the instrument of the revelation of His Love. He is nothing but Love. He loves me and he loves you.

If you have never tested the forbidden tree then rejoice, but if you did, then go and weep. See in the Apocalypse: the saints are men who have never been in contact with women, contaminated with women. Only John was able to follow the Lamb to the foot of the cross, because he was a virgin.

16.11.2007, Mass

“My Love, listen, time is short. Make use of every opportunity I give you to radiate and pour My Love like sunshine and rainfall in every heart upon every person and over the whole world. I am with you to strengthen you, do not be afraid of anybody, anything. I am, I am. My Love this is My message to you, My message of Love for the whole world. I have decided in My infinite Love and mercy to redeem all, all souls, to save the whole world because of My Love. I love the whole world, the whole of My creation. It is never in my mind to destroy what I created out of Love, but the world has been forcing my hand to destroy and annihilate it. The evil one has been forcing the world and souls to go against my eternal will so that I will destroy the world as useless.

Now I have decided in my infinite Love and mercy to do away with the rebellious one, the father of all sins and rebellion. I will drive him away from the world, which I have created for My beloved children, the human beings. My Son, all I have promised you and through you to the whole Church and to the whole world I mean to bring to fulfilment. I stand by my promises and I will make all of them good. My Love, I love you and I will ever love you and bring all to the Love of Me. I bring this through you, My Love, it is through My Love that I created the world. Through my Love I have saved and will ever save my world, my creation.

My Love, be ready to work, to suffer, to sacrifice and to obey Me even to the point of death. My Son you are carrying the wounds I have. I share everything with you, my sufferings, joys and glory. My Love, do not let anything discourage you or stand in the way of my love in any way. You are absolutely called in freedom to be one with Me, you are absolutely in union with Me. Let nothing and nobody think that it can in any way separate you from Me, My Love. I cannot be separated from you, My Love for I and my Love are one. Let the world come back to me. I mean to pour the blood of my love over the whole world not minding the obstacles. I mean to shine the light of my Love on all and on the whole world not minding the obstacles. I mean to radiate my Love into the whole world not minding the obstacles. I am God, not man. I am the Holy One in your midst. I am not a god, I am God, I am one, there is no other. I am the Almighty, nobody else is God! Nobody else is almighty!

I alone am God. I have decided in my infinite Love and mercy to save all souls that I have created out of Love, but My son, I require the simplest sign of love and I will make it infinite in value. Let every soul make some simple signs of response and I will accept that out of my Love and that soul will be saved. The simplest, the least sign of love and acceptance of My Love and I will act with My almighty power of creation and redemption and all will be saved who accept my Love and let My Love be poured upon and into them, and let My Love shine upon and into them, let my Love, the fire of My Love be radiated into them, the fire of my love be enkindled in them and upon them.

My Son, there is every hope to save all souls. My Love, your prayers have been heard. The prayers which I put into your heart and into your mouth, the Prayer which I Myself taught you and asked you to teach all. My Love, I am saving all souls. My Love, the Prayer of my Hearts of Love has been heard. I am saving all souls with My mighty power, with my almighty power, with the power of my infinite Love and mercy. My Love have you heard and understood what I have done and what I am doing? With the fire and the light and the radiation and outpouring of my infinite eternal

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<sup>1462</sup> Every member of the Church has the munus of prophecy, i.e. should be a person through whom the Holy Spirit speaks. And where God speaks, there is “revelation”, even if no “revelation” after Christ can overtake his own, but only explain and actualize it.



Love I am dispelling and annihilating all the darkness of wickedness and hatred and sin. I am bringing a new heaven and a new earth, where my Love, my infinite and eternal Love reigns.

My Church has prepared this over the centuries with faith, hope and charity, with the prayers and sacrifices and blood of uncountable martyrs, the sacrifice of uncountable saints. My Love, the time must come for the reign of the kingdom, of My kingdom, the reign of My Love, the reign of My Hearts of Love, the triumph of pure and holy Love, the time for the reign of the Most Holy Trinity. My Love, the time must come, it is there, the appointed time which I have fixed from all eternity to install my kingdom on earth, to restore the kingdom to Israel, the kingdom of true faith, pure love and peace and holiness. My Love the time has come for the union of all hearts in My Love. My Love, the time has come, I am He who Am the God of Love.

Prepare all for the reign of my kingdom of peace and Love, of righteousness and universal brotherhood of all in My Love, in My one family of love. My Love, this will not happen without a fight. It will not happen without a fight. The war is raging, all the evil forces are loose and pouring their venom of deceit and destruction on the world trying to deceive uncountable souls. But My Love, in My infinite Love and mercy, I have shortened the time of these tribulations. See the light of love and peace coming! The day of salvation is breaking over the whole world! The fire of love is lit and shining.

Prepare all for this day, the day of war against all evil forces and overthrow and destruction of all evil forces with the power of love, the almighty power of love, the divine power of love. But My son, My plan is to use human beings, victim souls who will give themselves as sacrifice of love, holocausts of love, who are set on fire and consumed by the fire of My divine Love. My son, do not allow any distraction, listen well! This is the time for the victims of love to shine and come out and live and proclaim their love for Me.

This is the time for the public war of Love. This is the time to fight for the honour of God and to defeat and overthrow the enemy completely with the fire and light and outpouring of pure and holy love. The enemy cannot withstand and cannot have anything with which to counteract the fire and light and outpouring of pure and holy love. The way the Archangel destroyed him, destroying it with the perfect obedience, perfect purity and holiness and oneness with My Eternal Father, the way my most holy mother, blessed mother fought and defeated and crushed the head of the serpent, the ancient dragon and the devil, with her perfect response of love and union with the most holy will of God with her pure and immaculate conception, with the Annunciation.

My son, My Love, everything that happened in My life and in the life of My mother are the means of overthrowing the evil and establishing the kingdom. Now it is the same with you, the only solution I have revealed to you is this, 'Unite! Unite with the Two Wounded and Bleeding Hearts!' Now, My Love, this is the time to apply this solution to the fullest and see what will happen. This enemy who has been deceiving souls and nations will be completely overthrown. This Prayer, this Prayer, this Prayer. My son! This Prayer! I have put the almighty and infinite power of love which I am, which I have in this Prayer to save all souls and save the whole world. Renew all My creation!

My Love, this is the time, no more hesitation, no more postponement, this is the time! My Love, stretch yourself to the highest of your limits as man and the divine power in you will take over. My Love I am with you both now and forever. The war is on! Let all my children of My Hearts of Love be warned and alert. Be awake! Be watchful. And pray. Stay awake and be praying! They will not fall into temptation. They will not fall into the hands of the evil one. The evil one has been overthrown. Now is the time to fight. The time for victory and triumph has come.

My son, My Love, this is the fullness of time. Not many have understood this. You must tell them all! This is the time for the reign of Love. The Pope has prepared the way. Do not be ashamed or afraid, nobody and nothing can do anything to you which I have not approved. Nothing can happen to you without My approval. All that happens to you is for the reign of My Love. My Love this is the time, get up and fight, get up and pray, get up and preach! Get up and love, get up and live! Get up and shine, get up and radiate My Love! Get up and draw from My infinite ocean of Love and pour it on souls, all souls. This is the time for the annihilation of evil and the establishing of the

kingdom of God. This is for which My Son came, worked tirelessly and offered himself pouring his most precious blood to the last drops on the cross. This is the time for which he has chosen [to pray in all his members this] ‘Thy kingdom come!’

My Love, open the eyes of the people to see it and to live accepting and embracing this love uniting themselves to these Two Hearts and in this way uniting themselves to the Most Holy Trinity of Love. This is my plan for salvation and fulfilment of all things, all things in Christ, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. My son, My Love, this is the fulfilment of the plan I have for all my creation. Now, My whole creation will be fulfilled when the splendour of my Love, the glory of God, the kingdom of God has come. My son, My Love, thank you immensely for the vigil last night, for the mass and the prayers and for listening with such attention, I love you and I will always love you and all with you.

Now, My son, My Love, the time has come to proclaim openly the only solution I have given you since childhood, which you have been proclaiming but not so loud and not so organized. Make everybody understand that this is the only solution to the problems of the world. I have given it and I will give it. Tell everybody! [...] All should consecrate themselves and unite themselves to the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts. The only solution; only those who are united to the Love of God will be saved, and all who are united will be saved. [...]

All who are consecrated, all who are united with Me and remain in this union are saved and help to save others through their prayers and their union with Me. My Love, help Me. The whole world is My family, the whole world is My garden. Help Me to recover and replant My garden with the fruits of Love. Let Love be flowing like river in My whole world, and let Love be falling like rain on My whole creation. Let Love be shining like the sun on My whole creation. Let Love be flowing from heaven down to the earth and be rising again from earth to heaven. Let all on earth and in heaven be united in the Hearts of Love, in the one Love of God, in the one Love of the Most Holy Trinity. My son, this work is enormous. It can only be done with the full and total inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. [...] Remember what happened in the days of Noah, he warned them, he warned them, he warned them, only those who entered the Ark were saved, but all who entered the Ark were saved.

Obtain their papers of consecration, this is the way I want it to be organized. Let it be organized as the Church does have organization from individual to family, from station to parish, diocese, country and the whole world. Please My son, hurry and obtain the consecration and union of souls to Me in the Hearts of Love. I want it. This is the eternal will of the Father. I am with you both now and forever and ever. Amen.

This work is enormous and can only be done with the full and total inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I have poured My Spirit in you and will ever be pouring Him into you. You are nothing and can do nothing without My Holy Spirit. Let all the members have special love and attachment to the Holy Spirit as they have to Me and you. Let their greatest love be to the Eternal Father, the Father of Love, your Father and My Father, the origin and end of all. My Love let all on earth know that they are all children of one Father, children of the one Father and that they all have their home in the one Father in heaven. At last all will return to the house of the Father in heaven.

Let there be no more hatred, wickedness and sin. Let there be no more wars and killing. Let there be Love flowing in every heart and every soul. Let children be taught from the earliest days to regard all human beings as children of the one Father in heaven. Let Love be planted and watered and tendered to grow in every heart, especially the heart of all children. Let all children be loved and cared for as children of the one Father in heaven. That is why I asked you to work hard and to introduce this free and loving feeding, education, care, clothing, housing for all children from the earliest days to at least their 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. Begin with children. The world resources are more than enough to take care of this, let all share, let all the nations share, let all the families share. Let there be children’s fund. It is strictly forbidden to teach children hatred, wickedness and sin.

The ten commandments is basis for the whole world. All must know that they have their one origin from the Father in heaven, who has generously poured His Love on His whole creation, He has put

many resources in all corners of the world and allowed man to discover them and make good use of them for their well-being in faithfulness and for the greater glory and honour of God. [...]"

12/12/2007, Nigeria (The message used here in sermon was published in 2007 in a letter to members with the date 1.12.2003 - the first five paragraphs, and date 3.11.2003 for the rest)

"I love my entire creation," says the Lord, "and it is my eternal will to establish the reign of My Love in the whole world, in the entire creation. Please my sons, please my daughters, help Me, help your God. Give yourselves unconditionally to work for the reign of the Love of God.

Please help Me, give yourselves for this work unconditionally. I am with you and will always help you. Please build up My Holy Mountain to be the highest of the mountains. The highest in holiness, the height of purity, the height of love and service, dedication. The height of praise and thanksgiving. Here I have chosen to dwell among men in My infinite love. Do not be intimidated by the various setbacks you are experiencing now, they will all come to pass. [...] Let every nation, every language, every culture, every race, all peoples find a place, their own place on my Holy Mountain and around it. This is the place of salvation and refuge for all peoples. I am with you and will always be with you unto the end of time, unto eternity."

"Here is the place of rest and security in the Love of God, in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary." The most secure place is in the Heart of Jesus, in the Heart of Mary. Lord Jesus, we thank you for giving us your Heart to be our home.

"My son, My Love, build up and secure my holy dwelling place. Pray and ask for all the possible help to build it, I will send you help, but please be steadfast in prayer, in thanksgiving. Let the securing and building up of my holy mountain be a priority. Please my son, my beloved, take it for what it is, what I want it to be, a priority only second to the priority of spreading the Prayer in the whole world.

This mountain is a visible sign of unity and concentration and dedication on the cause of My Hearts of Love. I bless my holy place with my eternal blessings, I bless Orlu with my eternal blessings of Love, make the best use of all I am sending you. [...]"

Praise the Lord! The Lord is continuing, speaking: "My Son, I want to tell you more about My holy mountain. My universal centre of the Hearts of Love, this is the centre of the world of love, this is the centre of the world of love, the centre of the world of hearts just as My Heart is the centre of all things visible and invisible, so is my universal centre of my Hearts of Love the universal centre of love for the whole world, and the centre of all hearts in the whole world. Here all hearts are at home. All hearts are at home here, all love is at home here. Love is at home here. Here is the home of all hearts and the home of love. Home of love, human and divine, it is the universal centre of Love - Divine and human, earthly and heavenly. This is my universal sanctuary, the holy of holies, the holiest place of the veneration of my love in the Two Hearts of Love, the seat, the throne of my love and mercy, the house of love, the gate of heaven, the house of God. Here I have chosen to dwell among men forever and ever. [...]"

25.12.2007, Christmas, Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love, Orlu, Vigil

We are joyful, full of happiness for the incarnation of our God, our Love our all, has become man and he is now one of us, he experienced our human situation, our human weakness, he encourages us to overcome our weaknesses and be what God wants us to be. We become what God wants us to be, when we do what God asks us to do. "Do whatever he tells you."

We celebrate this mass in thanksgiving to God for his incarnation, for his glorious incarnation, which is a supremely, infinite humility descending from the level of Godhead, Divinity to the level of human creature, nothing. We thank you God our Love for your humility, for humiliating yourself, teach us to be humble. The way of becoming man for God is humility, and the way of man becoming divinized in a way, of sharing the divinity of God, is also humility. God becomes man by humiliating himself and man also becomes what God wants him to be in God by humility. That's why God did not create man from the stars, from light, from air, from angels, he made man from

what? From humus, from soil, from dust. To show us the way to be the image and likeness from God for man is the way of remembering you are what? Dust and ashes, humility.

The whole of incarnation is humility. Humble yourself! Lower yourself and become man. In the same way humble yourself, lower yourself and you become like God. Obedience, that was what the devil terribly lost, when there in heaven instead of being humble he became proud and disobeyed. Disobedience is a sign of pride. He disobeyed God and lost his position there in heaven. He came and taught Adam and Eve also what? Pride and disobedience, and they lost paradise. Anybody who learns pride...you are already fallen. He who humbles himself will be exalted. Our blessed mother Mary humbles herself and she was made the mother of God. Here, we have come to this place, Ugwu Nso, valley, hill, bush, here the Lord wants us to stay and to grow. In humility we accept it and God will raise this place to be the highest mountain in the world. The height of holiness, of purity, the height of adoration and prayer. Christ was born in the most humble place. Not even among man, but among animals. My God, your humility is unfathomable. But the angels came to worship him there. They called the shepherds to join them and the star led the Magi.

My sisters and brothers, where you are does not affect your dignity. Your dignity is your union with God, your love of God, your oneness with God.

The birthday of the child is the birth feast of the mother. Yes, it is proper that the mother and the child celebrate, because it is the mother who gives birth to the child and the birthday is the delivery day of the mother. She has given birth. The body of the son is born. Two of them, wonderful. Also all who are one with Christ, this is our birthday, we celebrate our oneness with Christ. All his feasts are our feasts. My God, My Love, my All. So I wish all of you happy birthday of our God, of our Lord Jesus Christ, of our mother Mary, happy birthday to our union with Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is born here, Ugwu Nso, Immanuel, God is in our midst, it is because he is in our midst that we exist at all, or else we would not have existed. Look at the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, through him all things were made. Thank you for being our God. Do you know that he was not always your God? He was God before he created you, why then did he become my God? Because He is Love, because he loves me. At a particular point he became your God, because he loves you. He wasn't always Jesus Christ, the son of Mary. He was always God without beginning and end. Thank you Jesus for becoming man, thank you Jesus.

Without Mary all would have been misery, rottenness, sin. Thank you Mary. Thank you Father, Son, Holy Spirit, it was by your power that the Virgin was preserved from all sin. Concentrate on thanking God for becoming your God, because before, he was completely God in happiness and joy and then became our God to make us share in his majesty, divine life. What are you, man? How did he make it? He immersed himself in you so that you may be one with Him. Look at the simple unfathomable plan of God. This God whom we cannot conceive fully is the God who was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary. Can you imagine the whole world enter your stomach or mouth? Even the world is like a grain of sand compared to the universe and it is the creator of all this who became a child in the womb of Mary.

My Jesus, I must adore you! Oh, this incarnation of God in man! It was this incarnation, just the information of it, which made Lucifer rise in jealousy and rebelled. "We will not serve." The same reaction came from the human beings when Jesus announced the mystery of the Eucharist. "This language is intolerable, if you don't withdraw your statement, we shall no longer go with you." Peter is a great apostle, "Where shall we go, you have the words of eternal life". God, I thank you for choosing those little ones here to make them apostles of your love. See how weak we are. Come and live in me. Whatever is in me, is yours without exception. I offer to you all you have given to me. The implications of the incarnation: What you have done to your fellow brothers/sisters you have done it to God. "In them I look at you, I embrace you, I appear to you." Never treat any human being as a mere human being.

5.1.2008, Mass

The kingdom of God is in our midst, it is already there in our midst in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ himself who is the Son of the Father and of the Virgin Mary, and he wants us to unite ourselves to Him.

The first person to unite here on earth was Mary. And you are called to unite to these Two, Jesus and Mary. “Unite with the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts of Love.” This expands till everything is united in Christ. It is God’s plan to unite all things in heaven and on earth in Jesus Christ.

#### 25.1.2008 Conversion of St. Paul, Mass in Nigeria.

Considering the conversion of St. Paul we can ask why did God choose Paul to be apostle? Why did he choose me to be in the Hearts of Love? Do I bring the fruits that are expected? What does the Church want to tell us by putting this feast exactly one month after Christmas? It was not accidental. Paul is one of those whom God used very effectively to spread the Good News. He was a destroyer and became a builder, one of the greatest. He poured out his life as a libation, he didn’t spare himself. We find ourselves as dwarves before the giant of faith St. Paul. We don’t want to compare, but to learn from him. Why was he so successful in achieving the mission God gave him? Till today the gentile world remains the carrier and propagator and protector of the Christian Catholic faith. Rome became the capital of the catholic faith, of the Christian Church. Christ was not there, but Paul even went there in chains to preach. From his prison in Rome he was busy Christianising, making disciples of all nations.

I don’t know if you have heard the story where the devil was selecting which of his agents to send to combat the Christian Catholic faith. The last one said, “I will go and carry along their catechism, the bible, the laws of the Church. I will teach them these things, but I will tell them to wait, ‘don’t live them yet, don’t begin to practice these things yet, wait until what? Just wait, postpone it, don’t worry yourself yet.’” And the devil said, “Yes, you are the right person I will send.” What the devil seeks is to maximise injuries of souls. Their punishment will be greater, because they know the will of God and do not do it. I have warned you and continue warning you of the “laissez-faire” attitude, “it does not concern me”. I pray that we are really converted and face our mission with zeal. I pray God to give us the zeal of Paul to preach the Good News to the ends of the world. The zeal for this mission to intend to win, to do the will of God perfectly.

What the Lord asks us to do is very simple: Love Him and bring others to the love of Him. How do we show our love for God? This prayer. How do we breathe with the Love of God? This prayer. Lord Jesus Christ, give us your spirit and we shall be able to do all we should do. There was no single moment during the earthly ministry of our Lord when he was not fully occupied with his mission, whether he is praying alone in the hills, in the desert, or there among the crowds, in the wedding feast or wherever. He is always there on duty. Always on duty to teach people, all nations and in himself to be the carrier and proclaimer of the gospel, of the kingdom of God. St. Paul’s entrance into the apostolic college is one of the greatest things that happened, one of the greatest conversions after the resurrection of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, the first area where we should show that we are zealous is in prayers. The Lord is there to help us. Never compromise your purity, your holiness, for this purity and holiness is the guarantee for authenticity. Purity and holiness guarantee upon authenticity. Never compromise your holiness, never compromise your virginity, purity, your oneness with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, oneness with God. Never compromise your oneness with the most holy Trinity of Love.

St. Paul’s zeal is not an ordinary zeal, it is what has been described as fiery zeal, zeal of fire. Remember, that is what the Lord wants to do with us. He wants to turn us into flaming fire of his divine love.

#### 2.2.2008, Presentation of the Lord, Vigil

You can give Mary more honour than God only when you call her “God”, but that is completely false, Mary won’t accept it. There is no other title in heaven and on earth which would be too much for Mary. The only you can’t give to Mary is “God”. Every other title, every other honour you can give to Mary and it fits her perfectly well. Let us learn to give ourselves to Mary, who will then wash us, clean us, clothe us, powder us, pomade us and amend us and bring us to God. God will accept us as God accepts Mary.

The way Mary presents us to God is not foreign, she doesn’t take us to God like a foreign object, she takes us into her heart and presents her heart to God. We are inside the heart of Mary. So, in the way God accepts Mary he will accept us, if we give ourselves to Mary. The same thing happens with Jesus in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, because it is God worshipping God. *“He who eats me will live in me and I in him.”* This is the highest of prayers, the Holy Eucharist and the prayer of the Two Hearts of Love.

You must begin the mass outside and come into the Church with candle procession. We shall do it properly.

Jesus was 40 days old, the right age to present him to the Lord in the temple. And there Simeon and Anna, these two great people, great in age, great in wisdom, great in holiness, great in insight, great in faithfulness, great in their awaiting the redemption of Israel, they were led by the Holy Spirit and came at that point and there they welcomed the Lord. My brothers and sisters, we are doing two jobs now, the job of presentation and welcoming. I want to go straight to our point. Our point is the Two Hearts of Love. Today in a very special way we see Jesus and Mary, the Two Hearts ever united in Love coming to the temple of the Lord together. The first time they were on a journey was when Mary went to visit Elisabeth. She had already conceived Jesus Christ the Lord in her womb. We know Mary conceived Jesus first of all in her heart and then in her womb.

On this journey through the hill country of Judea Mary passed through many towns and villages, and everywhere the Two Hearts were, blessings, graces pouring on people. The climax was when she reached the house of Zechariah and greeted Elisabeth. The child in the womb of Elisabeth leapt for joy and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy. Wherever people honour the Two Hearts tremendous things happen, wherever the Two Hearts are honoured adequately, given the honour due to them wonderful things happen, miracles occur, miracles of conversion, miracles of enlightenment, miracles of being freed from the tentacles of evil spirits, evil forces and sin, miracles of belonging to God, holiness, holy, holy, holy.

All over wherever Jesus and Mary are welcomed, are presented and welcomed and honoured, holiness flows like a river, more than a river, like the ocean. And there God’s presence is manifested more than the sunlight and every eye and all around see and hear. Blessed are your eyes for seeing what you see and your ears for what you hear for I tell you many prophets and great people, many righteous people have longed to see what you see and didn’t see and to hear what you hear and have never heard.

Holiness, you are called to be holy, holy unto the Lord. Holiness means belonging to the Lord, to be consecrated to the Lord, for the Lord alone. If you are a seat, a chair, only the Lord will sit on you. If you are a cup, only the Lord will drink with you. If you are a spoon only the Lord will eat with you. If you are a bed only the Lord will sleep on you. And if you are a house, the Lord will dwell in you. You are God’s dwelling. St. Paul tells you, *“You are God’s temple”*. You are consecrated to the Lord, you must preserve yourself for the Lord.

My brothers and sisters, purity and holiness go together. If you are holy, chosen by God, called by God to belong to Him then you must be pure. You will not allow anything, anybody to contaminate you, only the Lord will eat you. If you open the heart of Mary you see nothing there but Jesus; the womb of Mary only who? Jesus; the eyes of Mary, only who? Jesus; the ears of Mary, only who? The word of God, Jesus. Mary is blessed. *“Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the breast that suckled thee”*, one woman shouted in the crowd when she heard Jesus preaching. Jesus answered, *“More blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”* And Mary is number one in

hearing the word of God and in keeping it. Because it was in her that the Word of God became flesh.

My sisters, my brothers, now, presenting the Lord and welcoming the Lord, presenting the Two Hearts of Love and welcoming the Two Hearts of Love, in you the Two Hearts of Love take flesh, become embodied. People don't see Jesus anymore in the flesh and Mary also, at times she appears to people, but you are a constant apparition of Jesus and Mary. You are the presentation of Jesus and Mary. Wherever you go, wherever you speak, whenever you act even in your thoughts, you should always present Jesus and Mary to God, to the people, always welcome the Two Hearts of Love in your person, and carry them in your person wherever you go. You should be a personification of the Two Hearts of Love. This is what the Lord said to me. And I am saying it to you. Jesus said, *"I don't call you slaves any more, I call you friends, because all I have learned from my Father I have given to you."* The Lord said to me, "My son, I have been looking for the person in whom My Love will reign, My Love will live, My Love will shine more than the sunshine. I found this person in my blessed mother Mary. She gave Me all she is and has and I gave her all I have and I am. We are one I am one with her. The clearest representation of this our oneness is the oneness in Love, oneness in the Heart, union in the Heart."

Mary remained a human being by nature; Jesus remained God by nature and a human being by incarnation, by nature also. He has two natures, divine nature and human nature. Mary has only one nature, human nature. Christ is only one person, divine person; Mary is also one person, human person. The two became one united in Love not minding the disparity of divinity and humanity, creator and creature, God and man, they became one in Love, fully united in Love. One can say the Two Hearts are one. It is correct.

The oneness of these Two Hearts is not something that happened today, it has been there even before God began to create. God decreed that the Two Hearts will be one, the incarnation was God's eternal plan, which was realized in time. In the fullness of time God became man. But even till today many people are blind, are deaf, they don't see, they don't hear the union of Jesus and Mary. So God began to look, "I have been looking for the person in whom this union, this oneness of Love, oneness of the Hearts in Love, will live and through whom it will shine like the sun and more than the sun in the whole world, in the whole of My creation in heaven and on earth." My brothers and sisters, the Lord said, "And I have found this in you. This is the only reason why I sent you into the world, to represent, to carry, to embody, to present, to personify this union of the Two Hearts." That is why I tell people, if you look at me and you see a black man you are blind. If you listen to my voice and you hear the voice of an African, Nigerian, Igbo, you are deaf. The only right sight is when you look at me and you see Jesus and Mary, the Two Hearts; when you listen to me and you hear the voice of Jesus and Mary; when you are approaching me and touching me you touch Jesus and Mary.

The Pope is the Vicar of Christ, the personal representative of Jesus Christ, the personification of Jesus Christ. This was a surprise for Christ when Philip asked him, *"Show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied."* Jesus answered, *"Philip, have I been with you all these years and still you do not know that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? I and the Father are one. How can you, having seen me, still ask to see the Father? Are you blind, Philip? Are you deaf, Philip?"*

When I was doing rosary procession in Germany at a very beautiful place with hills, fields and trees, I remembered the children of Fatima, who went on the fields of Cova da Iria to shout "Ave Maria!" listening to the echo. And one day what happened? Lightening, an angel appeared. He appeared several times and then Our Lady also appeared. So I was so full of the desire to see our blessed mother Mary and I prayed in my heart, "Please mother Mary, come to me now, I want to see you now." I was still a small boy when this happened, I was reading a catechism book and saw the picture of our Lady carrying the child Jesus, I made the sign of the cross on the picture and whispered with all my heart a prayer, "Mother Mary, Lord Jesus, I want to see you now, please come to me now." I hardly finished this prayer when something happened. The whole room became dark, and the candle on my table had no more luminescence. Why? Because an extraordinary light

was coming. I saw it coming to me at the table, I knelt down, covered my eyes and took fright and did what? And ran away. If I had stayed they would have said, "Don't be afraid". I was very sad that I ran away. When I repeated that type of thing again as an adult and priest there in Germany: "Mother Mary, I want to see you now." And she said deep in my heart, "Open your eyes and see I am coming." Who did I see? One of my sisters. Remember what our Lady said to me, "In their faces, in their eyes I am looking at you. With their arms I am touching you. With their mouth I am speaking to you. Each of these sisters is a Maria, all of them together form one Maria".

All of you sisters are one Maria, each one of you here is also Maria. You are representing Mary. The Church confirms this when she says that the religious are signs of the kingdom. Religious brothers and sisters who take the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience, they are in themselves signs of the kingdom. They are living sacraments of the kingdom of God. So, anybody who encounters you encounters the kingdom of God. Anybody who sees you sees the kingdom of God personified. Do you realize what you are called to be? We are talking of presentation of the Lord today. You are the presentation, you carry in your persons the presence of God. You carry in your persons the presence of Mary, of Jesus Christ. That means a lot, sisters, brothers. You are carrying the presence of God in your persons, then you must be very, very careful that all you think, all you say, all you do should represent Jesus. In your actions, in your thoughts, in your words you should really present Jesus. You are not just ambassadors. Ambassadors can have their time to play their table tennis, have time for their private life, but when it comes to official things he must represent the country's opinion. When he answers a question, he will not answer what he himself wants or thinks, but what the country should answer. But in your own case you have no more private life. You cannot say, "If I go to the chapel I represent the Two Hearts, but when I go to the market I am myself", no! You are a personal sacrament of the presence of God. A person representing Jesus and Mary. The Lord said to me, "My son, do you know wherever you go it is me? You are a permanent Corpus Christi procession. My angels and saints are following you, and you are carrying me in your person. You are Me and I am you."<sup>1463</sup> Last time when I read a message to you the Lord said, "I establish a special union, the type which has not been seen in the world, between you and me and between you and my sisters and brothers. Tell them they are you." You are me and I am you.

The Lord looked for a person in whom the union of the Two Hearts will shine out in the whole world more than the sunshine, and he found that person. For this reason alone he sent me, that is the reason of holiness. You are there only for God, therefore, in everything you think, say and do only God. Our blessed mother Mary is there only for Jesus. Her whole existence is Jesus, she gave birth only to Jesus and those she accepts as her children in Jesus Christ. There on the cross the Lord said to her, "Mother, behold your son." I am in him, John is in me and I am in John, he is your son, take him. And son John, "behold your mother," because you are now me. Mary is now your mother. You are now my disciple, he who eats my body and eats my flesh lives in me and I in him.

St. Paul could speak very clearly this theology, this spirituality, when he said, "*I live, yet no longer I, but Jesus lives in me*". You should be able to say, my sisters and my brothers, "I live, yet no longer me, but Jesus lives in me, Mary lives in me, the Two Hearts of Love live in me." You must be able to say that or else your formation is a failure. You can then act with authority of Jesus, with authority of Mary. When St. Paul was asked about celibacy and marriage, what did he say? "*About celibacy I have nothing direct from the Lord, but I am speaking as someone who has the spirit. He who marries does something good, but the person who does not marry does something better. Therefore I would advise you because of the situation of this time, if you can remain single for the sake of the kingdom, then remain so, if you can't then go and marry.*"

He said this by himself, but he spoke as someone who no longer lives, but Jesus lives in him. Inspired. See these two people today we meet at the temple, the old man Simeon, to whom it was

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<sup>1463</sup> In his sermon on 22.9.2011 in the Olympia-stadium in Berlin, Pope BENEDICT XVI, referring to the Gospel of St. John on Jesus the vine, talked on the „unheard-of“ thing, that Jesus, God, completely identifies with the members of his Church. Apart from being a biblical fact, one may assert that it was an experience of many mystics in the Church. From the above passage, one may deduce that also Fr. Montfort has such an experience.



revealed, “*Simeon you will not die until you see the salvation of Israel*”. That salvation is the person, personification of God’s presence, Jesus Christ is the carrier of salvation.

My sisters when the Lord raises you to such a height as to represent Mary, you are representing the Two Hearts of Love, please don’t joke with this. You are earthen vessels carrying great treasures. Therefore don’t play with yourselves, with your bodies, you are fragile, you must therefore avoid certain things, which may endanger your holiness. You are called by God, you are chosen by God to be there for himself, you are there for God alone, you are there for the Hearts of Love alone, therefore you should be very, very careful that whatever you do is only for who? For Jesus and Mary.

If you are eating, eat like Jesus and Mary. If Mary were here, how would Mary eat? How would Mary sit listening to Jesus preaching? I am sure that Mary would listen with all the powers of her spirit, her brain, her body, everything, that is why she was able to conceive and the Word took flesh in her. She didn’t listen half asleep. In this congregation we should show Jesus and Mary the highest possible love here on earth. Pray for it! And God will give us this grace. Let the whole world see what it means to love Jesus and Mary.

So, at this feast of presentation God is also presenting you as people he has chosen to be carriers of the Two Hearts of Love. This congregation is continuing the incarnation of Jesus and Mary. Mary is incarnating in you. Jesus is incarnating in you. Therefore you should be worthy of this great vocation, great calling from God. Know that you are carriers of great graces for the whole world and you can’t afford to fail. You can’t afford to joke with it. And we are given the weapon with which to fight the enemy. This enemy keeps harassing humanity, human race, making people its captives, slaves, and God gave you the weapon to fight this enemy. You are the weapon at the warfront.

Sisters and brothers, I want us to have a very high sense of responsibility. I am responsible for you. Adam and Eve had a very great responsibility. I have a responsibility for all my children and all who are to come, therefore I can’t joke with my work. I have the responsibility to keep the faith. If you have lost your virginity before coming here, then you must cry, “please, God, give me chastity!” And I know God will give you spiritual virginity. You must maintain your purity and allow nothing to contaminate you, contaminate this message, this love of God, which was given to you.

I want to present you to God, and present you to the people, as Mary did present Jesus to God and to the people. Mother Mary, please, make these your children fully aware of their responsibility, of their vocation, each one of them, all of them together, one Maria.

*The following till 12/4/2010 are excerpts of sermons and comments of Fr. Montfort, followed by the author, Sr. Maria Steidl, in handwriting, without the help of a recorder, later typed by her. Due to the velocity of the talk, errors and omissions can be there. They are not yet published.*

1.4.2010, Holy Thursday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Evening Mass, 7pm, starting with dancing.

If you don’t use your talents for others, they will one day expire. You will be the first to lose. Jesus said: “You are my heaven. [...] Whenever I come to you, I come to the one with whom I am well pleased!” He said it to me and for you, but he asked also: “When will I enjoy my stay with you here?” He wants to enjoy us. He wants to see us eat together, pray together. How it is paining me that I cannot provide the best for you.

[Adoration till midnight, mainly singing.]

2.4.2010 Good Friday, Orlu, Holy Mountain

Vigil.

(Fr. Montfort suggests to say rosary and rosary of Hearts of Love silently, if possible with climbing of steps.)

6am: Office of Readings and Lauds. After short reading:

This is the most serious time for Jesus and for all who love him. Between 6 and 9 he was tried, he had to climb the holy steps to the Pretorium. Around 3 o'clock he died, around 4 o'clock his heart was pierced, then he was taken down. Before 6 o'clock he was buried. You should follow him hour by hour now.

1.30-3.30pm: Stations of the Cross.

The cross belongs to the life of each person. One can accept it and can have cross and blessing; one can reject it and have only the cross. We should embrace it like Jesus; prayer for a life without suffering is rubbish. No Christian should pray such, for the cross is the entrance to heaven.

Please, never, never reject your sister or brother, never ignore anyone. Accept everything offered you with love, for the sake of God. Never say "I do not need you, I can do without you!" Respect the gift of each person, even if it is only a small gift.

4.4.2010 Easter Sunday, Orlu, Holy Mountain

Vigil

Today we inaugurate the Jubilee year of the Hearts of Love. On the night of Easter Sunday towards Monday the first five Sisters professed: When all the Church celebrated 2000 years of Christianity, God allowed the Church to give birth to this new Congregation.

As long as we are in the Hearts of Love, we are in heaven. They are the heaven in heaven.

"Nothing can harm you anymore, the level of love in you has exceeded a level where it could be extinguished. [...] Remember, you still receive higher duties, higher posts, responsibilities to lead my people. Now you have to begin to prepare your body, your soul for what is to come. Prepare your body for death, resurrection and ascension. Your body is divine, Body of Christ: that is the meaning of being a member of the Church. [...] Your head is in heaven, your feet are on earth. You cover the whole world, therefore let your love be universal. [...] They will try to pull you down to calumny and sin."

It was at this hour. By 3 o'clock [pm] he died, by 3 o'clock [am] he rose, before they could come by 4 o'clock.

Mass of the day, 9.30am, with "consecration" of the first 8 "Victims of Love"

Don't jump into being a Victim, but if you have the strong will, I encourage you. Victims are absolutely needed here at Ugwu Nso! Without them, no matter how few, the Reign is not possible. The first Victim is St. Michael the archangel, in heaven. He intervened, stood firm on the side of God. He suffered, God watched, until He then intervened. Another Victim was David, when he went against Goliath. A victim must never be afraid of evil, no matter how mighty it appears. A victim trusts completely in God. You have tasted the life, you have seen how it is, you are ready to keep it, not by your own strength, but by God's grace. Not to worry about anything at all, only to worry about keeping the prayer-times here at Ugwu Nso. It can be Professed, it can be Novices or Aspirant. The commitment is for a minimum of 6 months. One can live the life of victimhood, the times of Prayer and eating and rising even elsewhere, not only at Ugwu Nso.

Are you resolved to live in purity, poverty, obedience, truthfulness, love, prayer and apostolate?

Are you resolved to keep all the rules of our Congregation and the rules of Ugwu Nso?

Are you resolved to live a life of humble work here?

6.4.2010 Easter Tuesday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Morning Mass 6.30am.

If you have the spirit, the money you receive, you use to buy cement for Ugwu Nso, and this place will be transformed by your work. Before, when the Sisters went home, by coming back they will bring something home to Ugwu Nso. This place is your home, in life and in death. The noviciate in Okigwe was built with my savings as a student, 20.000 DM. When we went to Ilorin, bishop said we must build noviciate in his diocese, it was one of the sisters who brought the money for the land,

almost 4 Mill. Naira. The land opposite was bought by Sisters' money. It is not the rich who build up here, but the generous. God did not make mistake by making women to be the first to hear the Good News, both of Incarnation and Resurrection. Pioneers must suffer, so that those, who come after them, will have it easier. If you want to become a doctor, a lawyer, a professor: nonsense! Built up your Congregation first! Then, the pioneers, even if they are unlearned as Peter and James: their position is above all. A letter of St. Peter is greater than all the books of the most learned pope: It is Sacred Scripture! Simple people who allow God to use them. What is contemptible, God can elevate.

8.4.2010, Easter Thursday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) at washing of feet, Midday.

This is the last day you will wear blue for prayers. And the convent will be locked during Vigil, Morning Mass, Holy Hour, Rosary procession. If you are not prepared to live the life, do not come here!

9.4.2010, Easter Friday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Vigil

My Lord Jesus cried, o God! Crying! "I am thirsty!" "Let my request for prayer, for a few people who will live the prayer-times, not go unheard. For so many years! If the conditions are not met, I will reject this generation and wait for another generation that will meet the conditions, so that I can establish the Reign of My Love."

10.4.2010, Easter Saturday (Orlu, Holy Mountain)

Vigil

If you go to public school, as pupil or as teacher, as long as the lesson is on, you are permitted to do some compromise. But as soon as school dismisses, you are bound to come home without any delay and come for prayers. In our own schools, our prayer-life shall be respected, so that one can live the life as Jesus did, never deviating from the will of the Father.

Morning Mass, 6.45am, before the election for the general council

Before election, all must prove that they are members. Without the book of faithfulness in prayer, you are not eligible.

11.4.2010, Mercy Sunday (Orlu, Holy Mountain)

Vigil Mass.

Today is Mercy Sunday! One day, also the Feast of the Hearts of Love will be universally celebrated. Let us celebrate this Mercy Sunday well, repenting of our sins, going to confession. We celebrate the Mass for the outgoing Mother Montfort – continue to call her Mother. Once you are a mother, you remain a mother! The respect must remain. We thank God for what He achieved through her. I want to thank God also especially for the circle of Victims of Love. During the rosary-procession, red [the victims] was 80%. They have started well! There are still some others who were expected to volunteer themselves! Stop hiding and come out!

Mass of the day, 3.40pm:

This is one of the most precious Sundays of the year! Sr. Faustina came to us and gave us a very deep, touching message of union of Divine Mercy with the Two Hearts of Love (April 2004): "My son, I have given you Sr. Faustina as an angel by your side. Spread the message of Love in the whole world. [...]" "I, Sr. Faustina, your little angel. You know what is the great obstacle of your work? Your fear and shame. The success of your work is the greater success of my work. I am like John the Baptist, crying in the wilderness of Europe, preparing the road for the Love of God. You are the Love of God! Be what you are! Be very strict with yourself, with your time! Your death is near. Do not be afraid. You will not go until your mission is completed. Your mission is to bring all to the Love of God. [...] Divine Mercy is part of Divine Love. You are Love in the Most Holy Trinity. [...]" We shall promote this devotion of the Divine Mercy. It shall be like rosary to us; it is

no mixture if we permit this devotion. St. John the Baptist belongs to the OT, but he has entered the NT.

12.4.2010, Monday (Orlu, Holy Mountain) Vigil Mass.

We thought originally that this circle of Victims would be limited to Ugwu Nso, but we have seen that they are also very good and active in the spreading of the devotion! As it happened to the 7 first deacons, who were ordained to share food... The Victims may be more active in the propagation than others. So, they concentrate on prayer, purity, propagation. We cannot chain them, they shall go with their red [scapular] wherever the spirit sends them.

We wish that the Sister Novice-mistress will impart perfection to the novices, perfection in behaviour, comportment, elegance, being always full dressed before leaving your room, your cell. I want you to develop this self-esteem and joy in being what you are.

2010 or 2011, (typed by Fr. Montfort, not yet published)

“My Love! Receive My message for the whole world. My Love! My call to holiness is for all human beings – of all ages, races, cultures, creeds. I want all human beings to be saved and to come to perfect Love and union and fullness of Life and being with Me in heaven. I am God, the God of Love, God of all.

I want to unite all in Me – all in My Love – in My Hearts of Love. The whole world is mine. All creation is mine. All souls belong to Me. All power, all Love, glory, honour, redemption, life come from Me and go back to Me. Call all to glory! Call all to Love! Call all to prayer! Call all to holiness, to peace and Love!

Greet all with My peace and Love. Whoever accepts your greetings of peace and Love from Me will be blessed with peace and Love. Who refuses to accept it will not retain My peace and Love. My peace and Love will go to another. At last he/she will realise what she/he has refused. Hell is eternal regret.

Please accept My message for the whole world – people of all races, cultures, tongues, colours, ages, shapes, sizes, for the whole creation. Pray and fast for the salvation of all - all souls. [...] My Heart of Love is the safest, surest and easiest way to heaven. [...] Let them call Me Our God Our Love Our All. And give themselves to Me completely. Tell them that all of them – all who remain in My Love till the end will be saved. Let nobody and nothing separate them from My Love. [...] The rhythm of Prayer of the Hearts of Love is the rhythm of Love, is the rhythm of Life for them. Tell them to be steadfast with the hours of the prayers of Love. Let nothing hold them back - even for a brief moment. (They can say the prayers even for a brief moment). They are moments of union, of strength – union with Me the source of all life and Love; moments of strength – I am the principle and source of all strength. It is the moment of salvation – for their souls and all souls. It is the moment of purification – purification of all – all things around them and in them. It is the moment of sanctification for them and all around them. At these moments – I pour My special, most abundant blessings and graces on them and all around them. At this moment – all My priests are to pronounce the blessings of My Hearts of Love and bless all souls – all My creation. At this moment, when no priest is there, all My people are to call upon themselves My eternal blessings – on themselves and all around them. They are to touch one another at least with their souls, hearts, love and look; with their hands and their hearts. They are to open their hearts and hands. They are to touch all creation with their hearts, their spirits. They are to be a blessing to all creation. All My members of My Hearts of Love are a blessing to all creation. [...]

*The following is a message which Father Montfort was reading partly with great velocity during Mass. Sr. Maria Steidl taped it in 12 recordings of one minute each, and typed it out in 2014. The text was not yet published.*

5/4/20011, Ugwu Nso, Orlu, Nigeria

“[...] My Love, I have confined you in my Love. Nobody and nothing can separate you from my love. You are my Love and I am your Love. This new beginning is primarily for you. Just as the new beginning with the Immaculate Conception was primarily for me, Jesus Christ, so is this new beginning primarily for you, my Love. I am renewing all things in my Love and uniting all things in my Love. All hearts are to be united in my Love. My Love, remain strong. [...] There is no going back in my Love. My Love, my Hearts of Love, must always go forward. You must always go forward. I am with you. Be with me always. You will be a celebration. [...] My Love, my Immaculate Conception, I will preserve you from falling. I will preserve you from falling. You are my Love, my Immaculate Conception. I am your Love, your mother.” Mother Mary is speaking. “My Love, Immaculate Conception is a perfect new beginning. So I am beginning perfectly new with you. My Love, with my Heart of Love - allow me to make you *perfect*! [...] I am the perfect one in your midst. My Love, I have endowed you with perfection, but please, let nobody and nothing take it away from you. Keep away from women. Let no woman or man, no creature, tamper with your perfection. I have given you perfection in Love – the highest perfection. [...] Which I have given you for myself. I have given it to you for myself.” For God! “Please, preserve yourself for me. I have preserved you for myself. Preserve yourself for me. Remember – your body, your soul, you are not just a temple of the Holy Spirit [...] Your body is my infinite body. You come from me and you go back to me. You come back to me! Be strong! Be what you are! Be my Love, my perfect Love. My Son, this new beginning is a new beginning, is new! Rejoice! It is a new Beginning like New Testament. It will always be new and will never be old, like the Old Testament. It is a new beginning in Love. Love never ends. My son, my Love, I love you with eternal Love. It is my wish that you love all with the same Love with which I love you. Do you not know, My Love, that you are my presence in the world today?! [...] I am dwelling in the world in you and through you. Please, my son, remain ever in Love, in prayer, in loving all with my Love and bringing all to my Love. I am with you. I am in you. I am you. You are me. Take care of all, as I take care of you. Be me. I am you. You are me. Be, what you are. My Son, today, I give you all in my Hearts of Love anew, to embrace all. New birth. New beginning. I give you a completely new beginning. [...] I wipe out all the sins, all the transgressions of the past. [...] If you do my work, [...], I take all and give you the grace of baptism anew. New love! New creation! New heart! New life! That is it. The greatness of my Church will shine out more, when she put the splendour of my Two Hearts of Love in the middle of all that she does, just as the Eucharist is the middle, the centre, the core, so will the splendour of my Hearts of Love shed more light on the glory... of the Eucharist [...]. Do you know, can you imagine, what you have and when the Two Hearts of Love will shine, when all will gather around the triumphant Two Hearts of Love. My Two Hearts of Love will never enter [...] through the window or backyard. The Two Hearts of Love will be owner and power of Love, of the house. My son, [...] Just as my Heart is the centre of all things, visible and invisible, so is my Universal Centre of my Hearts of Love the Universal Centre of Love, for the whole world, and the centre of all hearts in the whole world. Here, all hearts are at home. All love is at home. Love is at home. Here is the home of all hearts. The home of Love! Home of all Love, human and divine. It is the universal Centre of all Love. [...] This is my universal sanctuary, my Holy of holies, the holiest place of the veneration of my Love in the Two Hearts of Love. This is the home of my Love, the seat, the throne of my Love, the throne of mercy, my Heart of Love, the Heart of my Love, the gate of heaven, the Heart of God. Here I have chosen to dwell among men for ever and ever. Nobody and nothing can separate my Love from this place, and nobody and nothing can separate this place from my Love. [...] Here I mean to manifest my Love to the whole world. Let the whole world come to me in my holy place. [...] I love all with my infinite and eternal Love. I want all to come to my Love. Come all to my Heart of Love! On this Holy Mountain, all peoples, all races, all colours, [...] all languages, all ages will come and encounter me in my eternal and infinite Love. [...] I love all with my eternal and infinite Love. My child, all should rally around the triumphant Two Hearts of Love. My Church, my Catholic Church, is the place of this rallying around. My holy mountain,

my universal Centre of the Two Hearts of Love, is the place of this rallying around the Triumphant Two Hearts of Love. [...] Let all come to me in my infinite Two Hearts of Love. I am the eternal Love, and my Love will reign on earth as it reigns in heaven. My Love will reign in any heart, it reigns in my Heart of Love. My Love will reign in every home, every home of Love. [...] There will be no segregation! No discrimination, no racism, no atom of hatred, wickedness, no sin, on the mountain [?] of my infinite and eternal Heart of Love.

O! My Love will reign on earth as it reigns in heaven. Let my Love reign! My Love reigns. My Love will ever reign. [...] Alleluia. Amen. [...] All hearts, in the whole world, that love me, I am calling on all my children in the whole world: Come to me! [...] Come and drink from the fountain of living water! Come and drink from the fountain of life! Come and drink from the fountain of Love. I am the fountain of life and Love. [...] Let all come to me in my Holy Mountain. Here, I will pour my Love on the whole world, not minding the obstacles. Here, I will save all souls, not minding the obstacles. Here, I will draw all to my Love, not minding the obstacle. Here, my Love will reign! [...]” Udo! [=peace] We are saying thank you Jesus! Thank you, my Lord...

*The following are excerpts of preachings of Father Montfort, written by hand by Sr. Maria Steidl, without the help of a recorder, in rare cases translated from German into English. Due to the velocity of the talk, parts are missing. Many repetitions are omitted. In messages, the missing of parts is indicated, else it is not indicated. These texts are not yet published.*

1<sup>st</sup> May 2011, Mercy-Sunday, Rome (beatification of John Paul II)

Holy Hour

The highest honour you can give to your parents, your family, your Church, your nation, is to be a saint. All of us should be saints. All you need to do is to “Do all that he tells you”, and avoid all He forbids. Whatever you cannot do, hand it over to God. If you are at the end of your strength, hand it over to Jesus. If you really mean Totus Tuus, it is a challenge to God to use you, and wherever you are, it will be according to the Will of God. John Paul II knew how to be a friend of God and a friend of all: young and old, black and white, catholic and non-Christians, ...

Saints are natural, truthful. They can make mistakes, but they do it with clean heart, without evil intentions. If you want to be a saint, you have to wake up and work for it, and toil!

14<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Saturday, Essen, Germany

Holy Hour

At prostration, during priestly ordination or religious profession, dies the old man, as in baptism, and a new man is being created. This happens also in the consecration to the Hearts of Love. It is a new life; whoever has done this consecration well, and well prepared, can say with St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Jesus and Mary live in me, God has re-created me.” God says: “I renew my Church, my world, my members always!” This renewal is as important as the creation... Fire lives through constant renewal... By calling you, God gives you new life. We are called, to show God’s Love to all mankind, to renew the whole world.

Who carries his/her weaknesses and sicknesses with love, the pains of that person turn to openings, like the wounds of Jesus, through which graces flow to all. When we complain and murmur, we show that we think that God hates us. No! I belong completely to God, Totus Tuus! When I walk, God walks with me. When you look into the Heart of Mary, it is there that you can see my home, as Jesus lives in the Tabernacle. Mary is my Tabernacle, there I live, there is my heaven – in heaven and on earth!

My Jesus, transform us! We are infinitely grateful to You, we thank you for all whom you have called to follow this way.

The cross is the Love that never ends. All other signs of love among human beings, sooner or later one becomes tired of it. The cross remains, this love has no end.

15<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Sunday, Germany

Vigil

When you give to God all that you are and that you have, God does with it what he did in Cana: Changing all; or as he did with the few breads and fishes: multiplying all.

The Lord spoke to us in the Gospel: "I am the door. I am the Good Shepherd. All, who came before me, are thieves and robbers... I am the only solution! I am the truth, I am the life, I am the way, I am the Way to the Father, I am the Way to eternal Life. Only through me one can come to the Father. All, who came before me are thieves and robbers..." Whoever clings to it till the end, must be saved. Whoever does not follow this truth, has destroyed himself. All our striving on earth is to unite with the Heart of God. How, if we do not know Him? It is absolutely necessary that you open your heart for God, so that God can reach all those, whom he wants to save through you. Only in union with Jesus we are saved... We have to donate ourselves always anew to God, as victim of Love, for he alone is my God, my Love, he alone is worthy!

16<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Monday, Essen, Germany,

Vigil

It is absolutely clear, what it means to have the fullness of life: To live in union with the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary, to live in union with the Most Holy Trinity, to live in union with the Holy Eucharist. What we are living here is heaven on earth... All flesh is like grass. Only what is done in Love remains forever. What is being thought, said, done in Love remains forever. Everything else is vanity, it will disappear. Only what is in Love, in the pure and holy Love, in union with the two wounded and bleeding hearts of Jesus and Mary, remains forever. Whatever is separated from the Love of God, cannot remain.

Holy Hour

The greatest love is it to do something for God, to do it because of the will of God. This is the Love that remains forever. Many die for others, often not out of Love. Soldiers. Terrorists. Those who work and work, and suddenly stop, because they see that they do not receive thanks – what did they work for? Not for God. We shall thank each other, but we shall not expect thanks. For thanks are a thief, which is stealing our reward in heaven! Love is not just a feeling, it is a commandment. It can be commanded, and it is accomplished with an act of the will.

18<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Wednesday, Poland, Vigil

Mary said in Fatima that wars are punishment for sins. Prayer, repentance, God can solve all problems. All the problems in the world are small for God.

19<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Thursday, Częstochowa (Poland)

Vigil

We have come to this place, to seek the protection of Mother Mary. From the very beginning she was conscious of having been called by God for a special mission. From childhood she was busy seeking, what God wanted of her – which vocation? She was living for many years in the temple, seeking God and praying. She did not seek in vain. She prayed for the Saviour, with all Jews. She did not know that she was the one who was to bring the Saviour into the world, until the angel came to her. "I praise you, Father, for hiding these things from the clever and learned, and revealing them to mere children..." Mary prepared herself, opened herself, was not distracted, but sought: What does God will? When will he come? This preparation was very, very important. God has given her all the graces, but Mary also worked, with all her strength. This mission can be fulfilled only by God: To establish the Reign of His Love in the world. Only God can do it, as only God can change bread into His Body. But we have to make our effort, do Vigil and Holy Hour and through the Prayer of the Hearts of Love unite ourselves with the Two wounded and bleeding Hearts. When the

three apostles in Gethsemane slept off, Jesus was very disappointed, but they had received the vocation to do Vigil not as clear as we. He told us very precisely how we can fulfil our mission – we must make our efforts. What he told me, he is saying it also to all who follow me: The most important thing is the Vigil. If you do not do any other thing, but you keep the Vigil, then you have done everything... . We have to plan our day in a way that the Vigil does not suffer. The Reign of the Hearts of Love means that people keep the Vigil, in honour of the Hearts of Love. If we can do more: Fine. If not: It is enough. Michael fought in heaven not with a sword, but with adoration of God. Thus he defeated the devil. “You must fight with the weapons I gave you: Purity and Holiness, Prayer and Preaching.” Mary crushed the head of the devil – not in a physical fight, but by listening only to God. Thus she crushed his pride, not paying attention to him. “Look only on Me”, the Lord taught me... “At the end, my Immaculate Heart must triumph!” This means, at the end all will unite with her Heart, live the immaculate life, love God like Mary, serve God like Mary, worship God like Mary, keep Vigil and Holy Hour. If Mc Donalds says that at the end, Mc Donalds must reign, it means that at the end, all will eat at Mc Donalds. If Mary says, at the end, her Immaculate Heart must reign, at the end, all will be like her. All are looking for happiness: They look for it in pleasures, property, sin, good job, children; they are looking for it. When they see how happy one is in the Hearts of Love and in this type of life, then they must come. If, wherever you are – in the desert, in the bush, in the mountain – if you live the life of purity and prayer, the life of the Hearts of Love there: God promised: “I will cause extraordinary light to shine there, and people will be attracted to come. With it, I will draw all souls to myself, to my Love. It is the light of my presence, the light is Me.”

#### Evening Mass

At the Feast of the Hearts of Love 2010, in Rome, Jesus told me why it is so important to consecrate oneself to Mary. Jesus said: “I was so successful, because I entrusted my mission to Mary.” He consecrated the Church to Mary when he said: “Woman, see your son!”... We know that we are all children of God, through Mary. We thank God that Mary is venerated as queen here in Poland. ... What was the secret of Pope John Paul II? In simple words: Mary. He taught the whole world “Totus Tuus”. The Feasts of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary were first requested by the Polish Church. It is very important that Poland remains Catholic and Marian. He [i.e. John Paul II, in a vision or locution] told me at his beatification: “You have to *pray* for the grace of becoming a saint!”

20<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Friday, Poland,  
Vigil

The Heart of Jesus is the Heart of God, Heart of the Father, and also Heart of the Holy Spirit. The Heart of Mary is the heart of the Church. When we love, honour and represent the Two Hearts of Love, we love and honour the heart of God, of the Church, in these hearts we are rooted. So we have to do only what God wants and what the Church wants and does: To draw all men to love and honour the Heart of God, and to follow what the Church teaches.

#### Holy Hour and Vesper

Jesus, the Son, has learnt obedience – through suffering. Obedience is not easy. But I believe, disobedience is even more tedious. In disobedience, you yourself carry the responsibilities of the consequences.

#### Evening Mass

Here in this church Mary once shed tears, and the people came to comfort her. Why did she cry? Because so many children of her heart are far from God and die without God – thus they are lost. All are entrusted to Mary, for she is the Mother of the Church. Mary begged us desperately to go to all the world and to tell all the people how much God loves the world... God has sent us to go



everywhere and to preach the saving plan, the only solution of God... I tell you, the Lord has given us his last card, the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary. Please, pass the information on to all: They must unite themselves with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, through Holy Mass, through Holy Hour of Adoration, through Nightvigil, through the Prayer of the Hearts of Love! ... I give the testimony: when you are united with Jesus and Mary, you are already in heaven, it is heavenly life! Adoration is heaven on earth. To do the Will of God, to avoid what He forbids, to love the Church, to love our neighbours with the Love of God, not to hate anybody, that is heaven on earth. We thank God for John Paul II! One can say, that God made him pope to consecrate the world to the Merciful Jesus and to the Heart of Mary.

21<sup>st</sup> May 2011, Saturday, Poland, Vigil

When we get up in the night to pray, it is obedience out of Love of God... God told us that the highest time of battle is this, when all people sleep – the devil does not sleep, he cannot sleep. There is no rest for the wicked. Even when they are on the bed, they do not sleep but plan evil. This is the time when Jesus was so disappointed with the apostles – all slept, except one: Judas! Judas was wide awake! Because they were still half asleep when Judas came, it is understandable that Peter cut off only an ear with his sword... Jesus felt that the soldiers were on their way coming, and he fought – not with Judas or with the devil, but with himself: Overcoming himself. At the Mount of Olives he took the decision, he allowed himself to be flogged, he carried the cross, he allowed himself to have his clothing removed and be crucified, here he died for us. What came after was only the realisation. For us the Vigil is the time to overcome ourselves, for the salvation of souls. If we cannot win the battle of the Vigil, we cannot win anywhere.

Sins of the flesh – today, sins are everywhere permitted, exposed and offered. If you tempt somebody to sin, you participate in that sin! Modest clothing is very important. But if a soul has people who pray for her, she can hardly get lost. It is very, very important to pray for people when they die. Peter, John and James did not understand this, unfortunately. But Mother Mary was there. The worst temptation for Jesus was not in the desert, but on the cross: the temptation of unforgiveness. Without forgiveness one cannot save souls. It is difficult to forgive those, who hurt us, persecute us, and do not repent. But we have to forgive always, so that our heart is always full of love and transformed.

Before you can save other souls, you have to purify first your own soul. You must be a friend of God, before you can intercede for others. That is why it is the only solution for us to be united with Jesus and Mary!

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2011, Sunday, Poland, Sunday-Mass

Adam and Eve were pure and holy, the sin separated them from God. Holiness is union with God, and sin is separation. If we learn from John Paul II, from childhood on he sought the will of God. He always did his best – as pupil, student, worker, priest, bishop, pope. As a family-father, to do the best for the family. As worker to do the best in the work – out of love of God, and thus always staying in the presence of God. That is the way of holiness. All people are called to unite themselves with God, to unite with the Heart of God. You are always called to live the unity with God – as the president of a country, as mayor, as teacher, as priest, as bus driver, as housewife, as the person cleaning the public toilets, as labourer, black and white, those who are sick and those who are healthy... unite with the two wounded and bleeding Hearts! God wants to lead all to perfection. Jesus said: “I am the Planner and the Fulfiller, the First and the Last... I have come to take my own into my care. The whole of creation is mine.”

“Who sees me, sees the Father.” Every man can say this, not like Jesus, who is God, but all are created in the image and likeness of God. When we commit sin, we destroy it, we can no longer represent God. But if we live a pure and holy life, we can say: “You want to see God? Look at me – I am a child of God.” In heaven, there are uncountable holy men and women, billions, but not all are beatified. John Paul II is loved even by Moslems and pagans, for he loved all, he radiated the

Love of God. He had a special love for the youth. He knows how many temptations they undergo. We thank God for all young people who follow the pope... John Paul II taught us unity with Jesus and Mary, the Two Hearts of Love; he taught us humility, when he kissed the ground in every country he visited, and in every country he visited a Marian shrine. But the highest he did in his life was the celebration of Holy Mass. Holy Eucharist, Mary and charity: Whoever lives thus, will be holy...

To do the own will, and not the Will of God, that is sin.

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011, Monday, Poland, Evening May-devotion

How great is priesthood! It is the twin-sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist, for it was born in the same moment... So many priests originate from Poland; it is a great gift of this country to the world, that Poland is nurturing so many holy priests. That is why it is so important to protect the families!

24<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Tuesday, Poland,  
Vigil

The Lord will not destroy the world, because of you, because you are in the world and loving Him; also because of the Holy Eucharist, because He is there in the world...

How did Mary become Mother of God? Only through prayer... How did Jesus succeed to save us? By saying, there at the Mount of Olives: 'Father, your Will be done!' And on the cross, he said the same: 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit!' Then he said concerning us, concerning the world: 'Father, forgive them!'...

Many thought, the year 2000 will be the year of the triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The triumph does not depend on a date, but it depends on people. When there are enough people, who get up in the night and keep Vigil, and keep Holy Hour during the day, the Triumph is there. God must find such people who say the Prayer of Love, in the night at least 100 times, in the Holy Hour by day at least 50 times.

Morning Mass

In Mary we have everything. Mary told me: "I have given you my heart – what are you lacking?!" Nothing! When you have Mary, you have Jesus, the Church, all graces and blessings... Please, do not allow impurity to enter into Poland. Do not allow uncontrolled sexuality, abortion, and oh! homosexual relationships<sup>1464</sup> to enter here! Block it off, with these the devil has destroyed uncountable souls! Protect your youth, your children! Mother Mary, protect this country, protect us, protect me also – I need your protection... Mother Mary is such a good teacher. In very short time she taught the servants to listen to Jesus and to do what he said....

Salvation happens only through unity with God, and this happens only through Jesus – Jesus is our way to God. And the unity with Jesus happens only through Mary – only Mary knows Jesus. The prayer of the Hearts of Love is prayer of unity...

28<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Saturday, Switzerland, Holy Mass

When one is strict with oneself like Brother Klaus of Flüeli, one cannot easily fall into sin... I do not understand someone who "left all for the sake of Christ", and then complains about hardships: You thus lose the glory, but the pain remains!

The New Creation, when only Love will reign, must soon come. Switzerland had no war for over 600 years now. So it is possible, here on earth, to make peace, to abolish wars, to destroy wickedness, sin and devil! That is what God wanted from the beginning, that his Love will reign in the world. We thank Brother Klaus for all he suffered, for himself, for his country, for the world.

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<sup>1464</sup> According to the knowledge of the author, Father Montfort never personally and knowingly met a person with homosexual tendencies. She is convinced Fr. Montfort would receive such a person with all the respect and love he has, as he does with everybody. But he considers homosexual acts as seriously self-destructive acts.

Isaiah has seen how wolves and lambs came together in peace – that happened at the grave of John Paul II. Peace and Love: That is what God wants. We have to be strict with ourselves like Brother Klaus: We are owing the world this effort, so that after us, peace will reign.

29<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Sunday, Germany, Holy Mass

We visited holy places of holy people. They marched the same ground, under the same sun, but they did the will of God perfectly. For us, there is only one way to sainthood: The way of union with these two wounded and bleeding hearts, by keeping the times of prayer. You can't keep them, unless you are pure, and purity means doing the will of God always. Purity means that no foreign idea enters your head. Eve lost her purity when she willingly listened to the snake. Mary listened only to God, and then closed her ear completely.

The Father told Jesus: 'Your way is the way of the cross.' Devil suggested other ways to him: Changing stones to bread, performing miracles in public, or, very easy, worshipping the devil. Devil continued to try to terrorize Christ, through Peter he tried to oppose him. He tried to terrorize also Mary when she prayed, but she ignored him. She knew that only what God approves will happen to her...

30<sup>th</sup> of May 2011, Monday, Germany

Vigil, sermon

We have the power not only to exorcise the devil, but to kill it. It has no power, we have the greatest power ever given to a creature, but it can be exercised only in complete union with God; if there is no sin, no hatred, no wickedness. God will not intervene and bring all to fulfilment, until you have exhausted all your human energy. God would not have raised Christ from the dead, if he had not died completely, poured out all his blood, and if he had not been buried. Lazarus was a preparation. Jesus waited until he had really died, was buried and began to decay. The apostles went fishing – the whole night. They caught nothing, not even a crayfish. Then they caught the largest – God likes to show that it is He who has done it. The miracle at Cana – when the wine had finished. No more wine! Mary intervened. God wants us to exhaust our whole strength, our whole life, then God will come. Gideon wanted to fight God's battle with thousands. God told them to reduce them, then again. They won only by making noise – to show that it is God who is doing it [cf. Judges 7,2-22].

Was someone created immaculate before Mary? At least, Adam and Eve. And others, I believe there were others who then disappointed God, saying No. Or who could not even be approached by God with the grace of Immaculate Conception, as sin and hatred prevented it. He had to wait, wait uncountable years, till Mary appeared!

Holy Hour

From now on, the Come-letter must be issued every month, at least 10 pages: Messages, preachings, photos, testimonies and activities. And our publications must bear the name of an author. Someone must witness.

1/6/2011, Wednesday, Essen, Germany

Vigil

At burial, there should be thanksgiving – unfortunately, it is not. We must thank and praise God for the uncountable good things! If I am to plan my own burial and brochure, there will be nothing else but thanksgiving to God! If I am to choose how I will die, I will like to die at Mass, at the end of Mass. The burial of our Sister Marie-Pierre was more of thanksgiving. All our struggle here on earth is to go to heaven! Our going to school, our working, our eating ... The only person we have to cry about is Judas. For he is lost, for ever and ever. All of that person is gone! Everything around him was a waste. It would have been better, he would not have been created: Christ said it. But once someone is in heaven: wow! John Paul II is the saint who has the most wide-spread quantity of "relics" of things he touched. The highest thing you can do for your family, your country, is to be a

saint. Let us therefore help each other to reach it. In the Hearts of Love we have the best and surest way to holiness. I have gone to all continents, except Australia (I have to go to Australia!) everywhere we can live this life!

Johannes Paul II hat jedes Land, das er besuchte, geküsst. Damit hat er es Gott geweiht, geheiligt, es in sein Totus Tuus einverleibt.

At the end of the Vigil-Mass:

If a parent of our members is clearly dying, a member or more members are to be assigned to stay with him or her, praying, visiting every day! If a member herself dies, all available members should be as near as possible to the person, day and night in prayer, keeping Vigil, celebrating Mass near her...

1/6/2001, Wednesday, Banneux, in a hotel/retreat-house near the apparition-site: retreat for four persons.

There is no need of talking on why we are so few. Jesus was ready to die for a single soul, to become man for a single soul. He would have become a man only for Mary, died only for Mary and John. Mary alone is greater than all the saints. But even for any soul – “They are my souls – the souls of your brothers and sisters. Poor blind folk! Induce them to come back to me!”

Das Ende ist nicht das Ende der Existenz der Welt, sondern das Ende von Hass, Bosheit, Sünde, Krieg, das Ende des Teufels! Das Ende der zeitlichen Welt ist der Beginn der Ewigkeit, der Beginn des Himmels!

Holy Hour

Wer in Banneux ist, ist auch in Belgien. Wer in den Herzen der Liebe ist, ist auch in der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit. Wer mit Maria vereint ist, ist auch mit Jesus vereint. Wer von Jesus geführt ist, ist auch vom Geist geführt. Jesus sagte: „Wer euch sieht, sieht mich.“

3/6/2011, Friday, Banneux,

Mass by 9.30am

Maria hat die Entscheidung getroffen und nie gezweifelt. Mary was tempted by millions of devils during her prayers.

At Evening Prayer

Whoever suffers in love, washes in the blood of the Lamb. That is why the blood of the Lamb can wash *white*. If you come to Vigil and Holy Hour, you suffer out of love. Mary – nobody flogged her, nobody nailed her. But she suffered with Christ, even more than Christ: The piercing, only her felt the pain. The persecution of the apostles, she suffered with this her children. And still, every sin pierces her heart. Every soul that gets lost makes her to suffer terribly. When the Lord showed it to me, it was terrible. A heart is very soft. And it is pierced by uncountable pins, by nails, by arrows. Every abortion, every theft, every joke against holy things pierce her heart ...

4/6/2011, Saturday, Héville, Belgium, Holy Hour

“Vigil and Holy Hour are the moments of supreme appointment with me. In these times I unite myself with you in a very special way. I unite my eternal will with your loving will. Do not allow anything to obstruct my communication to you. I communicate to you not only my words, but also myself. It is a person-to-person exchange. I give myself to you, you give yourself to me. As I am united to my Father and Spirit, I am united to you. We are united in persons. It is the deepest possible union, the origin of the union in the Holy Trinity.”

If we live our life between the two pillars of Vigil and Holy Hour, the enemy has no power over us! One of the greatest things Pope John Paul II did, is to make the Holy Hour a universal catholic observation. It is not strange that he died around the Mercy Sunday, and he was beatified on Mercy Sunday. With it, he made a very important step towards the proclamation of the Feast of the Two

Hearts of Love. “My son, take up your book and write. Write what I tell you. It is time for me to talk to you. I want to talk to you every Holy Hour and Vigil. Please, listen and obey! I want you to be very strict with yourself and with those around you, especially the sisters. The first area of attention is love. Prayer and works of Love! Stamp out every appearance of wickedness, untruthfulness, ... Please, for the sake of the survival of my Congregation, for the sake of my honour and glory, be very strict! Love them with all the pure and holy love that you are, but be very strict with purity and works of love. I bless all those who participate in the Holy Hour. I pour my eternal blessings also on my Pope, my beloved Pope of the Hearts of Love. The blessings of the Holy Hour of Love are infinite and eternal, as Love itself.”

“My son, suffer all he wants you to suffer, and all will be o.k. Preach all he wants you to preach. You are the hope of the human race.”

5/6/2011, 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Eastertide, Beaureain, Belgium

Mass by 10.45am in the first, main chapel of the adoration-church of the apparition-site

Something continues ringing in my mind: Mary is not only Mother of Jesus. When God spoke again, before dying, before Mary ceased to be a mother as her only son died, and she conceived – us. Nine days she carried the disciples in her womb and then gave birth to the Church. The one child must die, as Isaac had to be sacrificed, to be multiplied, for Abraham to become a father of many nations. Mary knows that she cannot conceive by her own power. Nor can she go to a man and receive pregnancy – it would have destroyed her virginity. Jesus is a Heart of Love, God of Love. The desire of Jesus was to establish his Reign – but not alone, but in union with Mary. He does not want to be honoured and loved alone: The commandments of love of God and love of neighbour are now fused together by the incarnation.

Mary is the foundation of God’s confirmation that I will never fall away from his grace and love: He gave her to me as my mother. We want to bring all hearts of all peoples and put them in her heart.

8/6/2011, Wednesday, Paray-le-Monial

Vigil with some French members

Die Einheit in der Kirche wird dadurch wieder hergestellt, nicht indem Maria und Eucharistie zur Seite gestellt werden, sondern genau durch diese Verehrung wird Gott die Einheit bringen.

11/6/2011, Saturday, St. Barnabas, Tridentine «Monastère du Saint Sacrement» a 71800 Saint Laurent en Brionnais, France

Morning Mass with some French members

“I want to talk to you. The triumph is still waiting, because you are hiding yourself. It is in you that the triumph will come first of all. Continue writing. You have to come out openly, like the apostles, to own and proclaim the Triumph of the Hearts of Love, of Love. [...] In your case, you will have the victory over all the Goliaths in the world. [...] It has been ordained that the Love of God must reign. Any force [...] you must fight and triumph. Must bring all to submit to the most holy will of God. You are to bring all to the Love of God. ‘Bring all to the Love of God’ means: bring all to the will of God. You will bring all hearts to love the will of God. You are to bring all persons to the union with the most holy and most adorable will of God. Bring all hearts to the union with the two wounded and bleeding Hearts. You are sent for the erection of the Reign [...] Only one with divine power can establish the Reign of the Love of God. The Kingdom of God, for which all are waiting. [...] Die Erde ist noch nicht am Ziel angekommen, bis die Herrschaft errichtet ist. Erst dann ist Himmel und Erde vollständig. Verliere keine Zeit mehr. Deine Energie sollst du nur verwenden für das Reich. Ich will dich warnen: keine anderen Mittel sollen verwendet werden für die Errichtung des Reiches, nur was Gott dir gibt: Totale, bedingungslose Einheit mit dem Willen Gottes, nur das kann das Reich der Liebe Gottes errichten. [...]” What Mother Mary taught us – she is the best teacher of heaven and earth. Sie lehrt uns mit wenigen Worten.

12/6/2011, Sunday of Pentecost, St. Laurent en Brionnais, France

Vigil

Have you received the Spirit?! [All keep silent.] I can see in you, that you have received the Spirit of Love!

Europa tut mir leid: Es hat sich auf der Basis von Geld vereinigt – das hat keine Dauer! Ohne Gott ist es ein Turmbau von Babel, und wird so enden. [From the end of vigil till 5.45 am, he remains in the church.]

Morning Mass

Wir feiern den Geburtstag der Kirche, nicht nur vor 2000 Jahren, sondern was hier und heute geschieht.

I want to concentrate on two gifts of the Holy Spirit: Love and unity with God. If you are in union with God, we will be in peace with sun and moon, with the earth, with death even, like St. Francis. I am warning the Europeans to build their union with God, if not, they will be like atheistic U.d.S.S.R., it must collapse. See the Church: built on God, on the Holy Eucharist, on the Holy Spirit, on Love, on Mary – it will last forever!

14/6/2011, Tuesday, Vila Cã, Portugal

Vigil with Portuguese, German and Nigerian members

We celebrate in Latin. As we are an international community, really Catholic, we shall adopt the language of the Church, followed by English and the language of the country.

We thank God for Portugal! Our first day in Portugal [13/6] was wonderful. We started with Mama Maria, she taught us for long. [After rosary and Mass in Fatima, he seemingly received a message.] We saw the love of Mama Maria for Portugal and the love of the Portuguese for Mama Maria. Poland and Portugal have such an outstanding love for Mary! [Someone complains about removal of crosses in public places and gay “marriages”]. This is the EU-disease. God will not allow people to throw him out of his creation. God will allow us to do our will. Doing our will will bring us suffering. You think to enjoy yourself, at the end you see that your life is useless. If you obey God, nature will obey you. When we reached Fatima, it was raining. I prayed – Mother Mary, take care of this weather! It was then a very beautiful weather.

We are warning the EU – a union without God must destroy itself. Build on God, on Love, on Mama Maria!

Dear sisters and brothers, we are very happy and grateful to God to be chosen for this mission, which really makes creation and life meaningful. Without it, it would have been better it would not have been created. For if the creation goes against God, what is the use of it? In the OT, God regretted having made man. And he sent the deluge. Only what is united to the will of God will be saved! This union will be done in Love. Only what is in love with God will survive. This Love is given to us especially in the Hearts of Love. I am praising God for hiding these things from the clever and learned. Are you aware? God wants to save the whole of creation through you and me.

Yesterday at Fatima, Our Lady made it clear to me what God wants: A family, a community where His will will be done: The family of the Hearts of Love. He wants a city, where all will be done according to his will. What Moses said: “You are a people chosen by the Lord...” How do you show that you belong to God? Purity: freedom from stain, from sin: all that is against the will of God. Purity is both physical and spiritual: In your thinking, in your wear...

There is one problem which is difficult – that 16 years old girl, of which Mary [in 1917] said, she will be in purgatory till the end of the world – what did she do? Wie Adam und Eva, die für ihre Sünde nicht in die Hölle stürzten, wie Luzifer, aber sie und ihre Nachkommen müssen es büßen bis zum Ende der Welt. It cannot be abortion. Abortion is murder. Who commits abortion will go to hell, not to purgatory... Our discussion is not for the sake of curiosity. The sense of sin has vanished. People drink sin like water. One man came from a very clean environment, and he came into an apartment with a shoemaker, and the leather, when wet, was smelling. He said: “I cannot

breathe here!” But after two weeks he got used to it. People also get used to sin – but the consequences remain! When I read the first time about fornication, I cried two days, shedding tears. Here it happens daily. Even a small lie is a bad sin. A lie is never a joke, it is a sin before God! God wants us not to commit any sin, but to do the will of God day and night. It is possible to stay in the world without sin! Only devil teaches that it is not possible. God said: “Please, my son, my Love, build me a throne, where I will be adored on earth, in close imitation of heaven. Build me a family, where my will be done, on earth as in heaven. Build me a community, where my Heart of Love will be honoured, [...]”

#### Morning Prayer

Please, prepare the prayers well. It is the work of the Preparer to come earlier and to prepare it.

#### Holy Hour in the house of Fernanda in Oiã, with 27 members

Wo du bist, und Menschen beginnen, Unreines zu reden oder zu tun, musst du laut protestieren: „Stopp das!“ Wenn sie nicht hören, musst du deine Kleider zerreißen und dann weggehen! Du musst sehr streng reagieren! Warum? Schau mal in die Hölle! 90% sind da wegen Sünden des Fleisches. Wir sind Gott ähnlich nicht durch das Fleisch, sondern durch die Seele. Es gibt drei bodenlose Abgründe. Erstens, Sex. Wer einmal da einsteigt, fällt immer tiefer. Morgen werden sie Tiere heiraten wollen, und mit ihnen schlafen. Und dann sich mit Maschinen erregen... Es gibt kein Ende. Ein anderer Abgrund ist Geld. Je mehr Geld du hast, um so mehr brauchst du. Der dritte ist Macht. Je mehr du hast, um so mehr willst du. Und der Teufel verkauft Macht! Um den Preis deiner Kinder, um den Preis ihres Ehepartners, um den Preis eines Teiles ihres Lebens...

Maria sagte mir: „Du kämpfst für die Herrschaft meines Herzens – wie kannst du denken, dass ich dich verlassen kann?!“ Wenn eine einzige Seele verloren geht, hat Gott verloren: War der Tod Jesu umsonst, war der Papst umsonst, alle Kirchen umsonst, die Sonne umsonst, die ganze Schöpfung umsonst!

16/6/2011, Thursday, parish St. Antonio de Cimo in V.N. Gaia

Vigil with ca. 60 people

Für Russland war die Lösung die Weihe an das Unbefleckte Herz Mariens. Gott verlangt jetzt diese Weihe: „Weiht mir eure Familien, eure Pfarreien, eure Diözesen, eure Länder, die ganze Welt!“ Gott hat gezeigt, wie mächtig diese Weihe ist. Wir müssen unsere Familien den Herzen Jesu und Mariens weihen. Der Pfarrer von Ars hatte alles versucht, aber niemand kam Sonntags zur Kirche. Dann hatte er die Eingebung von Maria: „Weihe deine Pfarrei meinem Unbefleckten Herzen.“ Er hat es gemacht, und innerhalb kurzer Zeit war die Pfarrei komplett verwandelt. Ich frage euch: Wie oft habt ihr in diesem Juni gebeichtet? Beichte! Sehr, sehr wichtig. Eines der effektivsten Mittel gegen die Sünde; es reinigt die Seele und den Körper auch. Maria sagte, Kriege sind Strafe für Sünden. Ich sage euch: Krankheit auch; nicht alle, aber viele Krankheitsfälle. Krankheit kam durch die Sünde von Adam und Eva in die Welt. Wenn wir gegen Gott rebellieren, rebelliert die Natur auch gegen uns. Wir müssen aufhören zu sündigen, zur Beichte gehen, und dann zur Kommunion. Unwürdige Kommunion ist Sakrileg! Und dadurch sind viele gestorben. Gott will *alle* Seelen retten. Er hat uns gelehrt, dieses Gebet zu sprechen: „Rettet alle Seelen!“ Jesus sagte mir: „Dieses Gebet sollst du überall und jederzeit beten. Dein Herz soll mir immer sagen: ‚Jesus! Maria! Ich liebe euch!‘“ Mein Bischof hat mich von allen Aufgaben befreit, damit ich in alle Pfarreien, alle Länder gehen kann um zu predigen.

#### Washing of feet before lunch

Ich will euch erinnern, dass Fußwaschung für unsere Gemeinschaft essenziell ist, konstitutiv! Jesus hat sie gemacht, bevor er die Heilige Eucharistie schenkte. Sein Hauptwerk war predigen – Er ist das Wort. Und das Wort hat die Jünger gereinigt. Aber da war ein Schmutz, der mit dem Wort allein nicht weggeht. Es brauchte die Tat. Um sie ganz zu reinigen, wusch er ihnen die Füße.

17/6/2011, Friday, House Coelho, Mozelos, Portugal

Vigil with ca. 20 people, including a student-priest

Are you happy? Whenever we are coming here, we are received with such joyfulness! Such a highly placed family, but humble and serving. There are people who are rich both physically, economically, and in graces and prayers. A rich man in Nigeria used to donate so much that people began protesting. He responded: "The hand of the giver is always over the hand of the receiver." Jesus also said: "If I do not give you my service, you have no part in me." We now give ourselves, in prayer, and all souls in the world are benefitting from our prayer. God has ordained that we shall fight and win this battle for him! Never be weak.

I thank God for this land Portugal, where Mary appeared and said: "No matter what happens, at last, my Immaculate Heart must triumph!" No amount of evil or moral decay or union of kingdoms or atheism can stop it. God has ordained it. And we are called to fight for this triumph. God can never allow the devil to defeat him. How can darkness defeat light? God is supreme! We fight a battle which is already fixed on triumph.

David and Goliath: David had to do his part, then God guided the stone and gave the strength. Equally, we also have to play our part, say the prayer. God will guide it and use it to destroy the devilish empire. Never be weak in prayer!

Our Lord said in the Gospel: your heart is where your treasure is. Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? When we were seminarians, one day the rector said to us: "If the seminary is burning now, I will just go to the office and take two documents. The rest can burn!" Where is your treasure? XY – if you are asked to take only one thing from your house if it burns? The Primas of Poland, when the communists carried him to prison, and they told him to carry his things, he took only the bible. I have two treasures, which are united: The Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary. We have these two Hearts – we are the richest! No gold or Euro of this world can buy these Hearts. Not even a single soul. By the cost of something, the prize, you know its value. The prize of souls is the blood of Jesus, Jesus Himself!

### Holy Hour

Wenn ich dich mit meiner Liebe liebe, gebe ich dir, was ich will. Viele Mütter tun das: Sie geben dem Kind und leiten das Kind, so wie sie es möchten, nicht immer wie das Kind ist und geschaffen ist. Es ist manchmal sehr zerstörerisch. Oder wenn ich dich mit deiner Liebe liebe, gebe ich dir, was du willst: Ich sage dir, was du hören willst, auch wenn es eine Lüge ist. Aber wenn ich dich mit Gottes Liebe liebe, gebe ich dir, was Gott will, und diese Liebe führt zu Gott.

Heute, Freitag. Um 15 Uhr war Jesus gestorben. Dadurch hat er diese Stunde geheiligt. Und Jesus hat versprochen: „Wer diese Stunde heilig hält, den lasse ich nicht allein in seiner eigenen Todesstunde. Ich komme mit Maria, und seine Todesstunde wird die Stunde seiner Verherrlichung.“

In the reading, we have seen the typical Paul. He was always a fighter for God! Why Paul killed Stephen, why he went to Damascus, is his zeal for God: He thought the Christians are destroying the religion. Until God confronted him: "You are not fighting for me, but persecuting me!" "How, when, where!?" "I am Jesus!" Jesus is God...

Paul said: "These mega apostles – I am more than they." How do you measure love? By dying. By doing all to the point of dying. Sacrifice is the measure of love. Ask yourself: What have you suffered for Jesus? A very fat Monsignor, when he could hardly walk again after lunch, he said in joke: "See what we are suffering for the Church!!!" Sacrifice is the most happy thing. What was your happiest moment as a mother with your children? Was it not the birth? And when they were drinking you? The devil is teaching that happiness is pleasure: sex, sex without children, without responsibilities! Eating, eating, then vomiting, and going back to eat! The real joy is in suffering for God, for souls. See my [swollen] knee – since November 2010. And I used it in December to go on the knees from Ugwu Nso to the Cathedral. And daily 100 Holy Steps, which in the day are so hot



that we can bake bread on it. We do it, not because we like suffering, but because we love God! To make others happy, makes us happy. Paul was not complaining in his sufferings, but praising God. Some parents complain to their children that they suffer too much for them. They should not complain! To suffer for them should be your joy. Your child is your cross and your crown. As Mary carried the cross – her Son. And she received the crown – her Son. That is why she is queen of heaven and earth. All men are suffering, but not all are offering it to God. Only sacrifice to God has value.

18/6/2011, Saturday, Mozelos, Portugal

Vigil with old and new members

I am very grateful to God for giving me, me and you, this great mission of Love. In every Mass I celebrate I must thank God for his infinite Love. This Love is clearly shown in the mission he gave us: To live Love, to pray Love, to preach Love... Lord, we can never thank you enough for choosing us for this greatest mission on earth! Do not ask “Why me?” There is no answer. The only answer is: “Because God loves me.” Sisters! Brothers! Are you always thanking God for this mission, for His Love?! If not, you must repent, and every day clearly thank God for Him! What would have been of my life without this mission? It would have been nothing and misery! But now, he has poured all of his blood, his Love, his Heart, all he has and is into me... Let us listen: “My Love, my son, do you know that I never stop talking to you?” After the Mass in the church of St. Anthony, someone followed me and was interested: “Do you see Jesus and Mary every day? You hear them every day?” I asked back: “If you live in your family, do you see your parents every day?” There at Ugwu Nso, people often say: “I have seen Jesus!” “I have seen Mary!” I told them: Jesus and Mary not just appear at Ugwu Nso – they live there! They do not come and go. They live! God has chosen that place as his dwelling place. Angels and saints live there. They can come out, if they want.

[Message of before September 2004:] “Just as I never stop loving you, I never stop communicating my message of Love to you always. Please, never stop listening to me, and you will be able to do all well. [...] You will be able to give yourself to others wholly and entirely. [...] You are to begin a revolution of Love. [...] It is the beginning of the Coming of the Holy Spirit. [...] This has changed the whole face of the earth. It is like the Incarnation that [...] united all in one. [...] The Holy Spirit came among them [...]. So it is with you: Love has come among men and dwells among men. Let the light of Love shine! [...] You are this fire. [...] The light of Love you are. [...] You are my Love, you are really my Love! Remain my Love. [...] When I was giving you the promises of the Hearts of Love, you also thought they are too much. And I asked you: ‘Do you know how long I waited to establish my Reign in the world?!’ Now the Reign of my Love is there! [...] you are me. I am you. Understand it simply as it is said. My words are not complicated. Understand it simply: You are my Love. [...] This incarnation of Love, this outpouring of Love, this Reign of Love, this triumph of Love – now is the time! My Love must reign on earth as it is in heaven. My son, do not be confused, do not doubt! It is your Love, your God, your All – I am your Lord Jesus Christ.” As Jesus was talking, Mary was also there. I asked her: “What shall I do?” She replied: “Do not do anything. Just listen to him, and do all he tells you. He is your God, your Love, your All. Just listen to all he tells you, and do all he commands you. Why are you afraid? [...] Just as I am the mother of Christ, I am the mother of Love. Just as I am the mother of God made man, so I am the mother of Love made man. You are Love made man. You are God’s Love made man. Do not be worried about this. [...] That is the truth, the simple truth. God is truth himself, God cannot deceive. You need the Spirit of God to understand God. I myself, I did not understand all God said. I myself, I did not understand all Jesus said, even as a small child. But I treasured all in my heart. It is only in heaven that I understood all God wanted me to understand. What is happening to you is that God is revealing yourself to you. [...] I know you. [...] He is simple, truthful, faithful. [...] Get up, go to him, listen to him and do all he tells you. I am the Mother of Love, write all he tells you: Write all in your heart, treasure them in your heart. Your heart is a Heart of Love.” Jesus continues speaking:

“I want you to remain with me. [...] The world is coming to an end. The end is change, the end is Love; there will be many very fast changes in the world, so fast, that many will not be able to catch up. But do not be afraid. All who are in my Love will be carried along by my Love. There will be many destructions. The destruction is purification. After, there will be a new paradise. The hatred will reach a peak, and then they will fall into the abyss. The abyss will swallow all who neglect and hate the will of God, all who refuse the will of God. Love, prayer and sacrifice will reach a summit. All who refuse it will reach a summit and force themselves to fall into the abyss. [...] Please, my son, make haste and proclaim my Love, my Prayer of Love, my devotion in the whole world. All who remain in my Hearts of Love are saved. [...] Establish centres of perpetual adoration. Very many centres! Centres everywhere, where human beings will find refuge, in times of terrible tribulations. [...] It is already on the door. The diabolic forces try to unleash the last battle. [...] The forces of God, of Love of God, of fear of God, of obedience to God will win. But the forces of evil are not yet spent forces. They are fighting. In a very corny way they are trying to infiltrate into my Church, the only institution in the world, which they have not and cannot take control of. They have sent their tentacles into every sphere of life: film and entertainment, [...] But my son, do not make any mistake: They are not in charge. I am God! I am in charge of all my creation. [...] I allowed that so as to hasten the total purification. Those who purify themselves with prayer will not suffer the purification by fire. [...] The nature will rise against human civilization without God. What I now want is the civilization of Love. This is championed by my Hearts of Love, my Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of my Mother. [...] When you see and hear of the calamities, do not be afraid. Set up my emblem for all eyes to see. [...] Every eye that sees my emblem of Love and loves it, [...] I will count them all among my saved, my beloved ones. Devil is trying to distract you to receive my message in its purity and holiness. I will secure you! I will not allow him to distract you. Remain fixed on me. I am fixed on you. [...] You have seen a very tiny sign of this distraction. [...] Especially leaders of peoples and nations, when they scheme to establish their own caprices, instead of my Will – it is I who created the world, not they! When they seek to establish themselves as the power in the world, tiny natural things will overthrow them. Viruses and bacteria and atoms will rise against them. [...] But if they love my will, everything will work for good. They will experience prosperity and blessing. The devil is trying to distract you from receiving my message. [...] I have no plan to destroy my creation. I have the plan to bring my creation to fulfilment, to union; fulfilment and union in my Love. When the stubborn and godless creatures, who try to manipulate the genesis and origin of things, and try to manipulate the things against my holy will, they will turn against them and destroy them. [...] There will be a special madness and disorder, if they continue to tamper with the genesis of things. I want human beings to make progress, but not the progress of destroying my creation! Everything I created is good. Let them create their high towers and big cities and projects without me... let them come together, form unions against my holy will. Let them enact laws without reference to my holy will. They will end in confusion and destruction! Let them rebel against me, and nature will rebel against them, even their own brains and systems of their bodies will rebel against them! New and incurable sicknesses will come. The devil will play them against themselves, in the pretext of helping them. [...] The devil cannot love them. The forces of evil cannot do them any good, but only bring destruction. Please, my son, assemble all my children in my Love. [...] Now go and lead my people in prayer. My little family will be the greatest family in the Church and in the world. [...] O! My Love must reign. [...]”

It is a very deep message, revealing what we are, and what will happen, and is happening. Do not be afraid. Do not worry about useless things: Food, clothing, house, money! Why do you allow yourself to be distracted on useless things and forget the most important, which is the Kingdom of God, the Reign of God!

Midday Prayer in Oiã, Rua 30 de Junho, 36, Bloco 1

Carry each other's burdens, Your sister and your brother is not a burden, but his/her problems are your problems. If your sister is hungry or has tooth-ache, you have it also. God made it like that, that we are bound to each other. Do not look for any way to be freed from anyone!"

Holy Hour in the Church of the Clarissas do Desagravo, Louriçal near Pombal, Portugal, with ca. 60 persons

Maria ist der Thron Gottes hier auf der Erde, nur durch Maria haben wir die tiefe Erkenntnis der Heiligen Dreifaltigkeit bekommen. Kannst du dir vorstellen, wie die Welt aussehen würde, wenn Maria zu ihrer Berufung Nein gesagt hätte? Jesus sagte: „Ich konnte in niemandem Mensch werden seit der Erschaffung der Welt, sonst in niemandem!“ Hätte sie Nein gesagt, so wären wir alle verloren. Mama Maria, du wurdest unbefleckt empfangen, und auch unbefleckt erzogen: Die Eltern haben sorgfältig verhindert, dass sie in schlechte Gesellschaft kam. Sie haben verhindert, dass Maria schlechte Worte hörte. Wäre Joachim ein Dieb gewesen, oder Anna eine zänkische Frau... Unsere Kinder, sie sehen viele schlechte Bilder... Wir danken Anna und Joachim, für wie ihr Maria erzogen habt! Maria hat auch gekämpft. Es war geschenkte Reinheit, aber sie hat gekämpft um es zu bewahren. Wir alle waren unbefleckt geboren, rein und heilig: in der Taufe. Aber wer hat die Taufgnade bewahrt bis heute? Ich möchte euch ermutigen, mehr zu kämpfen.

19/6/2011, Sunday of the Holy Trinity, Louriçal

Vigil with ca. 50 people

What makes us human beings is not our eating and drinking. Elephants and lions eat more, camels drink more. It is not our dancing – the fish dance better. It is not our beauty – peacock and antelope are more beautiful. The leopard is more powerful than man. What makes us human beings, is adoration of God, in our body. Angels need not sleep, eat, wash, iron, clean: They are only there for adoration. When Lucifer resigned his job of adoring God, he lost his essence, his nature. He no longer looked like an angel, but like a dragon, a monster! Also, any human being that goes to hell has lost his nature, his essence, and thus the person is no longer recognizable by God, who created us in his image and likeness.

Heute ist der Tag des neuen Anfangs. Der Herr spricht zu uns: „Meine Liebe, mein Alles, ich danke dir, dass du mir eine so schöne Dankesmesse gefeiert hast. Die Heiligen und die Engel im Himmel brauchen die Messe genauso wie die Menschen auf Erden und im Fegefeuer. [...] Let all who come for Vigil Mass know, that the condition for participation in your Vigil Mass is great Love of Me and the readiness to work with you.“

10am Sunday morning Mass

Gott lehrt mich Tag und Nacht, aber er lehrt mich nicht Dinge, sondern er gießt sich selbst in mich ein.

This thing happened on a Feast of the Holy Trinity. After Holy Communion I knelt down, and I felt something indescribable: Infinitely near and infinitely far; flowing around me, into me and from me to the outside, as if I am dissolving and it is dissolving in me, taking complete possession of me. I heard a voice, one voice with three tones, then later three voices: “I am God the Father” “I am God the Son” “I am the Holy Spirit”. With one voice: “You are Love. God is FatherSonHolySpirit. [...] Be what you are!”

Wir Menschen vergessen oft, wo wir herkommen. Für alles hat Gott einfach gesprochen und so geschaffen. Für den Menschen hat Gott Meeting gehalten: „Let us create man...“

I was so shocked as I heard yesterday that human beings, scientists, have started to mix human egg and sperm with animal genes. God warned us: “If human beings touch the genesis of man”, it will be the last straw which breaks the camel's back. The human being carries the breath of God! “A new madness will come out”...

“I the Father, ich spreche zu dir, mein Sohn! Ich bin der Ursprung der Liebe! [...] Ich segne dich! I am your blessing! [...] Your eternal place is in my Love. I embrace you. I kiss you always! I love

you always. My Love for you will never end.” What he says to me, I am saying it to all of you: When you come to the Blessed Sacrament: He is a person! Talk to Him, embrace Him, kiss Him: that is the proper adoration. Tell him: “I love you, I thank you for being my Daddy, mein Papi; I am your child!” See how He spoke to me; develop this love!

“My Love for you is Myself. [...] I sent you into the world to be my Love in the world at this time, so that the world will realize me as GOD-LOVE. Always be in Love, love all with my Love! [...] I love you!” He continues this, it is ringing for hours, days: He is Love, he speaks only Love, he looks only with Love!

God the Son also spoke. The three persons spoke. After the Father: “I, God the Son, your Love, your Heart, [...] I embrace you, I kiss you, [...] I thank you for being my Love! I love you with *all* the Love that I have! I love you with *all* the Love that I am! I am the source of all Love. All glory, all power belongs to me! [...] You are my Heart. [...] My Heart of Love! Remain ever in me, in my Heart of Love! [...]” Nach der Botschaft vom Heiligen Geist auch eine Botschaft von Maria. „I am the mother of divine Love. [...] There is no other Love than the Love born of me, the Love which is in me, the Love of the Trinity. All other things are love only to the extent that they accept and reflect the Love of God, and as much as they are united with the Love of God. Ich bin die Mutter der Liebe. Es ist meine Aufgabe, Liebe in der Welt zu gebären. Meine Aufgabe ist nicht beendet, sondern geht in dir weiter. Wie der Ewige Vater mir seinen Sohn gab, so that I take care of him, he has given you to me in this time. [...] You are the beloved born-of-me. You are my Heart. Take my heart, my pure and sinless heart. In it I have conceived God and brought to the world. I love you, my Love, my heartiest of Love! I will love you for ever and ever! [...]”

20/6/2011, Monday, Vila Cã, Portugal

Vigil with ca. 25 people

Der Teufel ist noch nicht tot. Er kommt auf drei Zugänge: 1. Unreinheit. 2. Mangel an Heiligkeit, besonders Mangel an Gebet. Der teufel treibt dich zu Aktivitäten, aber nie im Gebet. Er wird alle möglichen Beschäftigungen für dich schaffen, um dich abzulenken.

3. Uneinigkeit. Wenn die Menschen, die gegen den Teufel kämpfen, uneinig sind, sind sie schon gewonnen vom Teufel. Egal, wie sie beten, wie sie fasten: Die Tür für den Teufel ist schon geöffnet. Wenn die drei Zugänge zugemacht sind, wenn wir rein sind, stark im Gebet und vereint, dann hat der Teufel keine Chance.

If we do not pay attention to unity, if we allow party-ism, then the devil will just play with you and defeat you. Only 10% of mankind is not yet touched by the devil’s impurity...

Listen to the message to the members of the Hearts of Love: “Bitte, meine geliebten Kinder! [...] Für euch habe ich alles schon geplant! [...] My beloved children! For you, through you, in you I have crushed the head of the serpent. Hört auf mich! [...] I have called you from all parts of the world to be [...] part of the victory of the Hearts of Love. Ich selber habe den Teufel schon besiegt. [...]”

„Du hast mich gebeten, dir Helfer zu geben. Ich habe das gemacht. Ich habe Menschen für dich ausgesucht und mit großer Liebe beschenkt, und sie werden mit dir arbeiten. Ich werde sie zu einer soliden Familie formen. [...] Die selbe Liebe in der Dreifaltigkeit habe ich in sie eingepflanzt. [...] Diese Familie wird eine große Unterstützung für dich sein; sie sind meine Familie. [...] Sie werden meine Liebe ausstrahlen. [...] The spirit of oneness *must* live in them!! One in heart, in work, in prayer. Make sure that they are one! [...] Take full control and make sure that they are one. They must be united with you, their father, their love; with my mother, their mother, their love; with me, their Lord, their Love, [...]” If two quarrel, both must go.

30/6/2011, Thursday, Rome, at Opera Don Calabria, Via Giambattista Soria, 13

Excerpt of the Conference of Mons. Fortunatus Nwachukwu (friend of Fr. Montfort)

The Two Hearts are in union, but it is not a mixture. Whoever thinks of union as a mixture and becoming one in feeling, talking and thinking, will enter quickly into a marriage-crisis. Jesus and

Mary are different, they have differences, but no discussions, as we see in Luke, the young Jesus in Jerusalem, and in John, at Cana, and in the Synoptics, when Mary and the brothers want to speak to Jesus, and he says that the disciples are his family. There is a silence of the Scripture on what Jesus *did* after rejecting them, but other occasions show the intimate union of Jesus and Mary. Union, but different. Do not allow differences to disturb in the communities.

26/11/2011, Saturday before 1<sup>st</sup> of Advent, Ilorin, Brothers' noviciate

Mass in the evening, after the journey to Ilorin, sermon:

You must love the Lord your God with all your strength. If you preserve strength and do not spend it all on Christ, it is sin. If you carry the Blessed Sacrament and you look to another side, to people or to a statue, it is sin! If you carry another thing also, apart from Him, it is sin. If you are here in the noviciate, and you carry any other thing than Hearts of Love in your mind, you cannot be a Brother of the Hearts of Love. Whatever keeps you from prayer or makes you to be late is more important to you – and it shows that you are not worthy.

27/11/2011, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent, Ilorin, Sisters' noviciate

Vigil, Introduction:

The Lord is ushering us into his presence, the Holy of Holies, in this beginning of the liturgical year. And he is transforming us into the Holy of Holies. As we consume him in the holy Eucharist, he is consuming us. Man will never be God, but he is to be His image and likeness.

We have to reach the standard of “not doing my own will, but the will of the one who sent me.”

If Mary would not have done it, there would not have been any Advent. Mary alone was able to attract God from heaven, to incarnate in her. The meaning of the Church is to prepare a community, praying, preaching, where the second coming of Christ can happen. Every day is the end of the world for someone. The world is not our home. The Lord is my home, he is my Shepherd. So, the end of time is coming, for each one of us. But one day there will be the general end of time.

The locking of the Chapel-door 15 minutes to the time of prayer must continue here, both as a formation and for making it the image of the reality. There will not even be chance for you to say why you are coming late.

Whoever follows me, must follow me in doing His will. And I am telling you: the person you expect is already in your midst. Sacramentally. And He will come again: At the time and place of prayer. What we are practising now is what will be.

Sermon:

This Gospel-passage we heard, in Marc, is the last preaching of Christ. His very last preaching is: “Watch!” Stay awake! “If he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep.” If he finds you asleep, what will happen? There are two mayor sins you can commit, and they merit you expulsion from the celebration: 1) if you come late. 2) If you are found sleeping. You are not wearing the wedding-garment of alertness. If the sentry sleeps, he endangers the life of the whole army. When Saul pursued David, and slept in the night, David did not blame Saul. David blamed Abner, the general, for being so careless about the life of the king, sleeping. And God appointed us to be watching over souls.

Keep watch over your own soul. Can you do it? There was once a woman who came to pray for fruit of the womb. During preaching, I saw in a dream, a person came to her with a very small baby in the hand, offering it to her, for about 5 minutes – no reaction. The person went away with the baby, disappointed...

You, who are in charge of souls, you can't afford to sleep during Vigil.

This work cannot be done on a human level, it needs supernatural power. And that power takes over only, if your natural powers have expired. Prayer, fasting, abstinence makes you to ascend to that level.

This year is a year of great promises, to receive more and more graces from God, to correct your failures of the past, to unite yourselves more closely to the Two Hearts of Love. Profession is the highest type of bond. Bind yourself to God in love. You can't do it without the burning love, and the zeal to save souls. There is no better death than dying while saving souls. Any soul you pray for continuously must be saved.

Sunday Mass in the morning, Introduction:

All the Church does, is to prepare a people fit to receive Christ. The eye sees with light, the heart sees with love. Both light and love are attributes of God, but love is higher. That is why we see better with the heart.

Are you prepared, fit for the Lord? Christ does not wed bodies, he weds men and women, he weds His Church. Are you worthy? Are you a virgin as the Lamb? [The male novices respond a sounding "Yes!"]

A man married a girl who told him that she is a virgin. But on the marriage bed, there was no blood. That was the begin of complete rejection: "You have deceived me. You told me a lie! I married a bundle of lies."

Nobody is worthy to receive Christ, or to ascend to the altar. How dares the priest to repeat the words of Christ? First, because he was called. Mary did not say she was worthy, but she accepted the call and asked God to do whatever he wishes with her.

God told me, if someone lived as a harlot like Mary Magdalene, but repenting really from her sin, and called, found to be serious: "On the day of profession, I will give them a new virginity." Make sure that new virginity will never be soiled!"

Sermon:

On the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2004, the Lord gave me this responsibility: "My Love, My most beloved Love, the most important work you have to do for the Church is to conceive, give birth to and rear this Society of the Two Hearts of Love in the heart of the Church, to be what God wants it to be. Please, let nobody distract you from this work, do it very conscientiously well, to the best of your ability – I am with you both now and forever, Amen."

We have a very clear target: "My Love, conceive the best of children, give birth to the best of children, rear the best of children for God, for the Church, for humanity. Many things are facing the world, but I have given you the solution for all. This Society is the future, future of faith [...]. Ask whatever you need for the Brothers and Sisters of the Hearts of Love." God, give us your Spirit, Spirit of Love, all we are asking is your Holy Spirit! "Ask whatever you need for the priests, brothers, sisters and lay-apostles. Organize the work. [...] Face the noviciate of the Brothers and the Sisters."

The wild beast is trying to catch everybody with impurity, and many priests, sisters, bishops have fallen. Anyone who is not able to live the radical purity, we shall help the person to find another place. We shall help him, but he can't be here. By the time of St. Francis, materialism was ravaging the Church. Today it is impurity. The only way is: No contact! Avoid the contact, avoid it!

I want to rear best children – best in the area of purity, sacrifice and love. Sin can be only avoided, if you are completely consumed by God.

Holy Hour:

During Holy Hour, you not just say the prayers, but you do at least one reading of Gethsemane (Mt 26, 36-46; Mk 14, 32-42; Lk 22, 39-46), one reading of his death (Mt 27, 33-54; Mk 15, 22-39; Lk 23, 27-48), the reading of the piercing of his heart (Jn 19, 16-37 or 19, 23-37, or 19, 31-37), and then the message on the Holy Hour itself. Sr. Faustina immensely prepared our Holy Hour, spreading it in the whole world. But it is only a forerunner. John would point at Jesus and say: "This is the Lord." And his own disciples will leave him and follow Christ. And John is not annoyed. Sr.

Faustina wrote in one place, that the devotion to the Divine Mercy is a preparation for the Second Coming. She knows it very well.

You have to include in the Holy Hour the message on the Holy Hour [of the 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2002]: “My son, you must be very strict with yourself and the discipline of love and sacrifice among the members of my Society. Anyone who cannot do the Holy Hour by day and at least three hours of vigil by night need not be admitted to vows or promises among the brothers or sisters, less priests, or lay-apostles. Make the Holy Hour a complete hour, and the Vigil complete vigil, no matter where they are. In this way I mean to establish the Reign of my Love. I bless you and all the members. The principal prayer at Holy Hour and Vigil is the Prayer of the Hearts of Love. At Holy Hour, it is to be said at least 50 times, at Vigil at least 100 times. I bless you all.” One day, I was very sad: so much evil in the world! So much crisis... I prayed: “Lord, they have no more wine!” He answered: “Fill the jars with water! I will turn it into wine.” We have six jars: Mass, Vigil and Holy Hour on one side, 6, 12 and 4 o’clock on the other. Fill them to the brim!

After the short reading at Vespers:

Rejoice! The joy of the coming of Christ! ... But many, when they will see the truth about themselves, they will die. The light of the presence of Christ will make them see themselves as they really are, where they are. Many will die of fright. But rejoice! We are preparing for the Feast of 8<sup>th</sup> of December.

28/11/2011, Monday, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters’ noviciate, Sermon:

I want us to concentrate on the promises and blessings, especially on the Holy Mountain. We heard in the first reading of the Office in Isaiah of the Holy Mountain becoming the highest mountain – by way of establishment, not by adding sand. During Holy Hour we heard how the Lord said that he will establish the Reign of the Hearts of Love – when you and me live this life perfectly, uncompromising.

Establishment means erection – as you erect a diocese. Before erection, there are conditions. There must be serious preparations. You can compare the living of this life of the Hearts of Love to the dying of Christ on the cross. It was the way the Father chose, and the Son chose it also.

God knows what he wants. If one generation disappoints him, he waits for another. He is not in a hurry.

The Son asked: “Papa, must I drink this cup?! Is there no other way?” – “No, this is the only way.” And he drank the cup dry. “Papa, can’t you choose another person?” – “No, it is you who are the Chosen one, before you were born.” What the Lord requires from us is very simple: Just say the Prayer, live the Prayer, spread the Prayer!

My Love, my God, my All, thank you for choosing us, thank you for waiting so many years so patiently, thank you for making it easier for us to live the life perfectly!

This year is decisive. You can liken this year to the year which the wine-producer granted to the unproductive fig-tree, which he wanted to cut down. The Lord can no longer wait. He has no other solution than to unite to the Hearts of Love.

After the short reading of midday-prayer at Brothers’ noviciate:

We are absolutely sure that we shall be freed from the burden of sin, from the yoke of punishment. But Christ gave us the yoke of Love, of prayer; we are saved! This is our burden; the cross of damnation, hatred and wickedness is not our own. Let us carry our cross of Love with joy!

Holy Hour with Mass at Brothers’ noviciate

Sermon:

Why are you happy? Happiness is another word for love. If you love, you are happy. If you are newly fallen in love, you cannot even stop smiling, even if you burn yourself in the fire... You can’t even sleep. That is why only those who have great love of God can live this life of vigil every night.

In the Song of Songs, she asks: Have you seen my love?! If you are in love, your heart will be pursuing the person. That is why God incarnated. He couldn't stay there in heaven, he had to incarnate in the person he loved! That is why I am so happy: God loves me! And I love my Jesus!

The power to save! "All those who hear you, who see you, even those who slap you, they will all be saved." Whatever you do to us, you will be saved! If you get such a power, you will never be annoyed again. For those whom God loves, everything works to good. Then, how do you react to people? You always pity them.

Some people stole our stones at Orlu, and a sister asked me to pray there. I went and prayed: "Lord, bless all those who come here to steal stones..." – What is stones, compared with a soul? Nothing can be given in exchange for a soul. Nobody does evil willingly and knowingly. "Papa, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." The children in our schools, please, sisters, give them all the love and attention, even without payment! Pity for souls!... Jesus wept over Jerusalem. When the children of Fatima saw hell, they could not eat breakfast again happily, they tied penance-belts...

29/11/2011, Tuesday, Ilorin

Vigil at sisters' noviciate; during the sermon he reads a message:

"My Son, I have revealed to you the hidden mysteries of the Hearts of Love. It is this theology and spirituality, through which the hidden thoughts of many will be revealed. [...] Place it where it belongs: In the heart of the Catholic religion, it belongs to the very heart of Jesus, the heart of Mary, the heart of God, the heart of the Most Holy Trinity. It is Love! Love! Love! This is the heart of theology and spirituality, the heart of theologies and spiritualities. My Son, bring to the Love of God, the Love of me, to the love of the Most Holy Trinity, to the Love of Jesus and Mary, [...] to the love of self and to the love of the entire creation, to the pure and holy love. My Son, pray that the purification will not kill so many people.

There are times and places, in which you cannot allow any other person but me. There are times and places and spheres and mysteries, where I allowed only you to come in. [...] My Son, you delegate too much. Let it not be a sign of weakness or unwillingness to do my will of [...] teaching the whole world the union of the Two Hearts of Love, your most important assignment in life. If you delegate, you are bound to see that all is done exactly according to my Most Holy Will. All priestly function in the Society [of the Hearts of Love] is yours to perform and to delegate."

Many congregations close. Why? Are their founders no longer in heaven? – They have changed so much from the spirit of the founder that he cannot recognize them again as his children, and graces can no longer flow through him (or her) to them, and they dry up. Cut off from their fountain, by their General Chapters. When the great saint, St. Anthony, died, St. Francis came from heaven to present him to God. It will be me to present you to God, as you are a member.

Mary is Mediatrix of all graces: all graces pass through her, because she brought us Christ, who is the source of all graces. No grace without Him.

At Brothers' noviciate, after the reading of Midday-prayer:

The retreat should be for all – on 8<sup>th</sup> of December we have general renewal of commitment. We have it two times a year: 25<sup>th</sup> of March and 8<sup>th</sup> of December. Maybe it is providence: The Feast of the Hearts of Love in June, which falls into the high rainy season in Nigeria, we celebrate it in Rome. The 8<sup>th</sup> of December is a very nice time for a celebration in Nigeria... Everybody shall seek to renew themselves. A new life is coming to us on 8<sup>th</sup> of December.

We are happy, our formation is taking shape, for aspirants, postulants, noviciate.

At Brothers' noviciate, Mass during Holy Hour:

Sermon: Are you happy? Why? – Is being alive enough reason to be happy? Mary was happy, and all her reason centred on God. If you are happy outside God, you are walking on moving sand. If you are happy in God, that is Marian happiness. She does not rejoice in food. If you find happiness



in anything else than the Will of God, you are trading on slippery ground. I am happy because it is God's Love. The only thing which cannot be taken away from you! Dig for it – when God opens the door, nobody can close it. You would be most stupid to sell your birthright. My birthright is Hearts of Love, nothing can take it away from me. At Umuchima the bishop gave me 3-4 chaplaincies, apart from parish priest and rector of the school. When other priests complained that he gave so much to me, he took it away, one by one. Hearts of Love cannot be taken away from me, for it is God who gave it to me.

There shall be 30 days of preparation for the consecration to the Hearts of Love, 100 days of preparation for the solemn declaration [entrance into aspirancy], 2 years of postulancy, 2 years of noviciate. The cost of discipleship. If you don't know the cost of something, you don't know the value.

“These people that are to work with you, they must reject worldly influence, and must be prepared to service with their heart and mind. [...] They are to serve and listen to me alone! My throne is the Universal Centre, please, build it up to be my throne.

Anybody who brings serious problem to the Society shall be sent away immediately and without warning.

So many souls are being led astray, by falsification of Love. The clearest of Love is in the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. That is what you are: pure and holy Love. You cannot come back without establishing the Reign of Love. It may be as difficult as saving Sodom and Gomorrah, but never give up! Bring all to the Love of Me, of heaven, of the Church, [...]. You must win, but you must fight! Be what you are! And what you are and He who is will fight for you. Allow Him to use you, to unite all in Christ. [...]

After rosary-procession, he opens the retreat for those to be professed:

There is a level you must reach to make your profession meaningful. The most important thing about retreat is what comes after. Where it leads us to.

“I thank you for this loving Holy Hour. I am Love and I want to be loved, for it gives me the best opportunity to pour out my Love on my beloved who loves me.” As the wish of Isaac, who wanted a meal as occasion to bless the son. “Once you respond to my love, no matter how weak, I use it to give infinitely more blessings. My worst pain is not caused by sin as fornication, but by the rejection of my Love.” That was the reason why Judas went to hell. At Gethsemane, *all* apostles ran away, all denied him, all sold him, to get Barabbas. But Judas then rejected the Love of Jesus. Jesus knows how to handle sin, how to wash it clean. But the rejection of Love defeats the purpose of creating free creatures, who would freely love Him. Only Mary allowed God to love and use her as it pleases Him. God exposed her to death. Mary was a type of Isaac, ready to die, not defending herself. This total self-giving to God is the aim of this retreat. You must cut off all your securities.

“Please, give me the joy in loving Me and being my Love. I love all, but I do not get the fulfilment from them as from one single soul that freely responds. Let all days be like this. Please, give me all you have and all you are. Love all with my Love. Everything outside my will is from the evil one, and you must detect it and fight it immediately.”

If you give yourself to God, something special must happen in your life: You will have an encounter with God. This encounter is necessary for you to overcome the temptations that will come after profession.

Go to confession before retreat: if you are not purified, you will waste a lot of graces. Novice-master, how many priests are coming for confession tomorrow?

At profession, you are going to declare that you are a mad person in the Hearts of Love. Then people will allow you to live your madness. Declare for Hearts of Love openly, so that nobody will be scandalized when you do your fasting. Let all see: this is our way of life.

“Do not allow any person to influence you negatively, off your phone. Do not waste any energy. I am with you, both now and forever. Do not let anybody draw you into useless thoughts and talk.”

30/11/2011, Wednesday, St. Andrew, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters' noviciate. Almost all are late for the Vigil.

Sermon: My God, my Love, my All, you have shown us how unworthy we are, that we are nothing. This God of ours, this God full of tenderness and compassion, full of Love, especially towards those who *try* to fulfil the conditions for the Reign of the Hearts of Love.

Mass at Holy Hour at Brothers' noviciate

During retreat, there must be silence. If you can't control your tongue, you can't claim to be a self-controlled person. If you have to speak, you must speak whispering.

Sermon:

Don't make any vows you will not keep. When you make vows, you increase your chances for gaining graces, and also of increasing sins. The capital sin of our members is not keeping the Prayer times. With your vows, you have increased your capacity of sin. Ordinary people can eat and drink and sleep as they like. If you eat after 6pm or sleep during Holy Hour: Purgatory. I have warned you. You have made the vow of chastity. Married people, the more they do it the more God blesses them. If you do it – hellfire!

Every step you take towards the chapel, every second you spend there in prayer, God gives it infinite value, pouring out graces, graces, graces; letting you grow in holiness, throwing bomb on hell: because of the life you have chosen. Those who work in the night earn more. You also get more: more joy.

In the synoptics, Andrew has the blessing of being the first to be called. And he doubled his Summa cum Laude by calling his brother Simon at once, and Jesus made his brother the first pope. It was Andrew who converted the first pope, bringing him to Jesus! I want to bring people to Jesus who can be popes and bishops, not thieves and men-sellers as Judas. Andrew was never jealous, even when he was not promoted as his brother. Are you going to bring your family to the Hearts of Love?

All the apostles left everything to follow Jesus. Please, if you have "left everything", leave it really. The level of sacrifice you make is the level of your love. The highest you can give is your life.

If someone says "I love you!", say "Thank you". Then subject him to suffering and sacrifice. Are you willing to sacrifice everything to follow me?"

At Compline, examination of conscience (combined of 30<sup>th</sup> of November, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, omitting the repetitions):

We thank God for all the blessings He has been showering on us, we ask for forgiveness for our ingratitude, our lack of attention in prayer, our lack of love against God and one another. We confess that we have failed in many aspects, even prayer and purity.

Prayer – Have I been late for prayers, or have not all of the community participated? Have I kept all the prayer-times, have I attended all of them well, or did I sleep wilfully? Was I lazy in kneeling and prostrating – we shall prostrate in form of cross.

Chastity – Have I permitted impure thoughts, unchaste looks or touches? Sometimes we allow us to be invaded by impure passions and thoughts.

Poverty – Do not be attached to anything material. Have I used something today, which was not my own, and without telling the owner?

Honesty – Never try to deceive anybody, never mislead anybody. Say the truth, even if you lose. If you say the truth, God will gain, and he will pay you; on no occasion should you lie.

Apostolate – you should have the zeal to bring all to the Hearts of Love.

Love – It is our principal vow. Loving everybody, hating nobody, not even the devil, if he appears in human form. "Kill the devil with love" means: "love the devil, to convert or to chase him away."

Have I used the holy name of God in vain today? Have I spoken ill of any superior today? Abused the holy name of Hearts of Love? Have I done works of love today, have I washed their feet, have I

helped those with me to grow deeper into union with God? Have I listened attentively during conference, during preaching?

Some of you are still keeping grudges!!! How can you do such – coming to profession with animosities?! Do you want to be sealed with them? You must remove them! If you have anything with anybody, go this night to reconcile! Go to confession to your sister, your brother, ask him/her to forgive you.

1/12/2011, Thursday, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters' noviciate

You are welcome to the wedding feast of the Lamb. You are not here as spectators, but as those who wed. Salvation is union with God. Hell is to be separated from God. The only point of union with God for creatures is Jesus Christ. Christ came to us in union with Mary. That is why the only solution is to unite with the Two Hearts of Love. It is our mission to bring all to the Love of God. We are 10 years here in Ilorin – how many souls have we drawn to the Hearts of Love? Moslems, pagans, Anglicans: they are drawn all alike to Hearts of Love, the magnet of God.

Everything God made, he made it for a particular purpose. God created all by calling it into being. As for man, God not just called him, but he formed him. And before, God announced the purpose: "Let us make man in our image and likeness." The signature of God is in all, but only in man is his image. For it, God breathed his own life into man. "You are nothing but my Love." – Father Montfort is nothing. "You have nothing but me. You have no meaning outside my Love." As the image and likeness of God, man has become the apex of creation. He collects all creation and directs all to God. Man is a pilgrimage to God, man must always be 'to God'. The oldest man and the yet unborn have the same vocation: To represent God, to be a concretisation of the presence of God. "If you cannot love your brother whom you see, how can you imagine to love God, whom you do not see." (Cf. 1 Jn 4,20)

Your preparer (superior) is the God you see in a special way. What he/she represents is God. So he/she is bound to act like the Father to the members. Do not appoint any person who cannot represent God. They must follow you out of Love, you must draw them.

Your vocation is to represent God. The vocation of angels is different: They are created to be messengers of God, and to be around him to worship. Man's vocation is more...

In our particular case, Hearts of Love, we have a particular vocation: to receive, bear, radiate the Love of God, bearing Christ and bringing Him to people. How are we responding to our vocation?

God called Adam, because he did no longer see his image. Adam has lost his identity, as he separated from God. If I were in the bed by midnight, I would equally no longer be the Montfort of God. If you are doing what you should do, He will not ask you: "Where are you?!"

Your purity, virginity is the first thing you must guard and shelter. Once it is broken, it is lost. [...] Abram was a polytheist. God called him to understand that talking of many gods is nonsense. He called him to leave his country and people. Man was continually distorting the image of God. Man even worshipped reptiles. God became tired and abandoned man, and nature began to dominate man. Homosexuality is worse than fornication. Even, some women prefer dogs to men. Unnatural sex is worse than ordinary sex. Men do sex with pets! Sorry. Man is to represent God, rule the whole nature. You must be in union with the head, you must be under God, then you can command the sea and the sun, as Moses and Joshua. These things should be under your control. Even devil is surprised on what human beings can do in evil, once you lose your vocation. I tell you what God told me: "You will have no success outside my Hearts of Love." It is a double blessing: If you deviate, you have no success until you come back.

When I was in class 3, Secondary, everybody made friend with a girl. In the meeting of Catholic students, each sat with his girlfriend. Someone was put at my side; I tried to make friend, I tried to write a love-letter.... It is nonsense to try to do something outside your vocation!

Because of suffering, Jeremiah cursed the day of his birth and accused God for having seduced him: If he does speak, trouble from people; if he does not speak, fire from inside. Say it and know why

you die! Do it, dying while doing the will of God: There is no greater happiness. Being despised is part of our vocation. They laughed at me, calling Hearts of Love a leprosy. But my meat is the will of God. If you do it, you will be in harmony with yourself and with God. It is a joy, you die happily. Many die regretting, because on the point of death you see the film of your life, all you have destroyed, all the opportunities you have wasted. And you must confess it.

Preparers: You have to guide the Sisters: Not there! This is the line! You must be accountable, and guarded. You must know where they are, at any time. It is a sign of love to be jealous over them, do not allow them to stray. Once you are professed, the congregation must make sure that you are living your vows. Once you are professed, you lose your freedom. You no longer do what you like, sit as you like, go where you like. You must do what you are asked to do. During formation, you find out those who do what they like, eat what they like, wear what they like. You tell them: Sorry, you are a good person, but you can't be a religious.

This vocation requires the highest discipline. The way you smile, sit, walk must be disciplined. You are ascending to the highest: To be victim of Love. You are somebody God will consume.

Don't go to imitate other congregations. The first thing for us is to follow the rule of the Hearts of Love. After, you can add the psalms of the Benedictine rule, no trouble. If you want to follow another rule, go there! But in the Hearts of Love, you must live this life.

1985 my name appeared at Propaganda Fide to go to Rome to study. Another priest was faster, I did not take it serious. If I had gone that time, I might have pursued an intellectual career, study, writing... 1994, I had already developed the devotion: preaching, praying, fasting... By the mercy of God, I did not go to Rome that time. When I went, I had already brothers, sisters, [aspirants] Holy Mountain...

It must be in our formation that nobody must go alone: You are not independent. You cannot go anywhere without Hearts of Love. Anywhere I must keep the prayer-times.

But God does not want me to go about again, he wants me to settle down at Ugwu Nso and live there. Instead of preaching, I may be only listening and writing, but it is the same vigil and adoration I must do.

Whether you have eaten or not, there is no reason for you to miss Holy Hour.

#### Holy Hour with Mass at Brothers' noviciate

Sermon: Let us see in the Bible the people who answered a call from God. The first person God called was Adam. When He calls, He tells you at least two things: What he wants you to do; what he wants you not to do. And he will give you the terms of the covenant: What will follow, if you do it, or not do it. Adam was made in charge of the whole world – what a responsibility! He was free to give names to all, and they had to answer, for he was in charge. But if he eats of the tree in the middle, that day he will die. The same thing God told me: “The day you eat of the tree of fornication, you will die!”

The next person was Noah: He was to save some; he could save only 8 people. Then Abraham: the sign of the covenant was the circumcision. He was already a grown-up man, and it was very painful. But he did it. And God continued demanding: “Do not go back”; then: “Sacrifice your son.” Killing himself would have been less painful. But he was ready to do it – our father in faith.

There are things you must avoid when you work for God. The Legionaries of Christ have to search for another foundation for what is already founded, as their founder cannot be called their father.

In Igbo-land, you can raise your status by hard work, and become a titled man, and we are proud of it. But now, Igbos have become kidnappers and thieves – for money! The Igbos sing: “When the white man is sacked from his job, he will commit suicide. If the Igbo man is sacked, he goes home and does farm-work.” There is no jobless Igbo-man. This system helped also during the Biafra war: refugees were accepted, taken care of, as they helped in the work. There were no beggars. But now, things have shamefully changed.

Samson: ‘No razor should touch your hair.’ Those who are given serious responsibilities are also given serious things to do or to avoid. And their success depends on the observance.

[Two sisters make a joke.] O Sisters! This your light-headedness, like that of Sarah...

God asked us to keep the Prayer-times and to avoid impurity.

Before doing something, consult your local superior. Jesus spent whole nights to consult the Father. And the Father indicated the first pope to be chosen, when he made him to confess Jesus as the Messiah. The apostles learned from it. After making their human selection, they asked God to choose. You can never ask too much from God, ask him always what to do.

2/12/2011, Friday, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters' noviciate

Sermon: The way to discern vocation is the inner voice, saying: "At last, I have found what my heart is longing for!" It happened to Sr. Marie-Pierre. And you saw how she adapted to the life immediately. Once you understand your vocation, it will urge you to start immediately. See the 12-years old Jesus: full of zeal.

When it became clear to me: priesthood! I wanted to be ordained immediately. I even wrote to the bishop. He must have laughed and pitied me for no knowledge...

At Brothers' noviciate, after the short reading of Midday-Prayer:

The sign that you are progressing in union is your detachment of all in life. As St. Paul: "I count everything as rubbish", even his education at the best Law-school of the time. What matters for him is only Christ – precisely Christ as the crucified. Why? When Christ appeared to him, he revealed himself as the persecuted Christ. That image never left Paul. The highest point of Christ's persecution is the death of Christ on the cross. Your call is a call to the cross. You have to identify with the cross – all must be dead for you: food, clothing, beer, honour, titles ... and that rotten thing, sex. The attraction of sex, what is it? It is empty. Even married couples, they are more of enduring each other. Enjoyment has often vanished. All that matters is Jesus Christ, exactly the Crucified – that man of Golgotha. Being a pope, a bishop, a priest – nonsense. The will of God is the only important thing.

I still wonder why God asked me to detach myself even from my breviary, missal, computer [which he uses to type and conserve the messages]. Not only from sin, but also from good things! And attach myself only to the *person*. Don't attach yourself to shadows of Christ. He is there in person. Where do you find the person? In the Holy Eucharist – his Heart. This is what God taught me. This detachment from all is the meaning of the "pierce me with your arrows... Unite with the Sacred Heart". Attach yourself only to the highest, the person, detach yourself even from the means to reach Him.

Mass at Holy Hour

We offer this Mass as reparation for all the sins against the Love of God. Every sin rushes to pierce, to slice, to spit at these hearts. The Lord asked me: "Please, help me to bear all these injuries! Stay with me, console me!" The first call comes from pity for the wounded, bleeding Heart. "I love you, be appeased!" The first is to console Him.

Before Jesus weds you, he must give those of you who lost the virginity before you came to the religious life, a new virginity, because nothing impure can be united with Him. "Please, remain my pure and holy Love. St. Maria Goretti will follow you, with the palms of her virginity and martyrdom. St. Theresa will follow you to bring all to the Love of My Love. All my angels and saints follow you. All my members is given the grace of pure and holy Love." Don't spoil it, oh! This is the special grace you must have in the Hearts of Love.

"Be very strict in selecting people that *are* what I want – not people who *will be* what I want. Let them grow in purity and holiness. [...] Apply the principle of the strict separation of Brothers and Sisters. They are not interdependent. Their dependency is on you. [...] My Son, please help me, and let me do all I want to do with you and with all those close to you."

The type of helper God wants for us is the one that does Holy Hour and Vigil, living a life of purity, prayer and fasting. You do not even need to see your helper. Here you are required to sacrifice your will. You must reach to the level to submit, that you can do anything God wants, anywhere, but only what *God* wants. Prepared to be sent anywhere, to do any work. Then you will do that work with joy, happiness.

Neo-paganism is growing in many Catholic circles: people depending on sooth-sayers, that give advice: “Do not go out now – there are 10 demons waiting at the door! After about 2 hours, you can go.” There are ‘dibias’, wearing the cassock of priests, the habit of sisters.

You must first of all submit to our spirituality, if you want to be professed in the Hearts of Love. Those who come from other congregations to join us should stay longer: They must first remove the old, before they can swallow our own.

3/12/2011, Saturday, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters’ noviciate, Introduction:

If you are in charge of a community, be ready to accommodate a large number. Let nobody try to prevent growth. Let nobody feel irritated, when you see newcomers. Some want to be the only child.

When a poor man comes, he has a soul as big as the pope. The soul of the baby aborted somewhere, and the soul of the President of America – which one is greater? The poor, the blind, the lame, let them be gathered. If you are not welcome in one place, leave it! There are other places, where they are waiting for you. This is Jesus’ mission-tactic. The time is very short. The ones the world neglects are the ones God uses. Train yourselves to be catchers of souls. Each vocation must bring five others...

Accounting for members! Every time, the leaders must know where their people are. Each must give account of themselves, and of your sister, and of souls around you. I was still a small boy, when God told me: “Those around you, they are souls entrusted to you! Bring them to Me!” We must not allow any Sister to do final profession, if she has not brought another person. It is a barren woman! And there shall be no barren women in the people of God. One day, we will set a limit: You must have brought at least ... 50 new members. Because if you are not productive, you are destructive. You must be catchers of souls, especially vocations.

When my sister wanted to join the Daughters of Charity, the vocation directress, an Irish, she came every week to pet my parents, as they were eager to take her. I was wondering, how much she came – because of getting my sister.

Those who have vocation, even if the noviciate takes 12 years, you will stay.

Some of the Sisters are Sisters today, because I told them that it is their vocation. Someone has to tell you! Someone has to help you to answer correctly, as Eli helped Samuel. Sisters! Look at your number, and at the number of Brothers: The brothers: 30 postulants. The Sisters: 3 [actually up to 10]. Why are you drying up?!

Sermon:

Mary – it is easier to believe that she conceived without destroying her virginity, than her giving birth without tearing the virginal membrane. But all theologians must believe it. It is a mystery that he came out as he went in: as the Word of God, only that he was then with the flesh.

I need helpers who help me to keep the prayer-times. And whatever success you have must come with Prayer and keeping the prayer-times. I do not need success that comes from politics and money. It is not any type of money that can enter into this work. Stolen money, and blood-money will not enter here. The widow’s penny will do more than millions of bloody money. May their money perish with the wicked.

If God could feed the Israelites – we will not lack anything, if we keep our prayers. Do not look for any work that will distract you from prayers.

Mass at Holy Hour at Brothers' noviciate, Sermon:

There are persons bent on destroying, scattering, deceiving, misleading. The victory, the triumph, the Reign of the Hearts of Love will never come easily. Anybody developing a relaxation-attitude in the Hearts of Love is committing suicide. Anybody developing the soft, easy life, without sacrifice, that person is strangling himself/herself. Anybody showing you the easier way, the short cut, is a liar. I have warned myself and I am warning you: Don't relax! Be prepared to be like Mary in sacrificing herself to God, being ready to be used by God, uncompromisingly avoiding the pitfall of impurity and disobedience! How dare you put a condition?! Even if it is 'only' a condition on your helping me, poor me, poor as I am.

In a priests' meeting under Archbishop Arinze, problems came up. The bishop wanted to set up a commission. One hard-working priest was popularly acclaimed as chairman of the commission, to look into the case. The priest made the comment that commissions used to work long hours, give recommendations – and then it will be forgotten, gather dust. He requested that the archbishop should promise to act on the recommendation. Bishop Arinze laughed: "That means that you are now the archbishop. If you don't want to work, leave it!"

"My Love, please concentrate only on this: rearing the best child for me, for the world, for heaven! My Love, welcome to my throne! Here I am, here I am to reign. Here I am ruling. Here you are to stay and reign with me. Here I mean to heal and restore all to myself. Here I mean to unite all things to me. My Love, you are my instrument for this. [...] Never allow anybody to cheat you. Expose their hypocrisy and tricks. Show them that you know their evil machinations and tricks, and they will run away. [...] I will save all souls! I am not only a member, I am this family; I constitute it with my Love."

This family cannot be divided, or chaotic, it must be organized, responsible, united, as the family of Jesus – Mary – Joseph. Our harvest is souls. Not money! Not money! O God, save me. If you have not reached the stage of "Do with me whatever you will", if you dare give conditions to God – you have not yet entered the kindergarten of Love. You are completely unfit for the religious life.

We are praying for the virtues of silence, humility, obedience and perseverance to the end. Please, if you will one day go away, better go away now! All you will have toiled will be in vain. You have to learn and live the Fiat. If not, it has no head, no tail. Don't give God any condition, not even the condition to love you. Although God cannot but love you. Just do all he asks you to do. When will we learn to love God as we should?

4/12/2011, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters' noviciate, Sermon:

This is how God used to act: one person contaminates all; we share in the guilt and graces of all. When one man ran away from God and entered a ship, the whole ship was about to sink: Jonah. If all in one community live the prayer-life, God gives extraordinary peace. We have to bring all to the Love of God!

This is the last – the last is always the best. The last time, the last opportunity. It is the last revelation of the Love of God. It is the piercing of the Heart – the last wound, the deepest wound, bringing out blood and water, sign of the sacramental life of the Church. The wound touching his heart, to ascertain that he is dead, and if he is not dead, to kill. The public revelation ended with the last apostle. It began with Adam. It is Jesus who is the Revelation, the fullness, there can't be anything more than what we have in Jesus. But this fullness, this Jesus we have in the Hearts of Love. The mystery of the Love of God is not yet fully revealed. The mystery is simply union. Through this Prayer. Every prayer brings you into union with God. But there is no prayer as efficient as Holy Mass, and secondly the Prayer of the Hearts of Love.

Jesus is God, God is Love, Heart of Love. Mary represents the whole creation, she is the summary of the whole creation, and because of her union with Christ she infinitely supersedes the whole of creation, as the ocean is more than a drop of water, as a forest is more than a leaf, as a mountain is more than a grain of sand. If you have the Two Hearts of Love, you have everything.

Nobody can live this life. Nobody can, unless God gives you the grace. But this sister [who left us] said: “I can’t and I don’t want.” Angels can’t live it. Mary said: “How can?!” God will do it, the Holy Spirit will overshadow you... This life is very difficult. You can’t live it with human power. You need divine grace, but you must open yourself, submit, “Do with me whatever you want.” Do you believe?

Mass at Brothers’ noviciate, 10am, Introduction:

The cleanest place in the world should be our Centres of the Hearts of Love. It is very important for us to have the culture of cleanliness.

Whenever you pass the chapel, step in, greet him! He is the Master of the house.

Sunday Mass must be celebrated with the best: Best clothes, best songs; Sunday readings shall be sung – but very clearly; the music is the servant of the content.

Remove your pimples and rashes: You must appear as a queen, whom the Lord desires as his masterpiece. You must be neat for God. Every year on the Feast of the Hearts of Love, or on 8<sup>th</sup> of December, every sister and brother must receive a new habit.

The “marriage” of Jesus is completely and only spiritual. You still offer your body. Every sacrament has form (word) and matter. At marriage, the form is the mutual consent, the matter is their bodies. At Ordination, the matter is the candidate. Profession is not a sacrament, but it comes near: The form is your form of profession, the matter is you. That is why you have to be thoroughly clean. At Sinai, they were asked to clean up for three days. The environment for profession must be very clean. You should be clean and elegant, in a modest way, being very attractive – primarily to God. It was the attraction of Mary that brought God to incarnate in her. Prepare yourself, so that the King will desire your beauty! It is fire marrying fire – divine flame of Love wedding human flame of Love, purity weds purity.

Sermon:

I once knocked on the door of a professor, as seminarian. It was late in the evening, and I knocked carefully, but he heard it and opened and confessed: “Nobody ever knocked so gently at my door, that it cannot be heard unless in great attention!” This gentleness must be in you. This morning, someone knocked at my door, so urgent, so annoying, so demanding... Love is patient. That person was loveless: impatient.

I cherish all of you, you are very precious to me. But please, do not try to pluck the sun to put it under your arm. You will harm yourself, others, and even the sun. The sun must shine for all.

Bring everybody to the Love of God, do not exercise possessive love. Everything is possible to God, but not to love only one person. Christ loves all his creatures. But he loves especially those who followed him. Among those thousands he chose 72 “disciples”, from them 12 “apostles”, from them 3 who were competing who would love more. The first choice of Peter as pope was based on knowledge. The re-confirmation of Peter as the shepherd was based on “greater love than others”. Christ loves all, but some respond more to his love than others. The sun shines on all, but some elements absorb the light, others reflect it. Jesus wants people who radiate His Love. Some come nearer. John came nearer to the heart of Jesus and to Mary. The love of Jesus is reflected more in John than in others. And most in Mary: without any reserve. She opened her whole heart, womb, thoughts to God: I am completely yours, Totus tuus. Respond like Mama Maria! Never even for one second doubting “what the Lord said” (cf. Lk 1,45).

During Holy Hour:

It is our union with Him which consoles Jesus. Let us comfort him in the hour of his death, so that he will come in our own hour of death.

We listen to the blessing of those who keep the Holy Hour [message from before 22.9.2004]: “My son, my Love, my son of Love, note this: keeping of the prayer-times is a sign, a clear sign of the triumph of the Hearts of Love, of Love, of the Reign of Love. Keep them and teach others to keep



them religiously. In all my Centres of the Hearts of Love, the prayer-times shall be kept [...] If all in My Centres keep the prayer-times religiously – all those who live there, no matter their fewness – extraordinary peace and love will be felt there by all who come there with an open heart. This peace and Love is me. My Centres are Centres of Prayer, of triumph. My Centres are built on prayer. [...] My Hearts of Love must reign – through this Prayer and works of Love. The principal sin of my members is not keeping the prayer-times and not doing works of Love. [...] I bless all those who keep the prayer-times. [...] They are my martyrs, pouring their blood in union with me. They pour their blood for the salvation of the world. They are my heroes, my beloved, my companions. I told you to teach all to say this prayer especially by [4,6,12 o'clock and at Mass....] They are times of eternal graces and blessings. Let them realize that at this times, time flows into eternity, and eternity unites with time. [...]. The enemy will be destroyed and all his plans will be annihilated. Every day, before they go to bed, let them examine their conscience, both individually and collectively. Every laxity and lack must be confessed in all humility, asking for pardon, both individually and collectively. [...] All those who receive a special work on earth, I tell them what to do and what to avoid. Their success depends on how they comply with the will of God. [...] The same with you. I am! I bless you and I bless all with you with my eternal blessings of Love, of love and peace. O! My Love must reign! O! My Love will reign! O! My Love reigns!"

After evening Angelus: Rosary-procession with the Blessed Sacrament. The members carry incense, flowers and light. Between each decade, they kneel and receive a Eucharistic Blessing. The procession ends in the chapel with songs of praises and frenetic dancing, then Compline.

After the short reading of the Compline: I want to thank you for the love you have shown. The Lord wants us to do the Eucharistic Procession. We praise him with all our bodies, legs, arms, heads, toes – we can never overdo it.

5/12/2011, Monday, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters' noviciate

God has great confidence in the human nature, that is why he incarnated. Yesterday, after Holy Hour, I was very weak. I doubted whether I can make it to carry the Blessed Sacrament for the procession. But we did it, and not only 1 round, but almost two. And after, it was you who prolonged it. To me, it gave strength!

The devil is trying to corrupt the best. The few that will remain, the poor remnant, will be holy. After the flood, after the quake, after the purification. 'Master, are they few that are going to be saved?' What did Jesus answer? 'You must struggle!' If you want to be among the few that profess...

The whole chapter 13 of Luke is hard. It is Jesus weeping – over Jerusalem. Nigeria is ripe for disintegration. Jesus saw that Jerusalem will be destroyed, and Israel was annihilated from 130 after Christ till 1944. The same weeping Father Montfort will weep for Christians, for Igbo, for believers in Nigeria.

What we are fighting is more than world war. Those who are to do this battle, you must be ready to fight this fight, with purity and prayer and preaching. Use no other means!

Mass at Holy Hour at Brothers' noviciate

This man, Bishop Ayo-Maria, is the best bishop. He loves this congregation, that is why he is very strict. He wants to admit only those who really have the vocation, who love this life. Jesus has warned us: Just one person who does not join the prayers, but goes about chasing priests...

The genuine vocation is accepted anywhere, but chooses to come and suffer with me. Souls formed, destined by God. They will never, never step back. "Here is my house, here will I live, here will I die." They may not know their vocation at the beginning, as Samuel, running to the wrong person.

We want the best – the best heart, not the best of cars and shoes. Best in spirituality, in prayer, in poverty, in obedience, in purity.

Loving does not mean: “You must love”, but it means: “I must love you, whether you love me or not.” Even if you are ignored, you love...

6/12/2011, Tuesday, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters’ noviciate, Introduction:

You can be as old as Methuselah, as sick as Job; what I demand is that you must be able to keep this life without compromise. No matter how beautiful and intelligent you are. If God gives me old and sick people, why not? The condition is great love, that is, preparedness to die.

We pray for success of the profession – the success is the keeping of the vows. It would be sacrilege, if you make up your mind not to teach people about Hearts of Love, and you take the vow of apostolate: telling lie to God. But if you are ready to live it, your blessing will be great.

Formators: find out those who cannot accept formation – you talk and talk, but they can’t live it. Discover those who have no vocation, and send them away – in time!

Be honest to yourself, if you can’t. There must be temptation! After resisting for 1 month, 2 months, 3 month, 1 year, 2 years, 3 years... temptation will no longer pull you down, but strengthen you. The virginity of any sister, any member, is a special blessing to all. That is why we must cherish it. The power of prayer of any member is a blessing for all. Cherish the gifts of others, nurture it, raise it to the height. Use your gifts only for God. God said: “I will give you all you need.” If I need a car, he gives me a driver. If I need to speak polish, he gives me a translator. God gives all through the members.

Sermon:

[He reads a message from Mother Mary, which was given on 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2004:] “My son, I love you, Love from God. [...] Please, remain always united with Jesus, the Father, the Holy Spirit and with me. [...] Receive all that God, your God, gives you. Never hesitate to receive him any time, anywhere. He is ready to give you all. Receive all! Do not look at yourself – neither your smallness nor your greatness, neither at your humanness nor at your [...]. The devil cannot give you a message – God has prevented such a confusion. All that prevents you from receiving all is your hesitation. [...] Your most important work now is to receive the message, [...] especially at every time of prayer, at the end of preaching, [...]. Receive the Love of God and shine it on the whole creation. [...] Do it, and you have comforted the two Wounded and Bleeding Hearts. My son, please listen and do what I tell you. [...] I *am* your mother. Please help me. Help me to enjoy my special intimacy with you. I will never abandon you. Help me to take good care of the Sisters. [...] I see myself in all of them. [...] I have given you these precious daughters of mine to be your sisters, your mothers [...]. They are to follow you with undivided hearts. [...] They are the signs of the Reign [...]. They have the purest love for you and suffer the most to follow you. Of all your followers, they have the clearest, purest and deepest knowledge of you and your mission. [...] They are enduring the worst to follow you. [...] Let them climb into your heart and always find a place in your heart. Let no other person take control of them. [...] Love them as you love me. [...] In each and every one of them I appear and appeal to you. With their eyes, I look at you, [...]. I carry you in their hearts. In a very special way, they are your cross and your crown. They are yours.”

Jesus speaks [message from the 16.9.2004, after Mass]: : “My Son, I want to speak to you about the Sisters. My son, take care of them as I took care of My mother. It is Our will that you be one with your sisters, that you be one with your brothers/priests/lay-apostles. It is Our will that all members be of one mind and heart, united in Love in you. [...] Please, take care of your sisters especially. Let them have childlike intimacy with you. You are their father, they are your precious children. Do not lose any of them. You are the personification of the Trinitarian Love. [...] They are the sign of the triumph of the Hearts of Love. [...] They are the first to gather around the triumphant Hearts of Love. [...] They are the beauty of my Hearts of Love, of my family, of my Church, of my Kingdom. [...] Keep them beautiful, pure and holy and beautiful. The nearer they come to me, the more beautiful they are. [...] I have put more into you to give to them. All I have for them, I give through

you. Without your Love, they can do nothing for Hearts of Love. [...] Please, be patient with them. They love you and have already abandoned everything to follow you. [...] Go and tell them these messages of my Hearts of Love. [...] Your sisters are the glory and joy of my Hearts of Love. Please, guard them jealously, to be really my glory and joy. [...] I will give them a special place in my heart in heaven. Prepare them for it. Take special time to teach them to know and love me as you love and know me. [...] Let them know that they will suffer much. Teach them to love, honour and have the childlike love for my mother. She is not only a model and ideal for them, but one with them. [...] That they will have to suffer much, but that they will never be defeated or destroyed or seriously injured in their person or nature or union with Me. [...] They will crush the serpent with their oneness in love with Me and you. [...] Let them endure with her [Mary] and they will enjoy with her. [...] The only thing they should fear is sin: offending God, offending Me, offending you, offending My mother, offending My Church, offending the angels and saints, offending one another. Any sign of offence must be abhorred. Any act of Love should be praised. Through them, I intend to teach the world the meaning of Love. [...] Give them work always to do [...]. They have a right and claim to be near to you. [...] Please, take complete care of them. [...] Correct them immediately. [...] Never reduce their dignity. [...] They are and should be holier than all the tabernacles and monstrances. [...] I live more in them than in any tabernacle, I live more happily [...] in them than in the tabernacles and monstrances. My Love and glory shines more from them than from any tabernacle or monstrance in the world; my blood flows more in them than can be contained in any chalice. They are more monstrance than any monstrance. I live in them, my glory shines more in them than anywhere in the world. Please, my Love, love and cherish them and form them to what I want them to be. I want to rejoice in them always. I want to be proud of them always. I want to say all I can say of my mother about them and to them. I want to crown them with all the blessings and honours and glory with which I have rewarded my mother. [...] Teach them always to do the will of God. Teach them always to respond to the will of God as my mother: ‘Behold, I am your handmaid!’ [...] They are all Marias and they are all one Maria. [...] they are one with my mother. I want all creation to love and honour them.”

Conference for the novices at Brothers’ noviciate, 10 am:

As a Sister/Brother/Priest of the Hearts of Love, confession is obligatory, at least, i.e. at worst, with a gap of 14 days. Whether you commit sin or not. Confession is a type of insurance. As a member of this congregation, there are things you must do. One of them is confession, every two weeks. You must go to Mass, at least once a day. The ideal is day and night.

Are the side-rosaries ready? I am not annoyed if you do the rosaries during conference, or in the chapel, in the 15 minutes before prayers. Our Lady was never idle.

You should see clearly what is coming to you, and embrace it. As Jesus saw his cross and death coming, and from childhood he prepared himself for it. It will not be a strange something to you, this life of prayer and adoration.

We go in twos. We do not go out in single. You go to the market: in twos; to fetch water: in two...

Pray for being able to keep the vows, to wake up and keep awake during the Vigil. God will hear this prayer, for he needs this your living the life. Anybody doing the work cannot be but supported by God. Ask anything you want, but do not squander it, use it for the work. Ask for the Spirit! “Please, God, you know, I am weak. Give me the grace to live this life perfectly well. No matter how I am tempted, may I never fall!” He will give you his superabundant grace. God said: “There will e a time I will protect your prayers from distraction.” I was in Secondary School, preparing for exam. I went for Block-rosary. I tried to think of the chemical formulas, but the way was blocked! I could think only of the rosary. If you allow God, he will protect you from sin, from talking any rubbish, from falling away. He will do it for the sake of His name! You are bearing his name. Can you imagine what it means if the pope would fall? Religion would be ridiculed.

I thank God for the Senate in Nigeria, forbidding homosexual marriage. They did it unanimously! That is the good thing of the Moslems. As in the OT: It is abomination! God wants to use you to

show the world that it is possible to live pure and holy love. Take your minds away from your genital parts - it is possible.

#### Midday-prayer

Whenever you come together, we must sing all the psalms, unless we are in a terrible hurry. Singing is our way of praying the psalms! Reciting is for when you are on your own, alone.

#### Mass at Holy Hour

Supposing somebody comes to me, somebody preparing for profession, and says: "Father, if you don't buy golden shoe for me, I will not take part in the profession – I will not take the vows!" Or another request, as "Make me superior soonest." "Do you want to lose me? So, you want me to go?????" What answer will you give? God did not repent, when Lucifer put conditions, when the disciples deserted Jesus at the talk about the bread from heaven. There are things which are not permissible. At profession, you enter the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the most secure place! But in such a place, you have to observe all the rules, all!

"Do not be downcast because of rejection or persecution. It is the ordinary way. The way has to be made straight. Take up your name – Love. [...] The whole creation, the Church is waiting for you. I am the voice in the wilderness, the Holy Trinity has sent me to tell you that your public ministry has started." With profession, your public ministry will start. My Jesus, thank you!

My people, what have I done to you?! "My son, please, do not give people chance to insult you and to insult my holy name. If they insult you without reason – that is good. But if there is reason – that is bad. [...] You will be despised, even by my priests, even by your followers: They will disappoint you, [...] and cause you heartbreak. Do not put your trust in human beings. About hand-sets: I do not want personal hand-sets, for priests, brothers or sisters. All I want is service – or community-handsets."

God wants us to live real community-life. You must put the salt of community-life into the soup you are cooking here in the noviciates, if not, it is not edible to God. It must be put into them – go to the extreme! There is a community where they are even sharing their pants. Jesus was sharing his blood. We must be unrepentant, uncompromising. We were told: The only solution is unity! Which means, the only solution is community!

On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2004 the message on handsets was given, by Jesus. "Observe a serious separation between brothers and sisters, they can join for prayers, else, they must live semi-autonomously. They should share everything in common [...]. Lack of ability to share is enough reason to send somebody away from the community! Priests, Brothers and Sisters have to be open to each other, especially to you. Anyone that hides anything from you, without reason, must be sent for internal suspension; if persisting, should be sent away. [...] Please, let nothing distract you from the work. [...] My Love, conceive, bear and rear the best of children for the Church, the Society and mankind."

Personal handsets make you to be my-my... The Lord wants us to live community-life. It is a safeguard against impurity.

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves was a miracle of sharing. As you share, God increases. We are becoming more and more individualistic. If we share what we have, we shall not die of hunger. That is how Biafra survived: All shared with all.

No personal phones, but service-phones! Service-phone must not mean phone belonging to someone who has an office. If you are sent on an errand, you be given the community/service-phone; when you come back, you submit it. We shall not lack. You will lack only unwanted disturbances.

7/12/2011, Wednesday, St. Ambrose, Ilorin

Vigil at Sisters' noviciate, Introduction:

We welcome our first visitors. If they come earlier, it means they want to join the preparation. The best preparation is prayer. Today is our day of prayer and fasting. Some of you are joking with this our little discipline. If you cannot do dry-fasting, you can eat bread – simple bread, without sugar or honey. Every Wednesday of your life, unless it falls on a Solemnity or Feast-day. But if it is your birthday, you are to fast and shift your celebration. “Remain in the Love of God” – how? By keeping the commandments. “Be strict with yourself and your brothers and sisters. Save my family!” You have not only to keep the commandments, but make those around you to keep them. Brothers and Sisters: You are primarily to help me to comfort Jesus, helping me to collect all the blood of Jesus, helping me to do Holy Hour and Vigil, helping me to do 24 hours of adoration – I can’t do it alone! Help me to live pure and holy lives. Biscuit is no bread. We know what is bread, and we know what is biscuit. God said: “Eat only bread, drink only water on Wednesdays.” This is only one example. Another is coming late. We shall be there 15 min to the time, and *stay* in the chapel. We have to be disciplined! The higher your responsibility, the more you must be disciplined.

Sermon:

The man born blind was thrown out from the synagogue. They resolved to throw out anyone who believes in Jesus. But nobody was able to derail the man born blind, because he had a personal experience of the goodness of Jesus, personal knowledge of him. You, too, need a personal experience of God. Come to Jesus and have your personal experience! Such a knowledge is untouchable.

There is something we have to do this night: You have to forgive any person who injured you in any way: you must forgive from your heart.

“I need your love, for I am Love. [...] I give you every day your daily bread – my messages. Receive it and feed all around you with my daily bread. Any day you do not do it, go to confession for it. [...]” During consecration, the Lord spoke from the Host: “Teach the whole world this prayer, and all will be saved. This prayer and the Holy Eucharist are one. I am the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrifice on the cross. And I am this Prayer. If you say this Prayer, you draw from my Heart and are united with my sacrifice on the cross. [...] It is possible to save all souls! All who call on me even once in my Hearts of Love will be saved. [...] God is Love.”

After the short reading of Midday-prayer at the Brothers’ noviciate:

One of the most irrational things that has bedevilled mankind determined much of what man thinks and does, is: fear! Fear of what is to come. The most irrational of all fears is fear about your vocation. The only thing you need to do to secure your vocation is just: trust and obey. If you obey, it does not matter what comes out of it. It only matters that you have obeyed. You have loved. Obedience is the high mark of Love: “If you love me, keep my commandments.”

8/12/2011, Thursday, Immaculate Conception, Ilorin, all at Brothers’ noviciate

After profession, after rosary-procession:

The first problem I had with my parish-priest after ordination was my wearing the soutane always. And he forced me to wash it myself. I bought basin and Omo [washing-powder] and washed by myself. When I became a teacher in the seminary, the first staff-meeting was about what? – Montfort. Because of what? – Because of always wearing his soutane. Till tomorrow I must wear my soutane. If I had given up that time, by now I would be wearing Jeans. You must fight to wear it always, and then it becomes your habit. In the seminary, we had soutane with sash. 1975 we were clothed. Some wore the sash only on the day of clothing. But I wanted it, I and two others wore it till ordination. Always wear your habit, full habit with sash!

9/12/2011, Friday, Ilorin, all at Brothers’ noviciate, Vigil, Sermon

How I prayed to God, that God may open our eyes to understand what we are in. Yesterday I realized the sacrifice all of you made. Never in life you will eat again after 6, or know your bed from 23.30 on, or have rest in the afternoon ... The quality of your sacrifices... Jesus and Mary were able to save. There are souls entrusted to you! David and Goliath were the champions of their respective armies. Brothers and Sisters are the champions of the Hearts of Love, they cannot allow any hanky-panky. You are asked to sacrifice your sleep, your food, your ability to have children for the kingdom.

[Today, as often, at offertory, he uses the incense to dance gently round the altar.]

10/12/2011, Saturday, Ilorin, all at Brothers' noviciate

Vigil

I want us to contemplate that part of the Prayer: "Pierce me with your arrows..." Whom do we want to give life, comfort, glory and love? The only answer is "Jesus"! Jesus is dying!

"All you bring to the Hearts of Love, I will teach and prosper. My Love, my baby, do not be tired! I am with you. Do you not know that the more you receive my messages, the more I give you?! Please, My son, give all your time to receive my messages. I am my messages. I am pouring myself into you. Receive me, carry me with Love and give birth to me in prayer and preaching. Every time you pray, you conceive me; every time you preach you give birth to me. You are my baby, and I am your baby. [...] I am renewing you and regenerating you. [...] The work I have given you is the simplest: To love me. [...] Overcome the humanism, and put God in the middle. That is the whole message and meaning of the incarnation. The centre, infinitely strong, and around also shining. That is how the body is: the heart, strong, receiving and distributing. This is how the ocean is: receiving and sharing. I have given you the principle of religious life: Love, receiving and sharing for all eternity. This is how I lived, especially in the night, praying. [...] To have seen me is to have seen the Father. So it is with you. I have sent you for the same purpose: To unite all with me, in my Hearts of Love. Understand your work, and the very simple but infallible strategy of prayer and preaching. Remain strong! All must come to love Me! You are my Love, do not be afraid. Just do all I bid you, and you see that you have the best, better than the world could ever conceive or understand. Love all my children, all your children with My Love. All you love are my children."

During consecration, in September, Jesus spoke to me from the host: "[...] Keep this Holy Hour with greatest love. [...] It is the hour of the hardest decision. It is the Hour of the Most High, of the most perfect union of the human and divine, the completion of my mission, the hour of the piercing of the Hearts, hour of the Two Hearts of Love. My son, write: This hour is to be kept holy by all men and women who love me. Anyone who holds this Holy Hour belongs to the special circle of my lovers. [...] It is the great sign of Love and obedience. Whatever they ask in the Holy Hour, they will receive 100fold. You know how you yourself have been tempted. Prepare them for it. If they obey you, they cannot fall."

After the short reading at Midday-Prayer:

Someone prayed in Germany: "O God, destroy these big churches and help us to build small ones." Because the big churches are attractions for tourists, with organized guidance for the visit... The Blessed Sacrament is in a corner...

When I was rector of St. Kizito, I made up my mind, I will not register anyone for exam under the name of my school, where I am not sure he will get at least 7 credits. Others I registered under the name of another school; I organized their transport for their exam there. My school was the best in the state, and the other school that took my students was second. I tell this story, because it is not the quantity, but the quality. If in one community I am not present for prayers, he spoils the thing for others.

Holy Hour

Please, teach our children from the beginning that coming late is not done. It must be taught in a very hard way, so that they know it is serious.

“He suddenly enters his temple, he, whom they are awaiting.”

“My Son, face your work with all seriousness. You can never be too serious with your work, which is the most important work now on earth. Please, my beloved, son, My most beloved Love, face this work with all your strength, with all seriousness, with all your spirit, all your wisdom. Live every day as the last day, and every opportunity as the last opportunity to save souls. Always give your best. [...] Today is a turning point in your life. You carry the Reign of the Hearts of Love in your person. Please, let me manifest my Love and power in you. Please, let me show the world who I am, who you are and what Hearts of Love is. There will be tremendous changes in you and in the world. [...] Devil will be shouting – from outside. I have overthrown him.

[...] Never ask me to annihilate you!!! [...] This work must be done.” No timid person can be a saint.

11/12/2011, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Ilorin

Vigil at Brothers’ noviciate, Sermon

It must be taught you that you go to bed early. After Compline, don’t talk to anybody, go to bed and lie down! At St. Kizito, the children were not used to siesta after lunch. For 1 month, 2 month, I had to fight with them, go round with the stick, to make sure that all lie down. Then it became their habit. In the seminary it is easy: There is time of light-off, of great silence. Any light or noise is then a strange thing. Those who cannot live this life: throw the person out! Jesus took any qualm away by giving the reason, which is divine: “Those whom I have called, I will take their weaknesses from them. If I do not take it from them, I have not called them.”

You must know yourself. Know what you want in life, what you can do, have ability to respond to vocation. Vocation is always above you, coming from above and raising you to a higher level.

Mama Maria is from birth Immaculate Conception, which is a negative concept. It means contentless. Nothing is there. If you go to the refectory, and your plate is sparkling clean, will you be happy? Mary’s vocation is not Immaculate Conception, it is just a preparation. The content is to be Jesus. Her vocation was realized when Jesus entered her. A voice without word is empty sound. Your vocation is Hearts of Love. This Vigil is what God has been revealing for over 50 years: Every day, He reveals, teaches; and every day I know better that this is my life. “You are not Jesus Christ, but you come from him. [...] Always be tender and loving and lovable, the Lamb. [...]”

Sunday Mass at Sisters’ noviciate, 9.30am

What a hopeless founder I am! Tolerating what cannot be tolerated, overlooking to be insulted to the face, and still I go with you. When I look at what people have done to me and with me, even my closest people, you wonder what is keeping me still alive...

Rejoice always! Always be thankful, giving thanks for everything – that is the will of God. For everything God has made you must give thanks. You can never exhaust the reasons for being grateful. The first reason is: He has given us His Spirit – that is almost all. We are sharing in his innermost life. Man was moulded of clay, then He breathed in His own life. Our life is thus a borrowed life, as tenants. Man is only a caretaker of all you have on earth, even what you call “My life”. It is borrowed from God. Only God exists, all creatures subsist in him, attaching themselves to God. St. Paul reached the height where he said “Not I, but Christ lives in me.”

Who am I? The primary vocation is to be like God. How do we resemble God? We can’t be omniscient and all-powerful. Solomon asked for wisdom, and he had it more than any other, but he says: “It is vanity.” Only your vocation gives you a meaning. All the achievements of men... to show you that they are nothing, look at Japan: The ocean coughed, the earth shook itself... only Christ counts. This wisdom you must achieve if you want to reach a meaningful life on earth.

Millions of people follow Christ, although they have seen the first followers being killed. But death is a promotion. Progress in spiritual life must be slow and steady.

12/12/2011, Monday, Ilorin, Brothers' noviciate

Vigil, Introduction:

In the noviciate and at Ugwu Nso, there we must reach 100% of faithfulness to the prayer-times. Who comes 3 times late for prayers must withdraw: We must reach to this. This is the main point in our vow of truthfulness: To be truthful in writing your prayer-times. In the noviciate and at Ugwu Nso the life must be lived perfectly. In other centres, prepare! The Lord, the owner of the vineyard, has said how he wants us to do his work; we have to follow.

[He appoints a brother as vocation director.] Whoever looks at you sees the simplicity and the humility. You will look at the newcomers, and they will look at you to know what they want to be. You will be gentle; at the same time... Christ is Lamb and Lion. Be tender, but strict. This is how children learn. You will be in charge of aspirants and postulants at Ugwu Nso. Nobody is to talk to new vocations, but you! You must welcome newcomers with telling them, that it is unthinkable to come late to prayers, and insist on it.

Sermon:

Formators: Have you seen the work you have to do? One of the first things you have to do, is to send the children to bed in time and making sure that they sleep. We shall remove in time those who cannot live it. Collectively, we have to fight against it.

"He loves you, more than He loves Himself. [...] He is in you, remain always in Him. My son, I want to talk to you about religious sisters. The woman is a beautiful, holy, sacred creature of God." And women used to be more religious. Women are an image of God and must be respected!

Jesus is warning us: "Establish Centres! Nobody shall be without contact with the Hearts of Love. You enter into contact by taking the name of Love on your lips. Establish Centres of perpetual adoration everywhere, as a refuge for the terrible time that is coming. [...] Those who purify themselves with Prayer will not suffer the purification by destruction. I want the civilisation of Love. [...] Set up the emblem of my Love in the whole world. [...] My son, do not heed the devil. He wants to distract you, be fixed on me. [...] Confusions come up when they refuse to follow my holy will, as can be seen where people try to establish their own will. [...] I have no intention to destroy the world, I want to bring all to fulfilment. [...] Let them try to change the genesis of things, and these tiny things will turn against them, they will no longer be able to control themselves. [...]"

13/6/2012, Wednesday, Rome, Domus Regina Pacis, Via Bravetta 267, Vigil

The preparation for this Feast is a whole year-preparation. Not just by booking hotel, booking the flight. The major preparation is: let everybody be sealed by the Hearts of Love, touched by the Love of God, whether they be Moslems or Buddhists, spreading, teaching this prayer, shining it like sunshine. The Feast is the reaping. During the year is the time of sowing, pouring the Prayer like rainfall. Sowing the seed, not worrying where it falls. Some may fall among thorns and rocks – don't worry.

Of the Gospel Jesus said: Don't throw your pearls to the swine. On this prayer he said: "Pour it like rainfall! It cannot be desecrated." God has a strong will to save all souls. It is possible! This possibility is actualized, now.

The Church has warned us not to say anyone is in hell. The only person of whom we can say with assurance that he is in hell, is Judas, because Jesus said it. He refused the Love of God! Any small sign of Love, God says: "I will give it infinite value, and use it to save that soul." Nobody merits heaven, not even Paul. Heaven is always a gift from God. Not even Mary went to heaven with her own feet. She was carried! Only Christ went.

The parable of the vineyard – the pope who was baptised at birth and worked for 80 years, and the thief, who on the last minute says: "Lord, remember me!"... Do not exclude anyone from the Feast. As I have loved you, love one another. Love all! Teach everybody. We shall be very foolish to limit heaven for only my family. There is nobody created for hell. As a Christian, love everybody,



embrace everybody! Everybody you love, you save! Salvation is administered through love. The preparation for the Feast is universalizing your love. My God, help us.

14/6/2012, Thursday, Rome, Vigil

David rose to the highest by killing Goliath, and he fell to the lowest, by killing Uriah. God gave him the great promise, and all kings after him were of his line, till our own king, Jesus Christ. But he punished him for his sin: "Fighting and killing will not depart from your house!" When David did the census, against God: trying to find another basis for his power: Not in God, but in the manpower of his fighting men. How many died? [2 Sam 24,15] 70.000 people died! The sins of leaders... Family-heads! Parish priests! Bishops! Governors of countries... they are no longer private persons, but corporate persons: Their sins, corporate sins, their virtues, corporate virtues. The OT has been abolished, but not made useless. God wants us to reach perfection in Love, by uniting with the only two who are perfect – Jesus and Mary.

16/8/2012, Thursday, Essen, Germany, Vigil

"[...] People think that it is difficult to come to heaven. [...] Do any action, think any thought, say any word in union with my Love, and you merit eternal salvation! [...] Just call on me 'O Jesus!' and you will be sealed with my Love, which is a seal for eternal life.

11/11/2012, Sunday, Rome, Via Rusticucci, Vigil

"Call all those who are studying in the name of my Hearts of Love, and give them condition. If they accept, they can continue to study. If not, let them leave either the study or the Society or both." They must keep the prayer-times and belong to a community and stay there. It must be avoided that only one person stays in a place for studies. They must be helped.

"They [the sisters in Rome] have lost it [Casa Assistenti]. I will give them a small place, from where they can regain all, if they live the life; I will give them more than what they lost. Save and secure Fontecchio. Ugwu-Nso community is also in danger. If you do not act now to cleanse it, I will reduce Ugwu Nso to a very small place, and from there you will have to do many battles to regain all."

17/9/2013, Tuesday, St. Hildegard, Essen, Holy Hour

Saint Hildegard – the greatest saint of human and divine wisdom, all-round. She spoke to us about Hearts of Love. "Receive my message. Never leave Deutschland. Never abandon Deutschland. My Hearts of Love must reign in Deutschland! I give you my daughter Hildegard. Her mission was the union of Trinity and humanity. Her holistic vision was the preparation of the Hearts of Love. [...]" Hildegard is speaking [after 2004]: "I am a servant of the Hearts of Love. [...] You know where you come from and where you go to: You come from God and you go to God. But you can't go back alone. You have to carry along all who are given to you. Deutschland is given to you, and you are given to Deutschland. [...] Tell the members to be steadfast in prayers. [...] Stand up and spread the message of the Hearts of Love everywhere, especially in Deutschland. [...] Be wise! [...] Do not listen to the barking of the devil, who uses so many voices to discourage you and the members. Go and spread! [...]" Hildegard is our patron saint in the Hearts of Love.

"The next obstacle will be from internal fighting. All those who are not ready to live the life, send the person away. Purify your house! [...] Love endures all. Of all, Love lasts for ever. [...] Exercise your power in prayer and preaching. [...] God is with you and I am with you, with all the powers and graces and blessings I have. [...] Your coming to Germany is the most blessed thing that happened to Germany. Do not go away without achieving the triumph here. Ask the bishop [Ayo-Maria, his ordinary] to give you some little time to be here, and build the house on this solid foundation [...]. I will come and talk to you again and again."

“My Love, my Reign means first of all my Reign in you. Be brave and completely dedicated. [...] Be concentrated and do it well. [...] Once you receive the message, do not waste time in giving it. The effectiveness of the message depends on how you receive and give it. [...]”

19/9/2013, Thursday, Essen, Vigil

“You have to react when people appeal to you for help. All will appeal to you for help, and you have to react. All belong to me, even if they no longer love me, but hate me, hate themselves, kill each other: They are mine.”

23/9/2013, Monday, St. P. Pio, Essen, Vigil

God’s mercy is such that any sin you can commit, is already forgiven. But do not sin anymore! Unite yourself with these two wounded and bleeding Hearts!

Any civilization that blurs purity, destroys humanity. Every knowledge can be used well and badly, to destroy.

24/9/2013, Tuesday, Essen, Vigil

P. Pio is a special member of the Hearts of Love, a real victim of the Hearts of Love. He prayed 50 rosaries every day, 250 decades. He suffered for souls. At the tomb of P. Pio: “I thank you for coming. I have a message to give you. All that has been done till the moment is preparation for you. I have been sent to prepare for you. All creation is waiting for you, for the Second Coming. Now, shine, reign, love! [...] Do not delay the Second Coming any more. It took the prayer, the self-sacrifice of Mary to draw and attract the First Coming. It will take also your pure and holy Love, your sacrifice, to draw, to actualize the Second Coming.”

“You are Love and nothing, Love and nothing more, 1 Million times. Let nobody suggest anything to you. Just live this life – it is all. Live this time-table. Insist on it, eating at the proper time, praying at the proper time.”

Even if the whole world is confused about prayer, we shall never be confused. God has given us absolute clarity on what He wants. “If you live it well, any day you live it perfectly well, the prayer will be heard: Save all souls. That day, all souls [who die] will be saved, no soul will go to hell.” Michael fought the fight by praying. Why can’t we suffer it? It is like an atom-bomb, but instead of killing, it saves all.

Please, anybody coming must know that it begins by 23.30 and ends after 4. You must have enough fuel to remain, and take part actively. This mass is for all souls, but few will be present: Only those who can live it! There will be a time when Ugwu Nso will have high walls and 12 doors, and nobody can come in after 23.30, and nobody can go out before 4.

13/12/2013, Friday, Ugwu Nso

Holy Hour. At the end, the brothers seminarians arrive for their Christmas holiday

Welcome home! This is the place where we shall live, where we shall pray, where we shall preach, where we shall suffer, where we shall die and be buried. Make it your home. You shall organize it in a way that you go from here straight to the seminary, and that you come from the seminary straight to Ugwu Nso, without branching.

Say not only congrats to the new priests, but receive their blessing. Kneel down before them, their oil is still fresh and flowing. To be priests after the Heart of Jesus tomorrow, be seminarians after the Heart of Jesus today. May God make us a priestly family!

Compline

It is God who is always here – in the monstrance, in the tabernacle. It is us who go and come. It is he who begs us: “Do not desert me!” He is Emmanuel, God with us, but we, we must make time to visit him privately, and live the community-prayers, which are devised to make us always adore

him. Here we should be able to see Him from every place. If there must be walls, it must be walls of glass.

Jesus is praying to us, begging: “Give me every day my daily bread!” – adoration, worship. Mary is praying: “Give me every day my daily bread!” – rosary procession.

14/12/2013, Saturday, St. John of the Cross, Ugwu Nso

Vigil

We can never thank God enough for this mission. But I am warning you: The work has just started. All we were struggling till yesterday was just to be allowed to live this life. We have now been allowed to live, to breathe, to adore, to prostrate! The situation now is: Let us see what they can do. Let us watch them and see what will come out of it. The triumph is not from us, it is not from shouting. Our role is only to just live this life. What comes out of it is God’s work. As the priest takes bread and wine and prays exactly what he was told to pray. If he prays his own words for 50 years, nothing happens. If you do what you are told, even in the state of mortal sin, even without faith, the result must come. For it depends on God. There are many atheistic priests, who do not believe any more.

“Just do what I tell you, and leave clear records on what is to be done. Whatever happens when you die, don’t worry: I am God. I am fully in charge.”

During the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, you must prostrate. It is not something new: Apocalypse says that the elders prostrated before God. Your scapular is marked for prostration. Ugwu Nso is universal: All have access. But if you come, you must adore and prostrate. God freed Israel from Pharaoh, so that they will worship him. That is also the meaning of profession. Live the life of the Hearts of Love in the seminary without fear and compromise. If you are punished for wearing habit, or for not eating after 6, I will send you to another seminary. Then, they will ask for us. Just live the life. God will bring about extraordinary blessings, light, making you a Centre of the Hearts of Love. Convert them! You must be firm and fearless. It is God using us, and nothing will happen to us, except what God approves. And what God approves must work for the good of the mission. I admire very much the three young men, who refused to worship the statue, whether God will save them or not. No nonsense! Don’t look back, just do what God says, and you will become a fountain. Like the servants taught by Mary, and they filled the jars to the brim. Do not be proud. Do not be like the ox that carried the wagon with the Blessed Sacrament: when flowers were thrown, it rejoiced... Don’t take the glory of God! Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory. Not to you, not to me, it is Hearts of Love that must reign. If God wants to raise you, no trouble. We are just happy to be instruments of God. God told me: “You reign through prostration, by throwing yourself on the ground. Love it, preach it!” Our joy is: We have been allowed to live this life. The ball is before our foot, and there is nobody in the goal. They are just waiting for you to kick the ball.

After rosary procession from Umuchima to St. Louis’ chapel

Who can keep all the prayer-times shall be permitted to live at Ugwu Nso and thus have the privilege to be able to console the Heart of Mary with the salvation of souls!

15/12/2013, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Ugwu Nso

Vigil

What I want to say tonight, is the possibility for us to harvest from the power of the forgiveness of God. He said: “Any person you consecrate to the Hearts of Love and pray for, will never be lost.” Mary earned the privilege of freeing all her children from purgatory on Saturdays. How? By her faith. On Holy Saturday, the faith of all collapsed: the faith of Peter, of John, of Mary Magdalene. She went to the grave to anoint the body. When she saw the grave empty, instead of rejoicing, she began to cry: No hope! She thought they not only killed him, but also desecrated and stole the body. Mary was the only person who did not shake: “Blessed are you for you believed that what the Lord said will come true!” If you believe the promises – “Any day you keep all the prayer-times, no soul

will be lost.” Do you believe it? You do not believe it. If not, you would not dare to be late for prayers. How many of you came for the entrance-procession for Vigil tonight? If you would believe that the day you live this life, the gates of hell will be closed: No single soul will be lost. When Moses prayed, no single Jewish soldier was killed. “I will abolish death on this mountain.” This power God has given to man. Are we using it?

This man in the OT, who was pressed hard by his enemies and prayed to God for help. God sent his prophet who told the man to shoot arrows with his bow. The man shot three arrows and stopped. The prophet was annoyed: Why stopping? As many times as you shot, you will defeat the enemy. After three times, the enemy will overtake you. [King Joash of Israel and Prophet Elisha on the death-bed, cf. 2 Kings 13, 15-19] We, with every “Jesus, Mary! I love you...” we are sure of saving at least one soul. Why not saving 1 million every day?

Since many month, yesterday I had the opportunity to trek from Umuchima to Orlu. On other days I had to drive the car [with the microphones]. People worried me to enter the car. Do I not have two legs? People do it, walking for weeks in pilgrimage. God has given us the best, and has attached to it the reign of the Hearts of Love, the salvation of all souls. Let us love it: Life of perfection!

Let us work to make Ugwu Nso the place of splendour, of glory, to make it the throne of God!

Sunday Mass with reception of a sister and a brother in St. Mary’s parish Umumba Ndiuno in Enugu state: the small church was erected in 1919.

In Fatima, Mary requested the consecration of Russia. It was not done and war came, until John Paul II did the consecration. Then the wall fell, UdSSR fell, atheism fell. St. John M. Vianney consecrated his parish to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and all his parishioners converted: The power of consecration!

Holy Hour [immediately after the late, long mass]

My God, thank you for the possibility to do Holy Hour despite the odds. He is our nourishment more than any food!

16/12/2013, Monday, Ugwu Nso

Vigil

Udo! [peace] Udo! Udo! The whole world will see the peace that will flow like a river from here, like sunshine, like rainfall. From here it takes off to go to all hearts, all communities...

No more hiding, we are reigning with Christ. How? Through purity, sinlessness, prayer, complete commitment to God, prostration before God. Jesus told me yesterday: “Wherever you go, and prostrate in prayer of the Hearts of Love, there my Reign will be manifest.”

You have to be awake at preaching. And if you are awake, show it by showing me your eyes! The Word of God is not only heard, but also seen. For the Word of God became flesh.

After morning mass

Rosary procession every evening will from now on will be Eucharistic rosary procession. With candle! Mary wants rosary-procession, Jesus wants Eucharistic procession. The combination is the solution, and it shows the union of the Two Hearts. But we have to clear the road, so that the priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament will not stumble!

17/12/2013, Tuesday, Ugwu Nso

Vigil

The devil has great desire to enter our ranks, in order to destroy. The Church is the militant Church, fighting principalities and powers, the ancient dragon, not visible enemies. They are using superior knowledge. The only way to defeat him is to use God’s knowledge. If you do what he tells you, you are sure to conquer the devil. With disobedience, you walk into the minefield of the devil. You must

be harmless as doves, not cheating anyone, but also as wise as the serpent. Don't allow people to cheat you.

Anyone we do not trust, we cannot admit him/her. The community must be a healthy community, for we are sharing everything. The community must be protected. The Catholic Church is known for that. There are sicknesses, if you have it as a priest, you will not be allowed to celebrate Mass again. Even the pope. The life of the community is more important than your rights.

Mary told me: "When you are exceptionally holy, you will kiss not only my statue, but my person. I will come to you in person!" Be exceptionally holy. Preserve yourself, your body, your soul, your tongue, only for God. I say, hear, see only Hearts of Love. There must be this trust in a community.

"Be very, very careful with the brothers and sisters [aspirants] who were not sent by me, but by the devil. Use obedience to find them out, especially obedient compliance with the prayer-times, all the prayer-times. [...] What I have shown you as preparation for profession, pursue it with all vigour. [...] Fight [...]. Unite Umuchima with Ugwu Nso-Orlu. Let the rosary-procession be a sign of union. Go immediately and claim the Altar of Praise. [Marble altar Father erected with some brothers in 1987/88 in the Garden of the Hearts of Love in Umuchima. ...] Call all for annual pilgrimage to Ugwu Nso from Thursday before Christ the King till Sunday following the Immaculate Conception. It is for the renewal of vows and promises. [...] In this time, there will be many processions, both rosary- and Eucharistic processions. Organize it well [...] around this Prayer of the Hearts of Love. The steps you have taken for the separation of men and women are good, continue in that line. [...] My Love, make Ugwu Nso a small... a replay of what is in heaven. Let my children be happy. [...] All should know that you are my servant. Your first function is to listen to me and to receive my message. If I speak with you, all other things must disappear! [...] Give me your ears and heart, they belong to me. [...] All generations will call you blessed, for all will be blessed in you. [...] I am always pouring Myself in you. [...] My Love, why are you discouraged? Don't you know that you have already received 90% of success, as you do what I tell you?! [...] I want you to organize every evening Eucharistic rosary procession. On Saturday from Umuchima. On my Holy Mountain, let all follow the priest when he kneels and prostrates at consecration. [...] Let nobody come here and feel neglected. I want all who come to Me to be well fed, well housed, well cared for. [...]"

Even the devil spoke, tormented: "You have conquered me, but how do you think I will give up?! I will fight, fight! I planned to cause death, by all means, even by accident, of a newly ordained priest, of a brother, a sister, a lay-person. But you have defeated me by doing what Hearts of Love tell you! I dread her – she has completely humiliated me. And I dread you, because of your mission to crush me. But I will rule over you, if you would dare to sin, especially sins of the flesh! As long as you do not sin, I have no power over you. When you keep all the prayer-times, I am annihilated. I caused the damage of your car last Saturday. I wanted to cause more death here! But as long as you keep all the prayers, I am totally powerless."

God has given us the key: Every evening, Eucharistic rosary procession. We will begin it today. So that whether it is raining or sunning, nothing will prevent it.

### Holy Hour

Your place in the history of the Hearts of Love, will it be written in gold, or black, or blue, or red? You decide, it depends on how you respond to the graces which God in his infinite mercy is lavishing on us. Choose the best... making the Hearts of Love your home, your goal, your mission, your fulfilment, your heaven. I said it several times: I have found my heaven. It is in the Heart of Jesus and Mary.

18/12/2013, Wednesday, Ugwu Nso

### Vigil

One day lived here is *far* (!!!) more better than a thousand days lived elsewhere. Why? From the beginning to the end, God has designed this life to keep us closest to himself, to keep me constantly

in the sanctuary, before the Blessed Sacrament. To raise us up to the highest by bringing us down to the lowest.

“I have given you the best.” “I mean to give you powers that have never been given out since the creation of the world.” Let us appreciate and preserve what the Lord has given us, live it to the highest: consciousness, union with the Creator, dependence: depend on him! After creating, God knew what he has created. And it pleased him so much, and he poured blessings on creation. He gave rules to man, what to avoid and what to do. God has promised: “If only you live the life well *here*, the whole world will be saved.” “My Love, I want you to be perfect. Why I gave you this elaborate rule? In every grain of this rule of life is engraved perfection. My Love, I want you to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Pursue this perfection! In doing the will of your heavenly Father. [...] This is why we sent you into this world: To live this life and to teach all that this life is liveable. [...] Live it, preach it [...] and all will be alright for all creation, for all on earth, under the earth and in heaven. Through this God has planned to unite all on earth and in heaven. Just do faithfully what I tell you, and *all* will follow, *all* will follow. [...] All things will be added unto you, there will be nothing lacking. [...] Build this Noah’s arc, do not mind what they say or do. [...]”

26/4/2014, Saturday, Rome, Rita’s house, 6am morning Mass

In the Hearts of Love, God gives himself to us, asking, as he asked Mary: “Please, can I incarnate in you?!”

27/4/2014, Mercy Sunday, Rome, Rita’s house, Vigil

One day, a brother asked me, whether it is not good, if one brother will be with one sister, as St. Francis with St. Clare... When I went for formation-course, I presented the case and asked: Is it not better to send the person away? The formator smiled and said: “If you send those people away, you may end up sending away the normal ones and stay with the abnormal ones.” It is normal for people to be attracted by the other sex. It need to be controlled.

28/4/2014, Monday, St. Louis Mary de Montfort, Rome, Rita’s house, Vigil

It is by God’s providence that the canonization was done on Mercy Sunday, and a day before the feast of St. Louis M. de Montfort! His teaching of Totus Tuus made John Paul II such a giant of saint. There are graduations. The sainthood of Mary cannot be compared with the sainthood of Joseph. The sainthood of Joseph cannot be compared with the sainthood of St. Ambrose. The sainthood of John Paul II cannot be compared with the sainthood of S. Guannella. What made John Paul II rise like this, was Totus Tuus: giving all to Mary, and fighting till the end.”

29/4/2014, Tuesday, Rome, Rita’s house

Morning Mass

Are you happy? It is very important for this life to live it with happiness.

We are about to fall to pieces, everywhere, even the noviciate. Either we jump now into success, or we are finished. If you want to jump into success, you have to work for it. Our success is collective success or collective failure. In a football-team, you cannot succeed as single person, you must succeed as a team.

It is the first time God allowed that devil appeared to me. It was short after the final profession [Dic. 2013?!]: “I know you will win. But I must fight!” Accidents began. [One novice-brother died, one sister had broken leg.] Even the car where Anne [from France] and Sr. Helen were: the driver and the people in the front burnt, the two escaped through the window. The forces of evil are attacking us from every side.

If I had come to Rome, seeking to eat well and to dance, friends and benefactors to buy shoes for me, God would allow me to fall – if I am not serving his purpose. The Minimum: you must do Vigil and Holy Hour – together!

[About a person criticizing the sisters publicly:] If there is someone against you like that, you cronical it: Every day he says something, you write it down with date, and present the list to the authority. Pity him, pray for him, but make his plans to nothing by exposing him. Let the authorities know what he does and says, with date: catalogue it!

#### Midday Prayer

What was shown to me in prayer: We have to write everything we do. It is a command: You have to give account. Write every detail! Then we present it: Even if they throw us out, if we have the record, it will be our vindication.

In the Church, people build on what others did. Not as in politics, where predecessors are called stupid and their work is undone. In the Church, you have to give honour to those who came before you. Authority has to be sustained, and not always all can be made open to all.

23/5/2014, Friday, Napoli, Arco Mirelli 23: Holy Hour

In this our time, devil is more active than ever before: immorality and violence, and not being ashamed for it. Bishops who concentrate on selling churches, instead of concentrating on saving souls. But God has created man for salvation. Creation is useless without salvation. God pours his love and infinite mercy on the world, not minding the sins. All sins are already forgiven! Even the ones you may still do, are already forgiven and paid for! But not all know that their sins are forgiven. What is salvation? It is union with God! Our Lady said in Fatima: souls go to hell, not because of sin, but because nobody prays for them. God needs people who will unite with Jesus and Mary and through them, he means to save all souls. He needs people who will say this Prayer day and night! Whoever lives this life, is already a living martyr.

24/5/2014, Saturday, Napoli, Arco Mirelli 23, Vigil

I just want to tell you one thing: God loves you! To the extent that he preserved for you the best. Even the best part of the body. When Christ had already given his life, then he gave his heart. It was pierced, and he gave his last drop of blood. It cannot be possible to donate the heart, until you have already given your life. And you cannot receive a heart, unless you have given your own.

God the Father is Father, because he has a Son. The Son is his identity! God so loved the world that he gave his Son. If he had sent himself, I do not say that it would have been less. But Abraham would have suffered less, if God had asked him to sacrifice himself. We have to reach to the same level of love.

You have to open yourself completely to receive the gift of God. If someone comes with a big basin of gold, and you stretch out three fingers to take it – what does it mean? You have to extend both arms and open yourself completely, to take it all, as God gave himself completely to Mary, and she opened herself completely and gave herself completely to accept him all. “Piccolo amore” is not the way. A half heart cannot receive him.

17.20-19.45 Evening Mass with people

The lowest level of membership is to keep the night-vigil with two rosaries of the Hearts of Love, and the Holy Hour with one. The “perfect life” is to come by 23.30, do rosary-procession with candle and incense and flowers, to say Angelus by 12 midnight, with benediction of the whole world, to four directions, then Mass, adoration till 4 am, then keeping a little rest, having Mass and Laudes by 6am after Angelus and benediction...

25/5/2014, Sunday, Napoli, Arco Mirelli 23, Vigil

We have to become more serious to live this life, and then we cannot do any other thing. Take your studies as part of your prayers. Everywhere you go, teach people this prayer. Not only going to them; here you have the opportunity to *draw* them.

“My Son, abandon yourself completely to live this life. Found an association that will take care that all the children in the world will receive from the resources of the world free food, education and medi-care. All children are mine in a special way!”

24/6/2014, Tuesday, Nativity of John the Baptist, Rome, Via Bravetta, Domus Regina Pacis

Holy Hour

What a small beginning of a great Feast! But through this Feast the victory will come, the union of all in Christ will be fully realized.

John prepared for Christ; when he came, John disappeared. We also prepare, but when he comes, we will join him. The moment we will live it, the Reign will come. Let us reach the stage of no longer going back. We have over-ripened, but God is still patient with us. He said: “Any day we live this life perfectly well, no soul will go to hell that day. Once the Reign of the Immaculate Heart is there, no more soul will go to hell. Thus devil will be annihilated: nobody follows him to hell any more. He has to repent and say sorry. Devil will die! This is how God has planned it. Just live this life perfectly well! This is how God wants it. There will be attacks from all sides, but don’t be worried. Nobody knows God’s plan! The aim of this Feast is the Reign of the Hearts of Love.

25/6/2014, Wednesday, Rome, Regina Pacis

Vigil

God wants us to celebrate this Fest with all our love – all the love of your heart, your soul, also all the love of your body. With all your strength. God wants us to be perfect – on the human level. God is perfect on the divine level. But we are made in the image and likeness of God. We are not ordinary creatures. We are not only part of creation, we share in his divine existence, divine power, divine life, divine joy. We are not God, but God allowed us to share his life. It is the teaching of Christ that we shall be perfect as the Father is perfect. I want to remind you the perfection that God wants us to have: Eucharistic perfection! Perfection in love. “Remain in my love.”

Last week, the Lord made it clear to me that these three Feasts are united: Holy Trinity, Corpus Domini, Two Hearts of Love. They are one, they celebrate the perfection of Love. We should unite these three Feasts. The Feast should start with Holy Trinity.

“... I am giving it to all who cry day and night for this perfection. I will give it to them. It is a gift of my love and mercy. Teach my children all the perfection, all I taught you.

Holy Hour

Wednesday-Audience [of the Holy Father] is one of the best preparations for the Feast. We were welcomed by the Pope; he welcomed us in his diocese, in his house.

It is the Church in purgatory that gains most, and it is the Church in heaven that rejoices most. This is a heavenly Feast, the most heavenly Feast.

Any soul that loves the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary, that has said this Prayer even once, that looked at the Image, that saw or touched us, that we have loved, that we have consecrated, that we have mentioned in this Prayer and loved with this Prayer. All will be drawn to heaven. Let us not lose out of sight the aim of this Feast. Any person we have in our heart at this Feast, we send to this person the divine touch. Everyone will flock to this feast, for your presence; your presence in this feast will draw blessings to your friends, family, acquaintances. This Feast has the major part in the promise of Our Lady: “At last, my Immaculate Heart must triumph!”, i.e. there will be union of souls with Jesus, with Salvation. That is the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We are doing well already, praying, praying, praying. Let us continue, for the salvation of souls, for the good of the Church.

I want to thank God for his infinite love and mercy. We can never thank him enough. Look at your fruits of this Feast: souls entering into heaven. Uncountable souls. What the Lord said in the Gospel: “From their fruits you will know them.” There can be no better fruit of earth than souls entering heaven. Jesus is the best fruit of earth, and Mary. They are already in heaven. Thus every



soul that goes into heaven goes there only in union with Jesus and Mary, as any soul that goes to hell goes there in union with Lucifer.

We do the best harvest: the harvest of souls. The harvest is rich, but labourers are few. The Lord promised: “No matter the fewness...”

Many have contributed in the sowing of the seed which we are harvesting. I was deeply impressed by what the king did here: Josiah. They discovered a scroll, the Book of the Lord. He read it – and rent his garments and cried. They called assembly of all the people, young and old. They assembled, discovered their fault, and cried. They made a covenant: We shall do, all the Lord told us to do. Last night we read the rule the Lord gave me to live, every day... There is no other solution to save all souls! How can we unite to these two Hearts of Love? And he taught me this prayer. This Prayer is the only solution: there is no other. Many bishops, many prophets continue to look for other solutions. “I praise you, Father, for hiding these things from the clever and the learned...” Don’t be ashamed! Preach only this, live only this! Preachers are many, but none of them preaches this, lives this! It is the only solution! I read on St. Dominic: In every preaching he spoke on the rosary. It was the main thing in his life. Every other thing we do is either secondary or useless! Only living this life and living it.

One day, on the Holy Steps [in the sanctuary in Orlu, Nigeria], one voice was following me, pestering me: “What do you want – souls or money? Souls or money????!!” This is the question: Are we looking for souls, or for money? God provides everything you need, he will do it through people. Concentrate on souls! And God will use us to establish the Reign. The Levites received no land. Their portion was the service of God in the temple. Others were to give them 10% of their produce, their business.

Every time I encounter Pope Francis, I admire him more and more. How he took time today for the sick, caring for each of them! That is our work...

26/6/2014, Thursday, Rome, Domus Regina Pacis

Morning Prayer

Those who support gay, their argument is: “This is my nature! This is how I am.” But it is not true. Sin can be a punishment for sinning. You can be indoctrinated, and that works faster than poison.

Compline

It is very important to listen to God in silence. His voice is so soft! He does not need to shout in order to create. The most soft voice Jesus used, when he told me three times: “It is possible (!) to save all souls!”

27/6/2014, Friday of the Most Sacred Heart, Rome, S. Maria Maggiore

Mass by 10am

Every person you know, you have a relationship with this person: He belongs to you! Every person you love, take his heart, and give it with your own heart to Mary!

Domus Regina Pacis, Holy Hour

For many years, I prayed God to let me see the Image of the Hearts of Love. He showed it to me, appearing in heaven, in February 1988 in the Garden of the Hearts of Love [in Umuchima, Nigeria]. The eldest Marian Basilica is Mary herself: Temple of Jesus... Do not be afraid to enter into intimacy with Jesus and Mary, and to show it publicly: They will not misuse you!

28/6/2014, Saturday of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Rome, Regina Pacis, Holy Hour

What we are doing, no angel can do it, for God did not give them the power. Angels do not have the power to celebrate Mass. My God, my Love, my All, I thank you for giving such powers to man. Any sin committed anywhere in the world goes to wound that heart, the heart of Mary. She has no second without wound. The worst is when a soul gets lost. Before Judas hang himself, Mary called

him, begging him: "Please, come back! He will forgive!" Peter, after denying him, could not go to Jesus – he went to Mary, crying: "I have denied him!" She consoled him.<sup>1465</sup>

Love all with the heart of the Hearts of Love, not with your own heart. If you love me with your own heart, you want to unite me to yourself, possess me. And you will destroy me. If you love me with the Heart of Jesus and Mary, it is correct, and there will be no jealousy.

29/6/2014, Sunday of the Feast of the Two Hearts of Love/Solemnity of St. Peter & Paul, Rome, Regina Pacis

Vigil

Our participation is required for this Feast: We have to celebrate Masses and pray! Then God will do this Feast. This Feast is done and established by God himself, and it is meant to bring souls to the Love of God. All God asks of us is to celebrate Masses and to pray on that day.

We must not allow the devil to take our symbols. Love means Jesus! The triangle means the Holy Trinity!

Holy Hour

St. Paul – what he suffered! Instead of regretting, he boasted! He gloried in the cross of Christ. We are students of Christ. Our school is Love. As you use the thermometer to measure the temperature, you use the cross to measure love. Cross and sacrifice. The more you sacrifice, the more you love. There is no greater love than to give the life. The greatest of all gifts is Love. I am happy about this life God gave me. Those who say: "Father, you have headache – go and rest!" You are a devil! You should say: "Go to the chapel! You are late!" This is an angel, helping me. You should encourage one another to live this life, as Mary, who stood at the foot of the cross, praying and encouraging him to die for us. This issue of helping each other... When I prayed to give me helpers to help me to keep Holy Hour and Vigil, help me to do rosary-procession: that is the helpers I prayed for.

Compline

We thank God for today – the greatest day of the Feast. This year it was connected with Peter and Paul, the feast of universality and unity of the Church...

30/6/2014, Monday, Protomartyrs of Rome, Rome, Regina Pacis

Vigil

What did God do before creation? It is a wrong question, like: How did you give birth to your grandma? There was no time before creation. Also, What happens after the Feast? Is a wrong question. There is no after. The Feast is the union of all in Christ, the Feast was in the mind of God before creation, and it has no end! This Feast, what have we done? We were living our life. Now we continue our life. We continue the Feast! You have a birthday and a birthplace. Once you are born, you continue living... This man you are looking at has no other mission than to celebrate the Feast of the Two Hearts of Love. And I am living it every day. "Just live this life – that is all." It is by submission to the will of God that this life lives itself in you.

Meeting with sisters in the morning

The Lord said: "I did not marry them that they will be another person's housewife. Their work is to live this life and to spread it." Let them go to St. Peter and share prayers! Money is never to be in the forefront of what we are doing. It is not the centre of our apostolate. We are seeking the Reign. God has allowed that we have some who live completely the life in the Centres, and others, who will be less contemplative and more active. But everybody: you cannot miss the Holy Hour and Vigil, or else you must remove our habit. Casa Assistenti and Fontecchio allowed us to work and pray. Any work that permits our prayer-life is acceptable.

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<sup>1465</sup> Probably he refers to the visions in the work "The God-Man" of Maria Valtorta, which he read at least partly in Germany.

1/7/2014, Tuesday, Rome, Rita's house, Meeting with some sisters

If you care for old people: What they need most from you is your prayers.

#### Midday Prayer

Happy the man who finds wisdom. What is wisdom? It is not being expert. When they had no more wine, it was Mary who had the wisdom to find the solution: Jesus was there. Mary is called the Wisdom of God.

A good wife – who can find her? Her value surpasses all. Mary is more than all angels and saints together. My brother, Bishop Nwedo [Nigerian Founder], came into the quagmire, the quicksand of sisters. As a poor father, you cannot but be neutral. It is normal that some children come nearer to their parents. Some were nearer to Bishop Nwedo. One of them was from Orlu parish. A new Mother General, she faced those who were near to Bishop Nwedo, persecuting them. He reacted, defending them. The Mother General formed a team with others, with priests who felt neglected, and wrote terrible reports. The beginning was quarrel among sisters.

#### Holy Hour

What type of man is this? He calms the sea! Everything obeyed Jesus, because Jesus obeyed the Father. We shall not want. Sisters! There can be nothing else than battle. But what God has given you, nobody can take it from you, unless you throw it away. God wants to rest ... in your hearts. He does not want any artificial resting place.

2/7/2014, Wednesday, Rome, Rita's house

Morning mass with some sisters

Today is our day of fasting, of retreat. Day of closed doors and of looking at ourselves. It is good we look at ourselves. Today shall be a day of forgiveness and reconciliation.

See what happened in the Gospel: They *begged* Jesus to leave their territory. They did not want to change. You, do you want to change? It will cost you much. At Gerasa, Jesus came to destroy their economy. God wants to raise you – educationally, socially, economically – more than you *can* be. But God warned: “Anybody who will try to separate the Hearts of Love, I mean to eliminate!” The Jews [when they accused Mary of adultery] – even the pleading of Jesus did not save them from the elimination of the whole nation. Man is not a means. Even more, God and his work cannot be used for your own plans.

My family was the light of Orlu. My father was the *first* teacher! The shop [of lace] of my mother was the first along B.S.C.-road. Our house was the first zincked house. Now they say that it is Ugwu Nso that holds their progress...

#### After Holy Communion:

We shall not be like the Geraseans, who begged Jesus to go away, so that they will remain what they are. Mary told me: “What God wants to do with you is more than what he did with me.” And you also! Our right: right of prayer. What God gave us here in Italy – because of what he wants to do with us. If only you do the will of God.

3/7/2014, Thursday, Rome, Rita's house, Morning Mass

The Vincentians, when they pray and a poor man begs for food, they are to leave the prayer and serve him. We, if we pray and a poor man begs for bread, we beg him to come in and pray with us, then we give him something. We shall not neglect caring, but the centre of our caring is this Prayer, is the Holy Eucharist. At Orlu, the clinic has to be brought down *into* the Holy Mountain. When we began to take care of the sick at Ugwu Nso, we used prayer: It is the main thing! We are not "Medical Sisters of Mary". We are Sisters of the Two Hearts of Love. Prayer first!

22/10/2014, Wednesday, Fontecchio, St. John Paul II

Midday Prayer

Lord, do not allow them to wipe out Christianity from the place of your birth and apostolate! But Christianity is weakened by decadence in faith and morality. How can God protect them? In Nigeria, they want to take over, Islamize all. This particular brand of Islam is evil.<sup>1466</sup> Matilda's brother was one of the richest Igbos in Maiduguri. Now he is a beggar in Owerri. When people come to the North, they give them land free. And they build big things. When they have built, the Hausa pursue or kill them, and take the houses. The solution is there: consecrate the world to the Hearts of Love, consecrate Isis and Boko Haram to the Hearts of Love! Anyone can do it. God has given us the solution. Devil is fighting his last battle... If only we live this life, God will use us, and all these evil forces will disappear.

God now wants me to stay in Ugwu Nso and live the life. The time has come.

Holy Hour

"Go and tell my bishops in Nigeria to consecrate Nigeria to my Two Hearts of Love. Let them remember that their cathedrals can become mosques." The danger is real. Do not use their weapons of hatred, wickedness and sin. Use our own weapons, and you will be superior to them and destroy all their weapons. It is not easy to remain peaceful when they hit and machete you. God has given us the weapon of Love. But we are not using it well!"

19/6/2015, Friday, Napoli, Monastero Carmelitano Arco Mirelli, sermon at Holy Hour with lay members and Carmelitan nuns

One day, Jesus opened me His Heart and said: "Enter!" I entered. He said: "This is what you possess, and this is what possesses you!" And he also gave me to possess the hearts of all people, of all of you. What do I do with your hearts? I am not a thief of hearts. I win your hearts, by loving you with the Love of Jesus and Mary. I unite them with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. I have come to save all by uniting them to Jesus and Mary.

I thank you that you allow me to love you with the Love of Jesus and Mary, by preaching to you, by giving you Holy Communion, by consecrating you to the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary.

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<sup>1466</sup> Fr. Montfort has generally a high esteem for Moslems, especially for their prayer-life, their chaste clothing and for their ready acceptance of children from the hand of God.

## **5. Booklet of the first “COME”-Letters (COME, Newsletter of the Hearts of Love, Vol 1, n. 1-8)**

(The booklet of “Come”-letters was printed around 1988 in Orlu as a booklet without author, year, place and shared by Fr. Montfort to the first aspirants, educated devotees and volunteer workers. The original was typed with typewriter, while all other documents were written with computer.)

**(p. 2)** Let us go to the Love of God. (Living word of Divine Love)  
Newsletter of the Hearts of Love (1)

God is Love, come let us go to him. Come let us go to the love of God. God created us for the love of Him. He made our hearts to love him. We can never have fulfilment outside the love of God. It is absolutely necessary for our well-being and perfection that we love God, neighbour and self. This love is unconditional. It does not depend on anybody or anything but God. It is not reciprocity, it is life, it is God. God is life. God is love, love is life. [...] He longs for your heart. He thirsts for your love. **(p. 3)** Your loving him does not add anything to his love or glory. [...] Why then does he want my heart and longs for my love? It is that his goodness and love might overflow into my heart, into my being for my well-being and perfection.

This prayer is said at mass. “Almighty Father, the love you offer always exceeds the furthest expressions of our human longing, for you are greater than the human heart. Direct each thought, each effort of our life, so that the darkness of our faults and weaknesses may not obscure the vision of your glory or keep us from the peace you have promised”. I meditate on this preface: “[...] **(p. 4)** Our prayer of thanksgiving adds nothing to your greatness but makes us grow in your grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. [...]”

Let us go to the Love of God. Newsletter of the Hearts of Love (2).

Topic: Prayer: God’s own solution. Prayer of the Hearts of Love: God’s own solution. The only solution.

What is prayer?

Prayer is looking up to God, lifting up your heart to God, raising your hands to God. Raising your eyes to God, reclining your head on God, bowing down face to the ground to God, kneeling down before of God, prostrating your whole person before God, speaking to God, listening to God, learning the wishes of God, doing the will of God, above all. Prayer is experiencing and expressing our loving relationship with God. **(p. 5)** Prayer is loving encounter with God. Pray, pray, pray. [...] Prayer is as large as life. In fact, prayer is larger than life. All the acts of the human being, all aspects of life can be made prayer. Everything done for God is prayer. All loving thoughts, words and actions for God and towards God is prayer.

Sweetness of prayer:

Prayer is the sweetest, noblest and highest thing in the world. It is the sweetest thing from the world to heaven to God. It is the most pleasant fruit of the earth, the most attractive activity of man, the most rewarding and fulfilling work of man. Of all actions it is that which most makes man man. It is most befitting to man. Prayer is drawing water from God’s own well. It is being carried in God’s own arms and sucking milk from the breast: being bathed by God in his own fountain, being fed by God at His own breast. It is being swept and penetrated by rays from God’s own light. It is the most loving encounter with God who is love. Prayer is putting everything in the hands of God. **(p. 6)** It is

a loving gift, and submission and abandonment of ourselves, property, problems and prospects to God.

Life of prayer:

Prayer is life. Prayer is the life of the Christian. It is the most Christian act anybody can perform. It is the most salutary act of any human being. It is the act that most aptly distinguishes the human being from all other creatures as the creature made in the image and likeness of God.

Life of love: Love of prayer and prayer of love:

Come learn to pray. Come learn to love God. [...] **(p. 7)** [...]

Prayer of the Hearts of Love:

The prayer of the Hearts of Love is the prayer of Jesus and Mary. It is the prayer of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in love. It is no human composition. It is God's gift of love to us.

It is the prayer of the present moment. It is given to us to solve so much of our own problems today; problems both personal and collective, individual and of the family, family and community, community and nation, nation and the world. This prayer is aimed at curing the roots of all problems – sin, hatred, wickedness. It is a direct antidote to hatred, wickedness and sin. It is meant to heal the ravages of hatred, wickedness and sin. **(p. 8)** It is the neutralizer of the most devilish perpetrations on mankind. The prayer of the Hearts of Love is the prayer of union, union of God and man, man and man, family and family, community and community, nation and nation, race and race, earth and heaven. It is prayer of one heart, one spirit. This prayer is that all may be one.

God's gift, God's own solution:

This prayer is God's own gift of great love to man. This is God's own solution to the problems of the world today. It is God's own solution to man's wickedness, hatred and sin towards God. It is God's own solution to man's weakness. This is God's own solution to man's hatred of God, man's infidelity to God, man's hatred of God's love, man's breaking of God's heart.

It is no human invention or composition. The prayer of the Hearts of Love is God's perfect program for the reign of love in the world. It is God's own plan for the establishment of the reign of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in love. **(p. 9)** It is God's own way of establishing the reign of love in every heart and home and family and community and nation and the whole world. It is God's own loving revelation of (the only solution to) how we can please him, comfort him, console him, make amends for our sins and those of our brothers and sisters, neighbours and family. It is God's own way of drawing us to come right into his heart and live in his heart - in his love. It is God's own solution to the problems of man.

This prayer is God's simple loving method of the restoration of man to his primal status: the status terribly deformed by original sin and subsequent sins.

God's love created man. God's love saved man. God's love restored man. God's love is restoring man. God's love will restore man.

This Prayer of the Hearts of Love is the prayer. This prayer is God's own solution. The Prayer of the Hearts of Love is God's own solution: This is the only solution.

**(p. 10)**

COME. NEWSLETTER OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE (3)

[...] Every hour is holy. Every hour, time, day, week, month, season, year is sacred to the Lord, our God. He created all, He made them. He created all good. He blessed and sanctified them all. Therefore every hour is holy. Every hour is sacred to the Lord. [...] But to help human beings who cannot be [...] bowing and bowing and bowing or prostrating and prostrating and prostrating and praying and praying and praying, constantly, concentrating continuously, unendingly and

uninterruptedly without getting tired and bored and done. No, no man can do this. **(p. 11)** The Lord has appointed some hours as special and sacred. He has appointed some special times and places and persons and postures and established them as sacred unto God. This does not negate the general or common sacredness of all times and places and persons in God. Rather the special sacredness of these designated and chosen times, places and persons preserve the common sacredness of all times, places and persons.

In this devotion of the Hearts of Love, the Lord set up the sacred times as twelve o'clock, six o'clock, and four o'clock; the Lord set up the sacred moments as at Mass, Communion and end of Mass. The Lord set up the sacred hours as three to four o'clock, five to six o'clock, eleven to twelve o'clock. These are the solemn moments of union.

Hence the Prayer is said with all devotion and solemnity at these hours especially. The same at Mass. The Holy Mass is the greatest prayer and sacrifice there is. This prayer is said thus solemnly at Mass, at Communion and at the end of Mass. The prayer can be said publicly or privately.

Just as Fridays remind us of the cross – the crucifixion and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, **(p. 12)** Sundays remind us of creation, especially the new creation in Christ, the risen Lord – hence the great event of the resurrection. Thursdays are special days of great love of God, great love of the Hearts of Love. Thursdays are specially reminding us of the greatest prayer of Christ, the Mass, the last supper of the Lord and the greatest sacramental expression of his Love.

“When they were at supper he showed the depth of his love. God so loved the world that he gave his only son. No greater love has a man than when he laid down his life for his friends.” [... **p. 13.** Quotation of a preface and the words of consecration of Mass.]

These are the sacred hours in the devotion of the Hearts of Love. These are the special moments of prayer in this devotion of the Hearts of Love. These are the special moments of union in pure love and holy love with God, with oneself and with fellow beings. These are the times when one will not miss to say the prayer. **(p. 14)** These are the moment when one will put a stop to whatever else one is doing and devotedly give himself and time to say this prayer. These are the times when one will not omit the prayer but say it kneeling or prostrating whether in the open or secret, whether he is alone or with other people.

These are special solemn moments when God pours his blessings in abundance on all, who are members of the society of the Two Hearts of Love. These are special solemn moments when God pours his blessings in abundance on all who are in his love: On all who are in the Hearts of Love, on all who say the prayer of the Hearts of Love, on all who call on him in his Love, on all who live the life of Love. [...]

**(p 15)** COME. NEWSLETTER OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE NO. 4

#### THIS IS THE FULFIMENT

God is. God is Love. God created all things out of his Love. God plans all things in his love. His loving plan is that you and I and all will have fulfilment, have fulfilment in his love. [...] **(p 16)** [...] The prayer and devotion of the Hearts of Love usher in, inaugurate and actualise the time of the fullness of love, the time of fulfilment of God's plan. God through this prayer and devotion of the Hearts of Love means to establish the reign of love, the reign of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in love, the reign of the Hearts of Love. This is the inauguration of the fulfilment of the loving plan of God for the world, for mankind. This ushers in the time of the fulfilment of the hopes of man, hope of freedom from fears, hope of freedom from enemies, hope of freedom **(p 17)** from hatred, hope of man serving God in holiness, serving God in purity, [...]. **(p. 19)** The devotion of the Hearts of Love is given for the fulfilment of union of hearts. It is given for the establishment of the reign of the Hearts of Love – The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary. This is given for the fulfilment of the union of hearts – of all hearts in the love of God, for the fulfilment of the prayer of Christ that all may be one... the fulfilment of God's kingdom on earth, the fulfilment of God's will. That his will be done on earth as

in heaven. Because of this God daily calls us to come to the love of Him, he feeds us and feasts us daily in his love. [...]

**(p 22-26) NEWSLETTER 5**

**THESE ARE SOME OF THE PROMISES OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE**

“O! Hearts of Love! O! How I love to be called this. [... cf. Appendix 2.]”

**(p. 27) NEWSLETTER 6**

**THIS IS THE CATHOLIC MISSION OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE:**

This is a mission. This is a work. It is sent. It is given. Its origin is beyond. It is of God. It is of Jesus. It is of Jesus and Mary. It is of the Hearts of Love. It is of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in love. It is Catholic. [...] **(p. 28)** [...] It should be emphasized in all respects that this devotion, this mission, this work, this mission of universal love, this catholic mission of the Hearts of Love, this devotional way of life, [...] **(p. 29)** this life of prayer of love, this life of prayer of the Hearts of Love, this life of self-sacrifice in the Hearts of Love, [...] this life of total self-offering to God as a victim of love, this life of being entirely consumed by the love of God, [...] this life of being given up entirely to God and being taken up wholly in God and being used fully by God as it pleases him; this prayer, life, devotion, mission is ordained by the eternal will of God. [...] He ordained this prayer and life, devotion and mission, this way of life and love primarily for his own greater glory and honour and that his love and goodness might overflow into all, into all hearts and homes, into every person, everywhere and every time. God establishes this devotion and mission, to honour his only begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to give due honour **(p. 30)** to the Most Sacred Heart of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Immaculate Heart of Mary his daughter, who perfectly fulfilled an unimaginable part in the salvation of the world. And for the good and salvation and fulfilment of all. [...] **(p. 32)** It should be emphasized that this is of the very “raison d’être” of creation, the core essence of existence, the meaning and means of creation and salvation, the meaning and means of God’s self-revelation, self-communication, the ultimate meaning and means of God’s vocation for man, the vocation of God for man both to be, to be himself and to be for God. It is of the ultimate meaning and means of the fulfilment and realisation of God’s vocation for man to be (existence), to be himself, to be conscious of himself, to realise himself, to be in God, to be fully human and fully alive, to be in the world, to function in the world, to be effectively in the world to increase and multiply and dominate the earth, to be the apex and the king of creation, **(p. 33)** to be fully functional as man to be moving on the road to heaven, - real growth, and to be in heaven, being one with the creator and one’s end – this is the ultimate human fulfilment and happiness. [...]

**(p. 34- first half of p. 41)** is a long prayer to thank God for making “me” a Catholic, and a request to live it well, intercalated by scriptural readings of Mt 7, 43-48; 11, 28-30; 28, 16-20, Jn 20, 20-23, Mt 16, 19-20; Acts 1, 8, Rm 8, 31-39; Jn 13, 1-20, Jn 19, 26-27, and after some more text the first 2 paragraphs of LG, chapter 8.) [...]

**(p. 44) THE SPIRIT OF THE MISSION:**

The spirit of this mission (work) is the spirit of Jesus himself. It is the spirit of Jesus and Mary. It is the spirit of Love. [...] It is the spirit of love and forgiveness, of peace and joy, of sacrifice and hard work, of self denial and total absolute self-abandonment into the hands of God. Spirit of absolute/childlike trust and confidence in God. **(p. 45)** The spirit of universal love of all men and universal brotherhood of men, under the one and same universal Fatherhood of God, in the same one universal community/fellowship of the Spirit, in the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church in the communion of one body, one spirit in Christ, under the one and universal motherhood and care of Mary. In this we have the one and universal vicar of Christ, the Pope, the visible head and



universal leader of the faithful in Christ. In which we have the one same and universal birth, care, cleansing, nourishment and growth by the sacraments instituted by Christ and handed fully to his Church for the salvation of all men. In this we have the one same and universal and heavenly communion of the Saints who have gone before us, marked with the sign of faith and love and making the way and journey of faith and love more familiar, but not less difficult, and demanding and challenging. [...]

**(p. 48)** COME JOIN THE SOCIETY OF THE TWO HEARTS OF LOVE. COME JOIN IN THE CATHOLIC MISSION OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE. COME JOIN IN THE DEVOTION AND PRAYER OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE. COME JOIN IN THE WORK OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE. COME JOIN IN THE WORK OF BRINGING PEOPLE TO THE LOVE OF GOD. COME LET US GO TO THE LOVE OF GOD.

[...] It is a society of persons. It is a society of all persons dedicated to the Hearts of Love. It is a society of persons devoted to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in love. It is a society for all who have or will have great love of God and are willing, who will work with me to bring people to the love of God. **(p. 49)** It is a society of Souls formed by God who will have great love of God and who will work with Father Montfort to bring people to the love of God. It is a religious society. It is a Catholic Society. It is a society in the Catholic Church. [...]

**(p. 51)** [...] *Organisation:* This society is organised in circles. There are ten circles in all.

1. VOCATORS: This is the circle of all who call on the Hearts of Love devotedly even once in their lives and thereby receive the imprint of the Seal of the Hearts of Love engraved in their own Hearts.

2. DEVOTEES: These practice the devotion to the Hearts of Love constantly. They will thereby be turned by Jesus into flaming fire of divine love and they will never be lost.

**(p. 52)** 3. THE ENROLLED: These enrol their names in the society of the Two Hearts of Love. By this they especially consecrate themselves to Jesus - to the Hearts of Love. It is then a challenge to Jesus Christ, the Hearts of Love, to fight for them especially at the hour of death. Then he owes them a special fight.

4. THE PROPAGATORS: They propagate this devotion, thereby they will have their state in heaven raised according to their zeal, and success will accompany them.

5. THE CENTRAL CIRCLE: This is the Central authority. I takes charge of the messages of the Hearts of Love. The members dip themselves in the blood of Christ and becoming centres of Love, bring people and bath them in the blood of Christ. They collect **(p. 53)** the blood of Christ and pour on sinners. The Lord Jesus Christ has left them a reservoir of His blood.

6. THE BENEFACTORS: These give themselves to the love of God and pledge their resources for the work (mission) of the Hearts of Love.

7. THE VOLUNTEER WORKERS: These make the solemn declaration and give themselves to the love of God and pledge their services to the work (mission) of the Hearts of Love.

8. THE RELIGIOUS SISTERS: These (women) come from the volunteer workers of Love. They consecrate themselves to the love of God and give (pledge) themselves to the love of God and give their lives to the work (mission) of the Hearts of Love as religion sisters.

**(p. 54)** 9. THE RELIGIOUS BROTHERS: These men come from the volunteer workers. They consecrate themselves to the love of God and give their live for the work (mission) of the Heart of love as religious brothers.

10. THE PRIESTS: These men come from the volunteer workers consecrate themselves to the love of God in the Heart of Love and give (pledge) themselves to the love of God in the Hearts of Love and give their lives for the work (mission) of the Hearts of Love as priests.

A UNIT: All these circles form a single whole unit. None of these circles in itself forms a whole.

**(p. 55)** TIME FOR THIS DEVOTION:

This devotion to the Hearts of Love - of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in love, is to be practiced by every person everywhere and every time. But there are special times when the prayer is said: at twelve o'clock, four o'clock and six o'clock, at communion, at mass and at the end of mass. These special times, mass and at prayers, are the solemn moments of union.

**DAILY HOLY HOUR:** The Society practices daily Holy Hour in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament or<sup>1467</sup> in churches or in Gardens of the Hearts of Love and in the presence of the Image of the Hearts of Love or at the centre for the Hearts of Love. The times for the Holy Hour may be three to four o'clock, five to six o'clock, and eleven to twelve o'clock.

**DAILY VIGIL MASS AT THE CENTRE FOR THE HEARTS OF LOVE ORLU, 11- 12 pm<sup>1468</sup>,** is a very special time for super-abundance of blessings at that Most Sacred Place of this Devotion to the Hearts of Love - the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in Love.

**WEEKLY DEVOTION AND ADORATION ON THURSDAY:**

The society holds weekly devotions and adoration of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament every Thursday.

**(p. 56) WEEKLY VIGILS ON FRIDAY:** This Society organises vigils of prayer penance and promotion of the Devotion to the Hearts of Love and the love of God every Friday to Saturday evening.

**MONTHLY VIGILS:** This Society organises monthly vigils in the first week of every month.

**WEEKLY PRAYERS AND CARE FOR THE POOR; THE SICK AND NEEDY:**

The Society organises on a weekly basis sessions of prayer and care for the poor, the sick and needy (on Tuesdays especially).

**MONTHLY RECOLLECTION/RETREAT:**

The members of the Society hold monthly retreats (preferably at the mid month – Friday to Saturday).

**ANNUAL CONGRESSES:** The Society holds annual congress/ rally from Thursday to Sunday within the octave of Christmas and Thursday to Sunday within the Octave of Easter.

**ANNUAL FEASTS OF THE SOCIETY:** Special feasts of the society are the Annunciation, Christmas, Easter.

**SOLEMN FEAST OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE:**

The Solemn feast of the Hearts of Love occurs annually on the **(p. 57)** Sunday following the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (Friday) and the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Saturday); on that day many masses and prayers are offered to God for the love of the Hearts of Love and salvation of souls.

**SERVICES/ OFFICERS:** At each level and in each circle, the society is to have the following services/ offices:

1. **SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR:** He is the Priest who sees to the spiritual growth and authenticity of the members.
2. **PRESIDENT:** He is to come before the other members to prepare the place for them.
3. **VICE PRESIDENT:** Washes the feet of the members.
4. **SECRETARY:** Visits the sick members.
5. **TRESURER:** Gives alms to the poor.
6. **FINANCAL SECRETARY:** Keeps a record of the poor.
7. **PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER:** He sees to the transport of the members.
8. **ASSISTANT SECRETARY:** He is a beloved companion. [...]

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<sup>1467</sup> This "or" is due to the fact that in Nigeria in those years in many churches the Blessed Sacrament was not present, out of fear of desecration. The priest carried it after Mass to a chapel in the priest's house.

<sup>1468</sup> In those early years, Father celebrated the Vigil-Mass for the members by 11-12 pm; then he continued alone.

**(p. 60)** [...] PARTS: The prayer of the Hearts of Love is one prayer with many parts.

1. Prayer of sanctification or Act of Love also called Act of the Hearts of Love or the purificator.
2. Prayer of unification of the unificator.
3. Prayer for Immolation or the Immolator.

**(p. 61)**

4. Prayer of victimisation to perfect love, of consumption, also called consummator.
5. Short form of victimisation to perfect love, or perfector. The various parts have different functions.

[...] WHERE: This prayer is to be said everywhere, especially in churches, most especially in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, particularly when exposed. It is to be said at the centre for the Hearts of Love, in the Gardens and Arena<sup>1469</sup> of the Hearts of Love. In shrines of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Blessed Virgin Mary. In places designated for the worship of God in homes and other buildings where the faithful live, work or stay or reach. Before statues and pictures of representations of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed **(p. 62)** Virgin Mary, the Saints and angels, or wherever we have divine presence. Wherever we see the image or symbol of the Hearts of Love. In every heart, every home. In meetings and public gatherings, wherever one or two or three or more persons meet. Wherever there is any heart, soul or person.

WHEN: This most special prayer is to be said every time, especially at twelve, four and six o'clock, at communion and Mass, at prayers (and at the end of Mass).

This prayer said at Mass, at communion; if collectively, at the Priest's communion, if individually, at the individual's communion. This is for the solemn moments of union. At Mass the prayer can be said at the prayer of the faithful (intercessory prayer) [...], it can be said after the Priest's blessing and the *Ite Missa Est*.

**(p. 63)** [...] POSTURES: Whenever one says this prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed, one prostrates. One bows head to the ground at the call of the name Jesus and raises the head. This is done as many times as the Act of Love is repeated. One prostrates fully flat with the whole person on the ground at the prayer "O! Hearts of Love" and continues praying in this posture until the whole prayer is said. That is, until "O! Hearts of Love! Consume me. I am your victim of love!" This prayer calls for absolute humility, total self-giving to God. The same posture(s) is taken when saying the prayer before the image of the Hearts of Love exposed. At the special times and places **(p. 64)** it is to be said kneeling. Any posture that clearly shows absolute humility and self-emptying and self-giving and self-abandonment before God is acceptable.

While saying "pierce me with your arrows" one touches the Heart with the hand. The anthem of the Hearts of Love. "O! Jesus, O! Mary" is normally sung standing with the right palm spread firmly on the breast.

#### CHAPLET OF THE HEARTS OF LOVE:

The Chaplet of the Hearts of Love consists of ten "Jesus Mary, I love you" said solemnly, devotedly and constantly while contemplating the love of God, and the rest of the prayers then said after the ten Acts of Love.

[...] The prayer of the Hearts of Love can be said or sung. **(p. 65)** [...] One can say it while kissing the statues or picture of Jesus and Mary, the image of the Hearts of Love, the symbol of the Cross of the Hearts of Love, the crucifix etc. Sacred objects bringing Divine presence by the presence of Jesus and Mary - in the spirit of the prayer. [...] This gladdens the Heart of Jesus. It gladdens the Heart of Love. It makes Him smile. He likes this loving kisses in the spirit of reparation. He

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<sup>1469</sup> The Centre of the Hearts of Love in Amaocha/Umuchima had two areas: the "Arena" and the "Garden".

encourages and urges us to continue the practice. It helps to draw us deeper into His love. It helps to remove fear and shame from us, it helps us to love people, to come near to people. And people are drawn nearer to us. It helps and makes us to offer our troubles to God. [...] By saying the prayer, the devotion of the Hearts of Love is enkindled. **(p. 66)** It enkindles the fire of love in people. It renews the face of the earth. It is a prayer of the salvation of Souls. It makes us to realize that heaven is in our midst. It makes us to know that our God is He who is, the God of Love.

It is a prayer of repentance and of the repentant. This devotion helps those in purgatory. [...] This prayer/ devotion brings people to the love of God. It makes us to love and eager to do the will of God. It makes us willing to offer anything for the love of God. It protects and sanctifies us. This prayer/devotion makes us to work with Jesus and be with Jesus in the blessed Sacrament, Jesus who is abandoned, forgotten and a prisoner of love. The devotion makes us to bring many other people to unite and stay with and converse with Jesus. **(p. 67)** [...] It makes God's house full, with God's house very full He will be happy and forgive our sins. [...] It brings us to contemplation and sharing in Christ passion. It dispels hatred for when love meets love, hatred gives way. This prayer/devotion makes to correct, to rectify, to do with love what the misdeeds of executioners of Christ misdeed to His Sacred person; the executioners **(p. 68)** never feared people, place never stopped them, distance nor crowd never kept back even a lash. The Hearts of Love, (Jesus and Mary) want us to do the same with love. On this prayer/devotion depends the future of the world. It is the only solution to the problem of the future of the world. How the Sacred Heart will reign again. The only solution to the above problem is to unite to the two wounded and bleeding Hearts. But first, we are to send our blood into the holes of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Immaculate Heart which will unite with and send our blood (the reds [in the image]) unto the Sacred Heart of Jesus through this prayer of the Hearts of Love.

This devotion is the way of the union with the wounded and bleeding Hearts. This union by the prayer is the way of the reign of love in the whole world. Please never stop or fail to say and live this prayer.

## **6. SHL, The devotion and Society of the Hearts of Love - the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary – the Two Hearts ever united in Love, Eichstätt 1999.**

The booklet of 116 pages (A5) was printed in 1999 in Eichstätt. It does not mention the name of the author – Montfort OKAA, and it contains excerpts of the “Original Constitutions” of the whole Society of the Hearts of Love (Appendix 3). It also contains an apologetic-theological defence of the devotion of the Hearts of Love, and a brief history of the devotion in the whole Church and in Nigeria. It was printed and distributed by Father Montfort in the years 1999-2000, but not published. Here are given the pages 78-82, 85, 87, 97-109 of the booklet, the pages concerning the history of the devotion. The “History of the Society of the Hearts of Love”, contained in the p. 97-109 is integrated by some longer narrations from the earlier letter:

“A SOLEMN APPEAL TO MY BROTHER PRIEST”, Letter to the Nigerian Bishops’ Conference, 1999

(Letter of defence of the devotion and Society of the Hearts of Love, 22 pages, written by Fr. Montfort in Germany, sent to the novices in Nigeria, who photocopied it and brought it to the meeting-place of the bishops in Lagos in 1999, where it was shared.)

The intercalated passages from the pages 16-18 of the letter are given in braces { } and with the page-number of the letter indicated. Some names of persons are omitted.

**(p. 78: History of the devotion of the Two Hearts)**

[...] The Holy Father Pope John Paul II urges devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. [...] In a letter he personally delivered to the Father General of the Jesuits in Oct. 1986, in reference to the Sacred Heart devotion he writes: “the essential elements of this devotion belong in a permanent fashion to the spirituality of the Church throughout her history.”

From the earliest times the Church has always acknowledged the unique and lasting union of Our Lord Jesus Christ with His Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary. This union did not end in time but lasts unto eternity. [...] It is only in relation to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus that we can rightly see the meaning, appreciate the value, authentically practise and effectively teach the true devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In the Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary is manifest the most perfect creaturely response to the Infinite Divine Love. The Immaculate Heart is the most adequate response to the Divine Love of the Sacred Heart. In the union of Jesus and Mary we see the most perfect union of a creature with the Creator.

[...] The place of Jesus and Mary is at the core of our relationship with God. Jesus Himself is truly God and truly man. He is Emmanuel- “God is with us”. Mary is the Mother of Jesus. She is the Mother of God. The heart on symbolising Love represents the whole person. The Heart of Jesus is the Divine Heart. Mary is not God and [...] is never to be seen or placed as equal to God in any way. The Church has always seen **(p. 79)** her as having a specially privileged position with God and a unique and eternal union with Jesus. She is the daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son and spouse of the Holy Spirit. Her relationship with Jesus and with God is unique. She is most uniquely united with Jesus. Mary is never equal to Jesus, never equal to God, but she is ever united with Jesus. This unity has its origin in the eternal will of God and took place according to the eternal will and plan of God. This unique union became even more visible when she conceived Jesus in her virginal womb. It became more eloquent when she and Saint Joseph presented Him at the Temple as the holy Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his Mother: “look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise [...]” (Lk. 2,33-35). This unique and eternal union of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary can be more clearly seen at the suffering, crucifixion and death of Jesus on the cross of Calvary where

His Mother was there with her Divine Son, at the foot of His cross till the end. This union did not end there but continued as the work of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection and in the life of the young Church, when her motherly and loving heart followed the apostles and all the followers of Her Divine Son with indescribable care, love and prayers everywhere every moment in their evangelical work. This union became yet more perfect at her own death and assumption into heaven where she was perfectly and eternally united with her divine Son and was “crowned by the Most Holy Trinity to be the Queen of Angels and our Queen for ever.”

[...] The Society and members of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary International<sup>1470</sup> never talk of equality but union in the relationship of (p. 80) Mary with Jesus. An example of this perfect union without any equality is seen in the union of the Divine nature and human nature in the one Divine Person of Jesus Christ, which hypostatic union took place in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary through the action of the Holy Spirit according to the eternal will of the Father. The union of Jesus and Mary is essentially different from that of the Trinity. [...] The unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is a union of one Divine Nature, but the union of Our Lord Jesus Christ with His Mother is a union in Love, in perfect accord with the eternal will of God. Jesus Christ is God. Mary is a creature. She can never be equal to Jesus Christ. [...]

The Holy Father writes in a letter to Cardinal Sin on the occasion of an International Symposium on the Union of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary: „We can say that just as the mystery of Redemption began in the womb of the Virgin of Nazareth, so did that splendid union of the Hearts of Christ and His Mother. From the very moment when the Word was made flesh beneath the Heart of Mary, there has existed, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, an enduring relationship of love between them. The Heart of the Mother has always followed the redemptive mission of Her Son. As Jesus hung on the Cross in completion of His salvific work, Simeon’s prophecy foretelling the definitive alliance of the Hearts of the Son and of the Mother was fulfilled: “And a sword will pierce your own soul, too.” (Lk. 2,35) Indeed the centurion’s lance that (p. 81) pierced the side of Christ also penetrated the Heart of His sorrowful Mother and sealed it in sacrificial love.”

[...] Full of joy and thanksgiving to God we acknowledge that the members, even little children in this Society, [...] have always promptly rejected any such false teaching that present Mary as equal to Jesus [...].

Considering the great responsibility and power which Jesus Christ Himself gave to the Apostles on whose chair the bishops in every generation sit, there is a great need always to pray for our bishops (p. 82) and pastors for the guidance of the Holy Spirit which Our Lord Jesus Christ promised and sent to the Apostles and gives to the Church unto eternity. The Apostles often differed and even disputed strongly among themselves and in their councils (Acts 15,7). But at last they always resolved issues under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. That is why they could say: “It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves, not to impose on you any burden beyond the essentials”. (Acts 15,28). Through you I wish to beg his Excellency, our bishop [Mons. G. Ochiagha ], with the help of the same Holy Spirit ever guiding the Church, please to discern and try to differentiate between what a pastor as a person, as an individual, does not like and what is the will of God, what is authentically Christian and Catholic, what is in accordance with the Holy Scripture, what is true and faithful to the teaching and practice and long tradition of the Church, what is recognised, embraced and held by Christ’s faithful as good, authentically Christian and Catholic and as coming from God – inspired by the Holy Spirit.

[p. 82-85, 86: Apologetic text, quoting CIC, can. 215, 216, 223, 299, 300, similar to the following text of p. 85:]

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<sup>1470</sup> The “International” was added by Bishop Anthony Ilonu to the name of the Society in 1997, and later replaced by Fr. Montfort with “Catholic”.

**(p. 85)** The emphasis is not just on honouring the Most sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, rather the emphasis is on honouring them together as united. [...] If anybody finds anything whatsoever in this devotion which is contrary to our Catholic Faith and practices, [...] please let us know and we shall stop it and remove it immediately.

**(p. 87)** His Holiness Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, introducing the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, declared: “Guarding the deposit of Faith is the mission which the Lord entrusted to His Church, and which she fulfils in every age.” An essential part of this sacred revelation and precious deposit of faith is the great mystery of the Incarnation, the union of divine and human nature in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the special role of the Blessed Virgin in God's redemptive plan, the unique relationship of union in Love of Jesus and Mary, the union of the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary, [...] by the action of the Holy Spirit according to the eternal will of God the Father.

John Henry Cardinal Newman writing *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, underlined: if ever there was a case where the laity should be consulted, it would be in that of doctrines directly related to devotional expression. In the Catholic Church what is a higher and more popular object of devotion than the Love of God made manifest in the Hearts of Love – the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Two Hearts ever united in Love. VOX POPULI VOX DEI, the general and perennial cry in the Church attests to the reality of the guidance of the Holy Spirit over the universal Christ's faithful in matters of faith, doctrine and devotion. Is there anywhere any diocese in the Catholic Church where the faith and devotion to the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary is not zealously practised under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

**(p. 88)**

*Brief history of the Devotion to the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary*

[...] Our Lord [...] the Incarnate Love of God invited and still invites all to come to the Love of God, to His Heart of Love. [...] This brief and scanty historical trace is only to serve as a little help. New Testament: God is Love and Love is of God. (1 Jn 4, 7-8) [...]

**(p. 89)** From the patristic age, deep meditations on the pierced Side and Heart of the Lord has been a favourite theme yielding rich fruits. [...] The patristic saints and writers like Justin, Appolinarius of Hierapolis, Ireneus, Tertullian, Hyppolitus, Cyprian, as well as Origene, Ambrosius, Augustinus etc. dwelt on this, drawing from it both the theological, ecclesiological and devotional inferences and implications.

431: With the dogmatic definition of the title Theotokos, Mother of God, the Council of Ephesus clearly proclaimed the unique relationship of Mary with Jesus [...]

**(p. 90)** [Hermann Joseph; Luitgard of Tongern...]

**(p. 91-92)** [St. John Eudes, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque,...]

1747-1770: St. Teresa Margherita of the Sacred Heart of Jesus received the mission to propagate the message and mystery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to the Carmelites.

[1767: Clement XIII approved the Liturgy of the Feast of the S. Heart of Jesus for the Church in Poland; Fr. Coudrin and his mystical experience in 1792, then foundation of his congregation of the Two Hearts.]

**(p. 93)** [...] 1794: Pope Pius VI defended the Devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus against the attacks of the Jansenist in the Bull “Auctorem fidei”.

[...] 1872: The Consecration of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

1873: Ecuador becomes the first country [...] that officially consecrated herself to the Most Sacred Heart. [...]

**(p. 94)** [Leo XIII...] 1900: Consecration of Columbia to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. By national law the absolute dominion of the Divine Headship of Jesus Christ over all powers including that of the President and the houses of parliament was promulgated. The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart became a national holiday.

[...] 1907: Father Mateo received the mission from the Lord at Paray-le-Monial for the Enthronement of the Most Sacred Heart.

**(p. 95)** [...] 1925: Encyclical “Quas primas” by Pius XI on the universal Kingship of Christ and the yearly renewal of the consecration of the whole world to the Most Sacred Heart.

[...] 1932: Pius XI in the encyclical “Caritate Christi compulsi” recommends the devotion to the Sacred Heart as solution to the problems of the world. [Pius XII: Haurietis aquas ...]

**(p. 96)** [...] 1965: Paul VI defended the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart in the encyclical “Investigabiles divitas” against attacks which some people tried to base on the Vatican Council II documents.

1986: [...] John Paul II wrote a letter to the Superior General of the Jesuits, in which he urged the fulfilment of the mission given by the Lord for the spread of the devotion to His Most Sacred Heart. [...]

**(p. 97)** *Brief History of the Devotion, Society and Work of the Two Hearts of Love in Orlu, Nigeria*

[...] The devotion to the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary ever-united in Love began in Orlu among little children in the elementary school – Holy Trinity Practising School Orlu – in the sixties. Before and during the civil war this devotion had already taken the form of regular attendance at holy mass and regular visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, daily recitation of the rosary and works of charity, especially for the very poor, old and children. The civil war did not interrupt the fervour, rather it increased the zeal of this devotion and work of Love. However, it was after the war (in 1970) that the Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary was officially formally established at Orlu.

1971-74: The members of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary met regularly weekly at Orlu for prayers, Holy Hour of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, religious instruction and works of Love. The members were especially very active in the Block Rosary Crusade, the Legion of Mary and work of Love. The meeting used to take place in the Holy Trinity Church, but the Holy Hour of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was in the Chapel at “Holy Land”, the Rev. Fathers’ chapel and Marist Brothers’ Chapel.

1974: The Devotion was continued at the Seminary at Okpala. The Society continued to grow at Orlu.

**(p. 98)** 1975: Continuation of the Devotion in the senior seminary Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu with some seminarians from various dioceses and congregations.

1977: Continuation of the Devotion in the senior seminary at Ikot Ekpene, and intimation to some close friends that it is the will of God for the formation of a religious congregation in honour of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary.

1979: We sought and received ecclesiastical permission from the Rector of Bigard Memorial Seminary Enugu, for the prayer and Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. We organised a joint novena of the societies and individuals devoted to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Mary.

29<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1980. Creation of Orlu diocese out of Owerri [diocese].

Dec. 1981: During the Christmas vacation presentation of the prayer for the first time to his Excellency, the Bishop of Orlu and his comment that as a seminarian he had a collection of such prayers in a small book.

Dec. 1982: Presentation of the prayer once again to his Excellency, the bishop, and request for imprimatur to print it. His Excellency said that such prayers receive the approval only when the person is dead. However, he advised, encouraged and permitted us to write it or type it out and give to friends and those who would like to say the prayer.

1984: As a new priest working with Rev. Fr. Dr. N. Ndiokwerre, the Rector of Bonus Pastor Seminary Osina and parish priest of St. Mary’s Seminary Osina, I taught in the seminary and also helped him in the parish. I requested and obtained his permission to hold the Holy Hour of



adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every Thursday at St. Mary's parish church Osina. We began to do this Holy Hour of adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament using this prayer of the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary together with a group dedicated to St. Theresa of the Child Jesus. (p. 99) 1985: As curate under Rev. Fr. Dr. Jude Ndugbu I requested and got his permission to begin the Society of the Two Hearts of Love at St. Paul's Parish, Isu. We used to meet for Mass and Holy Hour of adoration at first in the private chapel in the Father's House. But as the members increased the parish priest asked us to go over to the parish Church and hold our devotions and meetings there. We were happy with that and the Devotion and Society grew from strength to strength.

1986/87: As curate under the Vicar General Rt. Rev. Msgr. P. Onyebuchi at Regina Pacis, Ihioma, I requested and got the Ecclesiastical permission from him to print the prayer of the Hearts of Love and to begin the Society of the Two Hearts of Love in Regina Pacis Parish, Ihioma. The prayer of the Hearts of Love was put in print for the first time at Ihioma, with ecclesiastical permission. The Devotion and Society became very strong and popular in Ihioma and the environs. It was at Ihioma that I received the inspiration that I would be sent to a place where the Love of God in the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary – the Devotion, Society and Work of the Hearts of Love would blossom.

A week after this we went for priests' annual retreat at Umuowa. One evening after supper his Excellency, my bishop, called me and told me that there is a place he would like to send me to work. I answered that I am ready to go wherever he sends me. Then he said: It is the place where we are beginning a new secondary school for the diocese. I want you to go and open and head St. Kizito's Secondary School Umuchima, he said. I asked him: "Do you think that I can do it." He replied: "I was your rector in the seminary and I ordained you priest, I know you can do it." There and then I accepted and knelt down and requested his Fatherly blessings. He prayed over me laying his hands on me and blessed me. Later he announced the appointment to all the priests. Some congratulated me. One came and asked me: "What did you do to the bishop that he is sending you to such a place?!"

1987: When his Excellency posted me as principal of St. Kizito's Secondary School Umuchima (and later as pastor of Umuchima) one of the first things I did was to have a chapel (I converted the (p. 100) room proposed for the garage into a chapel) which his Excellency blessed and we used to do Holy Hour daily 3-4 in this Chapel. We began the Society of the Hearts of Love at Umuchima. Later, on inspiration, I began to go to Amaocha for prayers. Many people began to gather for prayers, religious instructions, Holy Hour and Vigils at Amaocha – Umuchima. It became a place of prayer. Here we began to build some shelter for the teeming population of people, especially children. Thousands of the faithful and very many people from neighbouring towns and parishes used to come for the Devotion and meeting of the Society.

15<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1987: Nihil Obstat for the prayer of the Hearts of Love from the then Vicar General of Owerri Archdiocese, Rt. Rev. Msgr. V. Chikwe at Emekuku at the request of Mrs. Philomena Ada Ebbe, a marianist and a devotee to the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. She made this inspired move and obtained the Nihil Obstat even without previously consulting us. She hails from Umuobom in Orlu diocese, but was then teacher at Umunnoha in Owerri archdiocese. It was only after she had published it in her book "Marian Year Reflections" that she brought me a copy. At first she was apprehensive of my reaction. I was greatly pleased with her initiative. I thanked and blessed her and requested many more copies which I distributed.

Dec. 8.1987: While celebrating mass in the Church of the Immaculate Conception Umuchima I received an inspiration: "Please do not let My Church be abandoned." There and then I knelt down and promised My God that I will do His Will and not let His Church be abandoned. From that moment I began to take special interest in trying to resolve the issues and conflicts concerning the Church of Immaculate Conception, and the case between Umuchima and Obiohia on the Church without letting the Church be abandoned, as the then Parish Priest of Umuma Parish, under which Umuchima and Obiohia were, had already decided. It was in the effort to see that the Church was not abandoned that we began to hold regular prayers and liturgical celebration in the Church, and started renovating the Church some years later. The will of God (p. 101) which was made clear to

me was that the Church should not be abandoned. Not only this Church of Immaculate Conception but the Church itself. Later I understood this inspiration: "Please do not let My Church be abandoned" to mean not only this community Church but the whole Catholic Church.

1988: Marian Year and first congress at Umuchima.

The administrator of the Cathedral who was also the education secretary of the diocese, N.N. visited the place and presented us a model of Our Lady of Lourdes Pilgrimage Centre asking us to develop a centre for the Hearts of Love according to this model.

1989: When His Excellency came for confirmation at Umuchima and the prayer of the Hearts of Love was said at communion, after the mass His Excellency the bishop told me that we should say the prayer at the end of the mass.

1989: I informed his Excellency my bishop of the inspiration I have to form a religious congregation. Later he asked me to put the request in writing, which I did. After many month his Excellency told me that he was still considering the request. However, some girls who were members of the Society started coming and expressing their desire to dedicate their lives completely to the love and service of God, the Church and their fellow human beings as religious sisters in the Society of the Two Hearts of Love. After persistent requests I consulted some older priests and religious who encouraged me to get the aspirants together, and said that what the bishop will approve is what exists and not what does not exist. So I allowed a group of the aspirants to start coming together to pray, learn and do the work of the Hearts of Love. Some Rev. Sisters of other congregations volunteered to come to talk to them and to pray with them. So the first set of aspirants were formed. We started to build a small bungalow for them at Amaocha-Umuchima.

March 1989: The traditional ruler of Umuchima Eze C. Okwaraonunihu turned against me and against the Hearts of Love because the devotion and society was effectively dismantling pagan shrines and devilish practices. However we stood firmly (**p. 102**) against his moves to force Catholics to swear by idols and recommended instead that the suspects should be sent to a place like Elele<sup>1471</sup>. He came out openly and attacked and instigated some individuals in the community to attack the Devotion and Society and me. Some people who happily donated their land began to destroy what had been built and sought to prevent further erection and use of their land. I was inspired to move the Centre away from Umuchima and go to Orlu and build the Centre for the Hearts of Love at Orlu. By 15<sup>th</sup> March 1989 we have started moving away from Umuchima to Orlu. However due to the persistent faith and support of the Catholics in the community, both at home and abroad, I was instructed to keep the devotion and society alive at Umuchima in spite of opposition. The devotion and society grew even stronger and spread faster and wider with this opposition.

25<sup>th</sup> March 1989: When the Centre for the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary was opened at Orlu, I informed his Excellency, my bishop. At first he encouraged me advising me to make it an open place without residential buildings. Then the devotees and members of the Hearts of Love used to gather there weekly on Thursdays for prayers, singing, religious instructions, Holy Hour of adoration and vigil. When the number became so much and their zeal so strong I was inspired to go to his Excellency, my bishop, and request his permission for the celebration of Holy Masses at the Centre for the thousands of Catholics who used to gather there from all over the place. We did not begin to celebrate mass there until we have met with his Excellency and then his Excellency, the bishop referred us to the administrator of the Cathedral for the permission. So we started celebrating Holy Mass weekly on Thursday evening for the great population of Catholics who come there every Thursday.

10<sup>th</sup> August 1989: During priest's annual retreat his Excellency gave a conference in which inter alia he mentioned that priests should be careful not to allow unapproved societies (lay apostolate associations) to spread in their parishes. Rev. Fr. N.N. raised the question: If it is lay apostolate officials<sup>1472</sup> who are championing such unapproved societies quid a casu? After this (**p. 103**) many

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<sup>1471</sup> Prayer-ground of the Catholic priest Emmanuel Edeh CSSp, known by the people as a healer.

<sup>1472</sup> By that time, Father Montfort had the appointment as chaplain for lay-apostolate groups in the diocese.

priests asked us about the Society of the Two Hearts of Love. Some priests even threatened to stop them in their parishes. On the following day I went to his Excellency, my bishop and met him in his apartment and pleaded with my bishop both orally and in writing: “Please my Lord help me to let my brother priests know that you are not against the Society and the Devotion of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary, but that you have given us some permission to go ahead with the Society and Devotion. This will save me, the Society and especially my brother priests in whose parishes some faithful practice this devotion some bit of embarrassment. While praying for God's continued guidance on your Lordship and bowing and kneeling for your fatherly blessing, I remain your servant in Jesus and Mary!” His Excellency, my bishop responded: “Our priests will not act that way. They will not just jump on them and close them down. The best attitude of someone who is beginning something is to be detached from it. If he is so attached to it, it will die when he is no longer there. Did Christ begin any society? Did he begin the Spiritans? Such things were begun to help the Church.” Then he concluded by quoting Gamaliel: “If this is from God, it will stand. If not from God, it will crumble.” My response was: “Thank you, Mylord.” And knelt for his fatherly blessing which he gave me wholeheartedly laying hands on my head and asking Mother Mary to protect me in my apostolate. Then I rose, thanked his Excellency and went out relieved and trusting his words and hoping in Divine Providence.

1990: We began a novena for the Solemnity of the Annunciation with daily Mass at the Universal Centre which people now call “Ugwu Nso” [“Holy mountain” or “Holy hill”].

21<sup>st</sup> March 1990: His Excellency summoned me and ordered me to stop celebrating masses there. I cried and pleaded with his Excellency, my bishop, to let us finish the Novena, but he said no. The Chancellor of the Diocese Rev. Fr. Dr. F. Nnabuife who was around then saw me crying and asked what was wrong. I told him that the bishop has stopped me celebrating Masses at the Centre for the Hearts of Love, and I begged him to plead with his Lordship to permit us to continue celebrating Masses there for the (p. 104) thousands of Catholics who come. I believe he did approach his Excellency, but my bishop still refused. I wrote a letter to his Excellency. He did not even look at the letter, what more touching it. I informed the members that we would no longer celebrate masses at the Centre but the prayers, holy hour, rosary processions and adoration, penance and other preparations for the Solemnity of Annunciation would go on. We prayed much for the bishop out of the Christian Spirit of Love, that he might permit us to celebrate masses at the Centre.

Later, on the third day, the bishop summoned me and asked: “Montfort, did you continue to celebrate masses there?” I replied “No, Mylord. I stopped it as you ordered me.” Then he said: “I have seen that you are obedient, now go, you can celebrate mass there.” I knelt down and thanked him and requested his fatherly blessings which he readily gave me laying hands on my head and calling on the Most Holy Trinity to bless and strengthen me to do the work entrusted to me, and to lead the people who come to me. In a brief prayer before the blessing he called on our Blessed Lady to protect and guide me “BIKO NNE MARY LEKWA UKOCHUKWU NWA GI CHEKWABA YA DUBE YA.” He concluded with “OBI NSO JESU” I replied “MEERE ANYI EBERE”; “OBI MARIA NÉBURO NJO” “YOBALU ANYI BU NDI GBAKWUTELU GI AYIYO”.<sup>1473</sup> After the blessing I still continued kneeling there too happy and surprised to stand up. Then the bishop took my hands in his own and raised me up. I could sense a heavenly, a wonderful and unspeakable relief in his own spirit. Then he said to me: “Go, my son, I know who you are. I was your rector in the seminary and I ordained you priest. I know what you are. Go and may the Holy Spirit continue to guide you to do the work entrusted to you and to lead the people who come to you.”

When I told the members that evening that his Excellency, my bishop has given us the permission and blessing to be celebrating Masses at the Centre for the Hearts of Love, all jumped for joy praising God and singing the Love and glory of God in the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. Our praise of God knew no bound. We were very grateful to his Excellency. We celebrated the (p. 105) Solemnity of Annunciation that year with indescribable joy and thanksgiving to God.

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<sup>1473</sup> “Please, Mother Mary, see the priest, your son; protect him, guide him. Sacred Heart of Jesus” – “have mercy on us.” “Heart of Mary that does not carry sin [=Immaculate]” – “pray for us who have recourse to you.”

Chrism Mass 12<sup>th</sup> April 1990: The first set of aspirants appeared for the first time publicly clothed in their aspirants' habit.

1989- 1991: These three years were years of very fierce persecution, public disgrace and discredit and often physical assault on the members of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love in Orlu.

{ "Solemn appeal", p. 16:

[... The Cathedral - ] administrator invited the first two priests of my home parish, the cathedral Parish of Orlu, to celebrate masses in all the stations on Orlu parish then including Amike in which their only subject was preaching condemnation of the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary, the Society and Devotion and of course the Centre of the Hearts of Love Ugwu Nso and me. I got the inspiration: not to defend myself but that God Himself would defend me. I kept up a vigil of prayers and fasting. Almost everybody in Orlu especially little children defended the Hearts of Love. When those who came to preach against the Hearts of Love asked them where they encounter God all promptly responded: "Ugwu Nso", the Centre for the Hearts of Love.

Even these children were not spared. The administrator sent one man who went about terrorising the little children wherever they were saying the prayer of the Hearts of Love in Orlu. He sometimes physically eat up these children, tore their clothes and broke the Crucifixes and Statues of Our Blessed Lady, which they were using in their prayers. In spite of everything these little children remained faithful to their love and devotion and prayers to the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary. Their love and faith in God and their loyalty to the Church was not shaken by any of this persecution.

When I took an annual one-month holiday for the first time in order to retreat into prayer and fasting, the administrator announced to people that the bishop has banished me from the diocese. The Chairman of the parish council then, Mr. Osigwe, came to my place of retreat at the Centre and asked me why I was disobeying the bishop by not leaving the diocese if the bishop had banished me from the diocese as the administrator said. I told him that the bishop had never banished me from the diocese and that it was I MYSELF WHO WENT TO THE BISHOP AND ASKED HIM to grant me a one-month holiday, which I wanted to use for solitude, prayer, fasting and (p. 17) meditation. I believe he must have gone to the bishop to confirm whether it was me who had approached the bishop for holidays or whether my bishop has banished me from Orlu. This was the second time that I was accused of disobeying the bishop [by the administrator], which was a completely false accusation. [...]

The first accusation of purported disobedience to my bishop was made by Mons. N.N. It was during an annual priests' retreat at Umuowa Seminary that I came to his Excellency, my bishop, and told him that I would like to do some fasting during the retreat [...]. His Excellency asked me to go and meet the retreat moderator for the permission. [...] So he permitted me after ascertaining that it would not injure my health or disturb my full participation at the retreat programme. Two days later I was surprised when [ ... three monsignors] summoned me after supper and began to question and scold me for not eating. [...] I believe that these my brother Priests did not question and scold me out of bad will, but out of genuine brotherly concern for my health. All my efforts to explain to them [...] proved futile. So, this is how the rumour began to spread in the whole diocese and even beyond that Montfort is disobedient to his bishop. This greatly affected the devotion and Society of the Hearts of Love. Many began to see it all as act of disobedience to the Bishop, instead of what it is: the Work of Love and Act of the Infinite Love of God.

The administrator denied the members and many people who wore the badge of the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary, Holy Communion, and threatened that if they died they would not receive church burial. Some devotees and members who are knights of the Church were threatened with expulsion from their order if they continued to associate with the Hearts of Love.

After his Excellency, the bishop, has requested it and I have made some submission concerning the Society and Devotion of the Hearts of Love to him,<sup>1474</sup> I waited for so long a time for response. None came. It was Rev. Fr. Dr. N.N. who came to me after a priests monthly recollection at Umuhu and began to scold me for visiting, praying with and blessing a family to which we are related by marriage in his parish and who having had so many problems and bereavement in the family, begged me to visit and pray with them. Rev. Fr. Dr. N.N. boasted to me: Do you know that the Bishop has handed your case over to me? Do you know that it is I who will decide your fate? Now your fate and the fate of your Society and ministry of the Hearts of Love are in my hands. Now you will see what will happen. }

**(p. 105 continues)**

1990: Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, during Priests' recollection, his Excellency the bishop declared before all the priests of the diocese gathered: "I am saying this before the Blessed Sacrament, Montfort is not disobedient to me. He has my approval and blessing to carry on with the apostolate he is doing."

25<sup>th</sup> March 1991: His Excellency, my bishop issued the Certificate of Recognition<sup>1475</sup> of the Diocese of Orlu to the Society of the Two Hearts of Love, and wished the Society and all in it God's abundant blessings on the occasion of the Decade Celebration of the Diocese and His Bishopric.

{ "Solemn appeal", p. 17

1992. The administrator continued to fight against the devotion, society and centre at Orlu while the Eze of Umuchima and his supporter continued to attack all related to the Hearts of Love at Umuchima. The Eze and his delegation met with the administrator [...] several times. The administrator arranged with Eze and his supporters to meet with the bishop.

**(p. 18)** 1992. General relocation of priests in the diocese. I was dismissed as principal of St. Kizito and at the same time the bishop relocated the administrator to Nkwerre Parish. I was not located anywhere, but later his Excellency, my bishop ordered me to go to the monastery for one month. I went first to Ewu then later to Awhum. }

**(p. 105 continues)** 1992: When I returned from the monastery, his Excellency posted me as a curate to the parish priest at St. Theresa's Parish, Mbato. We continued with the Devotion and the Society was established at St. Theresa's Parish, Mbato [...].

**(p. 106)** 1992: His Excellency, my bishop asked us to choose one particular day in the week on which to celebrate mass at the Centre for the Hearts of Love "Ugwu Nso". Naturally we chose Thursdays. But my parish priest would not permit me to go to "Ugwu Nso" thinking that his Excellency, my bishop was completely against it. Later His Excellency summoned my parish priest, Fr. N.N. and myself together in his office and declared officially (especially to my parish priest) that I have the official permission from his Excellency, my bishop, to hold the devotion and celebrate masses at the Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary at Orlu every week, on Thursdays.

1994: His Excellency asked me to go out for studies to Germany. Through the Secretary to the pastoral council I pleaded with his Excellency to send another priest, but he insisted that I should go. I consulted the bishop's Secretary and expressed my concern about abandoning the devotion and Society of the Hearts of Love. He rather was of the opinion that I should leave all and go for studies, and that when I return and still continue with this devotion and society then it would be clear to his Lordship and all in the diocese that I was doing was no child's play or sentimentality. Many saw it as exile. Some advised me not to leave. Then I went personally to his Excellency, my bishop, and asked him what I would do with the Universal Centre for the Hearts of Love "Ugwu Nso" and the entire establishment around the devotion, society and work of the Hearts of Love. His

<sup>1474</sup> Probably the booklet of "Come-Newsletters" (appendix 5).

<sup>1475</sup> It is a type of receipt, the "recognition" for a conspicuous donation.

Excellency, my bishop, simply answered: “Go for your studies and leave all in the hands of God.” I obeyed. With tears, but complete submission to the will of God ever guiding His Church I left for studies overseas.

1994: During the language course we<sup>1476</sup> stayed in Iserlohn. The parish priest and the deacon in St. Aloysius Pfarrei, Iserlohn helped to us to make a German translation of the Prayer of the Hearts of Love. I and some patients at St. Elisabeth’s Hospital, Iserlohn, began the devotion to the Hearts of Love in the chapel of St. Elisabeth’s Hospital. We used to meet for prayers and (p. 107) for the celebration of Holy Mass on Thursdays with the kind permission of the parish priest.

1995: In Paderborn: the devotion and society of the Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary continued.

1996: in Eichstätt: Regular meeting for the devotion to the Hearts of Love in the Cathedral.

1997: Permission and blessing from the Bishop of Eichstätt for the devotion and society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary in a chapel. He gave us a monstrance for the weekly exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and permitted the monthly celebration of masses. Ecclesiastical approval was also given for the private distribution and use of the prayer of the Hearts of Love by the devotees.

8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1997: Imprimatur for the Prayer of the Hearts of Love was given by the Archdiocese of Paderborn. The Society of the Two Hearts of Love International (Die Vereinigung der Zwei Herzen der Liebe International) published the prayer.

1997: Some members of the Society from Germany visited Nigeria for the first time in what they termed a Pilgrimage to the Young Church in Nigeria, Africa. They were very warmly received at Orlu [...]. They came to experience the Church and the devotion in Africa, to encourage their fellow Christians and members, to know their problems and find ways of helping them and also to strengthen and reinvigorate their own faith.

They visited many parishes across the country. They also had the opportunity to meet and discuss with some archbishops and bishops including His Grace Most Rev. Dr. Anthony Obinna the Archbishop of Owerri, His Grace Most Rev. Dr. Gabriel Ganaka the Archbishop of Jos, His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Gregory Ochiagha the bishop of Orlu and His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Anthony Ilonu of Okigwe. They expressed how they were highly impressed, greatly edified and deeply inspired by the faith, warmth and zeal they experienced during their encounter with the archbishops and bishops, the priest, religious and the laity they met.

(p. 108) [...] The Society of the Two Hearts of Love International was wholeheartedly and officially accepted in Okigwe Diocese by His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Anthony Ilonu and given a piece of Land in Okigwe on which to build school and convent and to manage the school. The building project began later in the year. [...]

Before the members in Germany set out on our pilgrimage to the young church in Nigeria in Africa, all the members everywhere were called upon to pray, fast and offer masses, do holy hour of adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and night vigils, rosary processions, alms deeds and works of Love so that the visit would be a blessed one. It was our decision to visit many local ordinaries in Nigeria and to build a centre for the Hearts of Love (to include a school, convent and hospital) in the diocese of any bishop who would accept the Society and give us land and support.

The members visited many archdioceses and dioceses including our beloved diocese of Orlu, Abuja, Ahiara, Enugu, Isele-uku, Jos, Lagos, Makurdi, Okigwe and Owerri. [...] We were sure that the bishop acted under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and has the right to accept the Devotion and Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary International in his diocese.

(p. 109) [...] 1998: During the visit of the Pope to Nigeria in March 1998 for the beatification of the Blessed Fr. Michael Iwene Tansi, the members in Nigeria carried the foundation stone of the school and convent to the Papal mass for the Blessing from the Pope. A week after the Pope’s visit and the beatification, the bishop of Okigwe performed the foundation stone laying ceremony of the school

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<sup>1476</sup> They were two priests from Orlu who came to Germany together: Fr. Thaddeus and Fr. Montfort.

and convent in honour of the Hearts of Love- the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary ever united in Love.

1998: Second visit of the members from Germany to Nigeria. In September and October the President of the Society in Germany and another member, the mother of the first German novice in the new convent, visited the Society of the Hearts of Love in Nigeria. They were impressed by the deep faith of our Nigerian Catholic brothers and sisters, and were honoured to be present at the official opening of the new convent on the Feast of the Holy Rosary, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1998. The novices and postulants of the Sisters of the Hearts of Love were received by His Lordship Most Rev. Dr. Anthony Ilonu, the Bishop of Okigwe, during a public ceremony attended by hundreds of the faithful from various dioceses and the members of the Hearts of Love from Germany and England. The Society is working hard to ensure that direct contact between the faithful and members of the Society in different countries, including Nigeria, will become stronger and more fruitful in the spirit of the new evangelisation, urged by the Love of God. All to the greater glory and honour of God.

## 7. Letter from Fr. Montfort to all the members in Germany

In November 2000 the Vicar General of Limburg asked Father Montfort to leave the diocese and forbade the monthly charismatic mass in the convent of the Ursuline Sisters in Königstein. Father Montfort then sent this letter to all members, asking them to accept the decisions in obedience, but to continue with the prayer and the devotion of the Hearts of Love.

VEREINIGUNG DER ZWEI HERZEN DER LIEBE INTERNATIONAL e.V. [...]

### AUFRUF ZUM GEHORSAM; ZUR BUSSE; ZU GEBET UND OPFER

Wahrscheinlich habt ihr von der Entscheidung des Herrn Generalvikars von Limburg gehört, dass der Heilungsgottesdienst in Königstein am ersten Freitag des Monats zur Ehre des Heiligsten Herzens Jesu und des Unbefleckten Herzens Mariens, [...] ab 1. Januar 2001 nicht mehr stattfinden darf.

Im Gehorsam gegenüber dem ewigen und obersten Willen Gottes schreiben wir Euch, um Euch, die Mitglieder der Vereinigung der Zwei Herzen der Liebe International, und alle, die das Heiligste Herz Jesu und das Unbefleckte Herz Mariens verehren, alle unsere Freunde, zum Gehorsam gegenüber dem Willen Gottes und gegenüber der Kirche aufzurufen.

1. Gehorsam: Aus Liebe zu Gott, seiner Kirche und unseren Mitmenschen müssen wir dem Willen Gottes gehorchen und auf die Lehre und Weisungen seiner Kirche hören, sowie auf die Bedürfnisse unserer Mitmenschen - unserer Brüder und Schwestern. Aus Gehorsam gegenüber dem ewigen Willen Gottes verlassen wir die Diözese Limburg. Aus Gehorsam gegenüber dem Bischof von Limburg und entsprechend den Anweisungen seines Generalvikars müssen wir den Heilungsgottesdienst am ersten Freitag in Königstein aufgeben. Es wurde bereits angesagt, dass der letzte Heilungsgottesdienst am 1. Fr. im Dezember sein wird.

2. Unsere Mission ist es, im Herzen der katholischen Kirche Liebe zu sein: Wir müssen im Herzen der katholischen Kirche bleiben. Gott hat uns zu dieser Mission der Liebe gerufen: Ihn zu lieben und anderen zu helfen, ihn zu lieben, ihn im Herzen der Kirche zu lieben, in der katholischen Kirche. Wir können uns nicht an den Rand der Kirche drängen lassen und als Sekte erscheinen. Wir haben unsere Mission: Liebe genau im Herzen der katholischen Kirche zu sein.

3. Gebet: [...] Ich rufe Euch alle auf, Eure Gebete zu verstärken. [...]

4. Bleibt immer vereint mit den Herzen der Liebe Jesu und Mariens: Wir müssen immer vereint bleiben mit den zwei verwundeten und liebenden Herzen. [...]

5. Verlassen der Diözese Limburg: Der Herr Generalvikar hat uns mehrere Male aufgefordert, die Diözese Limburg zu verlassen und hat weitere Konsequenzen angedeutet. [...]

6. Dankbarkeit gegenüber den Ursulinen: [...] Möge Gott sie segnen und reich belohnen.

7. Was wir tun sollen: Gehorsam gegenüber dem Willen Gottes, Gehorsam und Respekt gegenüber der Kirche, gegenüber den Bischöfen, Gehorsam gegenüber den Bedürfnissen unserer Brüder und Schwestern - Gebet: Betet, betet, betet sehr viel. Feiert regelmäßig die hl. Messe mit. Haltet die hl. Stunde, Nachtanbetung. [...] Fastet wenigstens einmal in der Woche für die Herrschaft der Herzen der Liebe. Tut Werke der Liebe: Besucht die Kranken, die Alten, die Einsamen. Teilt mit den Armen. [...] Im Nov. besucht die [...] Friedhöfe.

*Gebet: O Gott, Vater der Liebe! Das Werk der Herzen der Liebe ist Dein Werk. Verteidige Dein Werk der Liebe! Gott Sohn, Du bist das Herz der Liebe! Verteidige Dein Werk der Liebe! Gott Heiliger Geist, [...] Heilige Maria, Mutter der Liebe, Du bist das Herz der Liebe! Bitte für uns und verteidige dein Werk der Liebe! Heiliger Josef und all ihr Heilige, [...] Heiliger Michael und alle Engel [...]! Segen: Möge die Lebensfülle, das Heil, die Herrlichkeit und die Liebe Gottes in den Herzen der Liebe auf Euch herabkommen und allezeit mit Euch bleiben. Amen. [...]*

Königstein, November 2000

Montfort Okaa (signature)



## **8. Testimony of Sr. Mary Matilda Egbusinwa SHL**

(In February 2003, all Sisters and many lay-members wrote testimonies about the founder and the Society. These were given to Bishop Ayo-Maria to help him in defending the Society against some accusations. This is the testimony of one of the earliest aspirants for sisterhood in the Hearts of Love, and the only one that was available for this doctorate work. Typed by the author.)

(p. 1 of the handwritten original) 4<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2003

I, Sr. Mary Matilda Egbusinwa, am a native of Umuchima in Ideato South Local Government Area of Imo State, and also from the Church of the Immaculate Conception Umuchima, which is one of the Catholic communities in the diocese of Orlu. I am thanking God for this opportunity for me to write about Rev. Father Montfort Okaa, the Society of the Two Hearts of Love, his life, work and the movement of the Society.

I knew him in the year 1987 when Most Rev. Dr. G. O. Ochiagha, the Bishop of Orlu diocese, sent him to Umuchima as the first Principal of St. Kizito Secondary School. He was the Principal of this Catholic school and also in charge of Umuchima Catholic Community.

His life and work: I will like to share with you how God used him both in the school and in the community. His time at Umuchima was the period of knowledge, repentance, conversion, peace and work of Love for the sake of God. As the first principal of St. Kizito's, he gave the school a solid foundation, good name and made it a centre of learning. This made most of the parents to withdraw their children from government schools and to send them to St. Kizito's to study. Because of the way he handled the teachers, students and Church-members, some of these children who were not members of the Catholic Church turned and became members. He taught them how to pray, study and become good citizens. His name will never be forgotten in that school, because he suffered much and the school lacked many things, but with his efforts, the school became one of the best schools in Orlu diocese. He always (p. 2) taught people to have great Love of God, to love their neighbours and to do the work of love to everyone, and people will love God through them. He centred all his teaching on the teaching of the Catholic Church. After teaching, you will see him practising what he taught and you will see the reflection of God's Love in him and his love to others especially in the school, church, community, to sick people, the needy, troubled, widows, aged and mostly to children, and because of this many parents named their sons Montfort. God's work through him at Umuchima can never be forgotten, because when he came to Umuchima the town was scattered, in lack of peace and faith, and conflicts here and there, such as the conflict between Umuchima station [an out-station of a parish] and Obiohia station about the church they built together before they were divided into two stations. Or the conflict between the traditional ruler of Umuchima and their native daughters, for the ruler chased them away from Umuchima. Or the conflict between the traditional ruler and some of the groups in the town who did not like the way the ruler was acting. When Father M. C. Okaa came, he started with these three conflicts, and he started Masses, Prayer of the Two Hearts of Love, especially at Holy Hours (especially 3 to 4 in the afternoon) and adoration in the night. From these he perfectly settled all these conflicts and united all people together. Again in one of the villages in Umuchima called Obinugwu, where people were not living in peace, evil spirits attacked and sudden death of young people in that village or kindred occurred. There was one fruit tree in the centre of that area which belonged to the pagans, and people were fearing the tree, (p. 3) because every time, especially at night, voices will be heard, but you will not see those talking. He visited the kindred and celebrated Mass with them in their kindred-hall and after Mass they took him to that fruit-tree and he prayed with them the Prayer of the Hearts of Love, then he sprinkled holy water round that place and before the next day the fruit tree fell down and he told the people that they should start from that day to make that place the centre of prayer, say the rosary and the Prayer of the Hearts of Love every day and have great love of God, come to Mass every day and do the work of love everyone. From that day till now that

place became a place of prayer for Christians and they were living in peace and harmony and their faith in God was very much improved and the pagans and others who were not members of the Catholic Church turned to belong to the Catholic Church till now. Some people who were members of the Catholic Church, but during hardship and difficulties they ran to where they thought that was the best for them [to Pentecostal “churches”, mostly], came back and renewed their lives in the Catholic Church. He made all the places of pagan shrines in the town to be centres of prayer, and also turned pagan celebrations to be Christian celebrations, such as the New Yam festival. What a glory and honour to God! What a blessing to the Pope, bishops, priests and the universal Church. He converted Umuchima into Christianity based on Catholic doctrine, that is (p. 4) to say, about 98% of the population in Umuchima were Catholics and even our neighbouring town who witnessed the work of God also joined.

The movement from one place to another [from Orlu to Okigwe, from Okigwe to Ilorin] by the members of the Two Hearts of Love, the priest in charge and the sisters, was nothing but to find those who will look into this work and know the will of God and help in the propagation of it. This work is a gift to the Church in regards to what I said above, and it is the light to the world, and the bible told us that the light cannot be hidden or suppressed, but it must shine in the sight of the people so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven. (Cf. Mt 5:16)

Again those who will help this work of Love of God did not say yes or no, but left it in coma situation for more than ten years. So the Society needs help to grow, for the salvation of souls. It is very difficult to love, but this Society is teaching how to love. If we have great love of God and love our fellow human beings, heaven is ours. Please help this Society to grow and God will help you. The good work has spread to some places in the world by those who witness to the Love of God. Thanks.

Your Sister in Christ  
Matilda

## **9. Brochure of the Silver Jubilee of priesthood of Fr. Montfort Okaa**

(The celebration, in which the brochure was distributed, was held in Orlu, Nigeria, on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2009. Here are given only the few pages that were quoted in the work.)

(front:) 25th Priestly Anniversary, 50th Birthday & Baptism of Rev. Fr. Dr. Montfort C. Okaa

(p. 13: profile of Fr. Montfort, written by Rev. Fr. Pius C. Ohia, a highly pathetic writer. Fr. Pius was a priest from Orlu diocese, younger than Fr. Montfort. He died in 2013.)

EARLY LIFE: [...] His parents [...] lived at Umudihe village in Orlu. His father was a pure, modest peasant teacher and headmaster with a strong faith. His mother was a virtuous woman who knew how to face the sacrifices of poverty with Christian courage: a Churchwarden and a fervent legionary. Never was she guilty of envy [...]. Louis de Montfort who was given a Christian education was truly a model child. He was never troublesome nor capricious and was always obedient to his parents. Morning and evening, he went to the Church to pay a visit to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and the Madonna. [...]

HIS EARLY PRIESTLY MINISTRY: Rev. Fr. Dr. Louis de Montfort's early priestly apostolate was a ferocious spiritual battlefield with evil men and evil forces of various and diverse kinds. [...] With a touch of melancholy in his voice, he would say to his friend and fellow priests, "So no one could defend me before my superiors and authorities, I was an insipid ... of Macaroni with neither salt nor sauce"!

A MAN OF SORROWS AND ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEFS: Like an infant, he was unable to play hide and seek, because he did not know how. He had discovered man too soon and had suffered too soon for him. Yet, he always remained aglow with the spirit. He was constant at prayer, fasting and abstinence. He is always persevering in the face of crucible tribulations. He is blessed with the outstanding virtues of prudence, courage, temperance and fortitude.

### **(p. 22) TWO HEARTS OF LOVE AN ENRICHMENT IN MY RELIGIOUS PRIESTLY LIFE**

By Fr. Jude-Mary Obiechina Cmf

Very Rev. Fr. Montfort Okaa, founder of the Society of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus and Mary with his Bishop, Most Rev. Dr. Ayo-Maria Atoyebi (O.P.) the Catholic Bishop of Ilorin, requested the Claretian Missionaries to take up the work of the formation of his Novices at Ilorin for a period of three years. My provincial superior, Very Rev. Emmanuel Edeh, (cmf) after consulting with his council, asked me if I wanted to go to Ilorin to help the new congregation in the work of formation as a Novice Director. I accepted the challenge with great reluctance, agreeing with my provincial to give the ministry a few month trial.

I arrived at Yakuba- Ilorin on Saturday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of March, 2008 at 11:45pm. It was about 9hrs journey from the Claretian Institute of Philosophy, Maryland, Nekede-Owerri. For the most part, I have spent the most part of my priestly life for these twenty- five years in the work of formation at the Heart of Mary Novitiate, Utonkon Benue State, CIP Nekede and Claretian Theologate, Attakwu, Enugu. In the formation ministry, I have the training and the related studies, the skill and the experience as well as the interest and liking. Formation is a sharing in the work of God the Father who through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of His Son Jesus Christ in the hearts of young men and women. At Ilorin, my first preoccupation was the studying of the constitution, the spirituality and the program of this noble congregation.

I am a Missionary Son of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Cordis Mariae Filii (cmf). It would be unfair to my Novices and to the Congregation of the Sons of the Two Hearts of Love if I were to impart them the Claretian spirituality and charism. Also, I have to face the challenges of being in a new culture, language and religion. The inhabitants [of Ilorin] are predominantly Islam and Pentecostals. However, I experienced tremendous friendship with most of them in my twelve months stay at Ilorin. Coping with these challenges helped to intensify my priestly zeal as well as

my expanding my visions and horizons towards life. My ministry of formation was not limited to the Sons of Two Hearts of Love. It was also extended to the Sisters of the Two Hearts of Love Novitiate. On the average, I celebrated two Masses daily, one for the Brother Novices and the other for the Sisters. I also helped them out at confessions, conferences, consultations and directions. It has been a most exciting experience in my involvement in the formation ministry to learn that men and women are basically different in their approaches towards life. I am inclined to think that the way a seasoned formator deals with the formation of male novices should be different from his approaches to female novices.

The [...] Bishop of the Diocese of Ilorin, Most Rev. Dr. Ayo-Maria Atoyebi (O.P), was very kind and hospitable to me. He has always been a simple and unassuming man. From time to time, he has visited the Novitiate to know how the Novices are faring. He is a most appreciative Bishop I have ever encountered in my life.

The Father founder, Very Rev. Fr. Montfort Okaa has always been a good friend since our years in the seminary. If you want to know him well, just read the life of his patron saint, St. Louis Mariae de Montfort. St. Louis Mariae de Montfort was a great lover and devotee of Jesus and Mary. His greatest ambition was to bring everyone to Jesus through Mary. If you want to know about Fr. Montfort Okaa, and his great work in the Church, by all means do visit the Holy Mountain *Ugwu Nso*, Orlu. It is the Universal Centre for the Two Hearts of Love. It is a place of pilgrimage, prayer, penance and sacrifice. Many miracles of nature and grace do occur daily in this holy centre.

I cannot thank enough the Lord and His Blessed Mother for all they have done for me. It is one of the most enriching experience of my priestly life to have the honour to be invited by Fr. Okaa to work for the triumph of the Two Hearts of Love of Jesus & Mary. On Sunday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2008, one of the most momentous events took place in the history of the congregation of the Two Hearts of Love. It was the first Religious profession of my nine Novices. It was the first of its kind in the hallmark of the Sons of the Two Hearts. These newly professed Brothers are already doing their Philosophy in different major seminaries in Nigeria. [...] May the Two Hearts of Love continue to bless and fructify the holy work He has started through his humble instrument, Very Rev. Fr. Montfort Okaa.

**(p. 42) Felicitation! Felicitation! Felicitation!**

I wish to congratulate you Rev. Fr. Dr. Montfort Okaa, on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of your priestly ordination. God has been wonderful to you, has really blessed you, and done so much to the Church through you. All of us rejoice together on the occasion of this Silver Jubilee Celebration. We thank God together. I wish you God's more abundant blessings and graces in your vocation and work you are doing for the Church. Take courage and go ahead. God is great. I also pray God to bless your congregation and make it what He wants it to be. Bravo!

Very Rev. Fr. Monsignor Mba [The first priest of Orlu diocese, ordained in Dec. 1959]

**(p. 63) Congratulations**

The family of late Dr. A. Cand/ Mrs Rosemary Ngozi Okolo warmly congratulate Rev. Fr. Montfort Okaa on his 25<sup>th</sup> priestly ordination anniversary. Father, we sincerely thank God for your being, through you many have been granted freedom from bondage, peace, love have been established amongst people, families and communities at large. We pray that God in His infinite mercy will continue to grant you the grace, wisdom as you work in his vineyard. Long life Fr. Montfort Okaa. Long life Two Hearts of Love

Yours sincerely, Rosemary Ngozi Okolo

**(p. 67) St. Andrews Catholic Parish Urualla, Ideato North L.G.A.**

**CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE**

To the Glory of God the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Ghost and in honour of Our Lady. The Parish priest and the good people of St. Andrew's Urualla heartily congratulates the Father Founder

of Two Hearts of Love Society on his Silver Jubilee priestly anniversary celebration. We thank God for His gift of you to the entire human race. We pray that the Two Hearts of Love will continue to strengthen you daily in your priestly endeavours as you work jointly to seeing that their noble will is realized to the Glory of God.

Your Son Fr. Christian Azubuiké

**(p. 72) BRAVO OUR VERY DEAR BROTHER, REV. FR. DR. MONTFORT CHUKWUEMEKA OKANWIKPO, ON THE OCCASION OF YOUR PRIESTLY SILVER JUBILEE**

Rev. Fr. Dr. Montfort Chukwuemeka Okanwikpo, I, John, your brother, and the entire Okanwikpo family is very happy and proud of your religious life. The corner stone which was rejected has now become the pillar of the mighty building, that is the Lord's doing. You have achieved too much since your priestly ordination in 1983, namely founding the Society of the Two Hearts of Love with the postulant house in Okigwe Diocese, the Noviciate House in Ilorin Diocese, while the universal headquarters are at Ugwu-Nso (Holy Mountain) Orlu in Orlu Diocese. If you were allowed to pull all the infrastructures and the resources to Orlu it would have been wonderful.

You embodied a lot of enviable qualities too numerous to mention here... Very charitable and humble to the core, peacemaker, a lover and a helper of the downtrodden etc. You have positively touched the life of millions of people (both black and white) in all parts of Nigeria, Germany, Italy, France, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, etc. Your strength is divine.

You are a rare gift from God to Okanwikpo's family, Orlu people, the Catholic Church and the whole world, though they are yet to know you and your worth. Even though we know you from birth, we at times wonder if you are a human being. You are too much in your priesthood and religious activities. Again, we are proud of you. All your brothers, sisters, Umuduruanyaehie village men, all your kinsmen both far and near are proud of you. Keep the flag flying our dear brother. We wish you many, many more jubilees ahead.

Your brother Sir John Okanwikpo (KSM[Knight of St. Molumba]) On behalf of the family

**(p. 73) Catholic Diocese of Orlu**

Hand in Hand e.V. "MMESOMA SOCIAL SERVICES"

Computer department, Campus 1: St. Patrick's Parish Umuzike, Orlu; Campus 2: St. Michael's Parish Urualla

**AT YOUR 50<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY AND SILVER JUBILEE, 25 YEARS A PRIEST, LET US THANK AND PRAISE THE LORD TOGETHER!**

On this accord we stand, God is love and His heart is for us. Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Mary Montfort Chukwuemeka Okanwikpo. In love God has created you and His unique gifts to you are the answer to your special vocation as His Presbyter [...]. You are also a promoter of vocations, an evangelizer and courageous provider for our local needs, for the people and the community. On this blessed occasion of your rejoicing over many years in life, 50 years as well as the silver jubilee of your ordination as a catholic priest, having served so well and indefatigably all these years, also BEING SO STEADFAST IN LOVE AND SERVICE TO GOD AND HUMANITY in your ministry of love, it is our collective joy to join in your thanksgiving ceremonies. As a brother too, a closer one for that matter, I recall all your spiritual enrichment and supports to my common vocation with you in the Priesthood and radical but dynamic encouragement to my God-given endowments and sacred abilities. Your joy is my joy. Your fears are also my fears [...], may the hope of a successful end continue to characterize your endeavours in the vineyard of the Lord of the harvest.

May His superabundant, unfailing and continued love remain with you all the way. So are my wishes to you on behalf of Hand In Hand e. V. "MMESOMA SOCIAL SERVICES", CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ORLU. [...]

Ad Multos Annos, Rev. Fr. Nkem Hyginus M. V. Chigere (The Moderator)

**(p. 83) HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL PARISH ORLU: CONGRATULATION ON YOUR 25 YEAR ANIVERSARY AS A CATHOLIC PRIEST**

The Cathedral Administrator, the Associate Administrator, the parish council and the entire Catholic Community of the Holy Trinity Cathedral Parish Orlu happily rejoice with you, our beloved son, Rev. Fr. Dr. Montfort Okaa, founder THE SOCIETY OF THE TWO HEARTS OF LOVE INTERNATIONAL (comprising of the Sisters of Love, the Sons of Jesus and Mary, the Hearts of Love international Nursery/ Primary/ Secondary School) all for the growth of the mission of the Catholic Church.

Your achievements as a catholic priest in 25 years has in no small measures boosted the catholic faith in Orlu which your late Uncle Moses Mbaïke Mmaduka and other pioneered in 1918. We are proud of you.

By these achievements, you have distinguished yourself in your apostolate of which both young and old in Orlu believe you are a living saint. May God bless you and give you more years of fruitful service [...].

Rev. Fr. Cornelius Ekwebelem, for the Cathedral Parish

Sir P.A. Meremikwu, Chairman Parish Council

Mr. P.O. Duruiheoma, Secretary Parish Council

### **10. Brochure of the silver Jubilee of sisterhood of Sr. Cecilia Okanwikpo D.C.**

The celebration, in which the brochure was distributed, was held in Orlu, Nigeria, on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2010. Here is given the beginning of the “profile” of Sr. Cecilia as written by her family, p. 5 of the brochure.

Rev. Sr. Cecilia Oyibo Okanwikpo was born as a 6<sup>th</sup> child of Chief Sir Nnaoma [“good father”] Louis Okanwikpo of Duruanyahie, Orlu and Chief Lady Ezinne [“true mother”] Cecilia Okanwikpo of Umuokekpu Owerrebeiri, Orlu.

Oyibo, as she is fondly called, did her primary education at Holy Trinity Practising School, Orlu, and her secondary school at Okporo Technichal College from 1973-1979. As a child, she joined many religious organisations, e.g. Legion of Mary, St. Anthony’s Guild, St. Theresa of the Child Jesus – Little Flower. She frequented the Marist Brothers Community and joined them in staying in their office.

After obtaining her Teacher Grade II Certificate from T.T.C. [Teachers Technical College] Egbema, Sr. Cecilia joined the Congregation of Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent De Paul and made her first Religious Profession in 1984.

When asked why the Congregation of St. Vincent De Paul, she pointed out that Papa (Chief, Sir, Nnaoma Di Ebube [“wonderful good father”] Louis Okanwikpo) was a perpetual member and president of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul in Orlu. She would want to follow his footsteps to show concern and love to the marginalized, the poor, the hungry and the destitute whom she calls “MY MASTERS”. According to her, she is what she is because of them.

Wherever Sr. Cecilia goes, she makes a friend of these people. She knows their number in each city where she stays because she visits them on a daily basis. The inmates of the Cheshire Home, the handicapped and disabled persons in Orlu are her special guests in this occasion [of jubilee]. This is very typical of Sr. Cecilia.

Sr. Cecilia’s life has been one of teaching and caring lovingly. She taught mentally unpaired children in Port Harcourt 1986-1987, then in Ogobia, Benue State, from 1988-1990. In 1991, Sr. Cecilia Oyibo obtained her Associate Certificate in Education from the University of Port Harcourt, as well as the Certificate in Theology from the Catholic Institute of West Africa. [...]

## 11. La dimensione sponsale del Cuore di Cristo e di Maria: Prospettive di teologia biblica

Speech of Prof. Giuseppe De Virgilio on the congress of the Two Hearts of Love during the annual Feast in Rome 2006, held at the church of St. Ambrose, Via di S. Ambrogio della M., only contribution handed over to the Society of the Hearts of Love on electronic device, given here slightly shortened.

### Preliminari

La dimensione «sponsale» dell'esperienza umana fa riferimento al motivo simbolico del cuore<sup>1477</sup>. Nella Bibbia con il termine «cuore» si allude ad una categoria comprensiva della persona umana e della sua profonda relazione affettiva. Nella tradizione religiosa cristiana l'attenzione è stata rivolta prima alla scena di Gv 19,31-37, mettendo in luce una serie di elementi spirituali emergenti: la ferita del costato di Cristo, il sangue e l'acqua, l'elevazione della croce, la partecipazione della Madre e del discepolo prediletto alla sofferenza mortale di Gesù. In un periodo posteriore<sup>1478</sup> è nata un'altra interpretazione: il costato trafitto rimanda ad una «realtà interiore» non espressamente indicata dall'evangelista, ma che ne contiene il significato essenziale: il cuore di Cristo<sup>1479</sup>.

Il riferimento al costato trafitto è strettamente collegata al culto al Sacro Cuore di Cristo, in relazione a due elementi: la considerazione del cuore fisico di Cristo e il valore simbolico del cuore<sup>1480</sup>. L'enciclica *Haurietis aquas* ha voluto superare tutte le concezioni troppo formalizzate dei teologi riguardo alla determinazione dell'oggetto del culto<sup>1481</sup>. Nell'enciclica di papa Pio XII la prospettiva teologica collegata con il tema del cuore si allarga a tutto il mistero della salvezza<sup>1482</sup>. Uguali considerazioni teologico-spirituali vanno espresse in relazione al culto nei riguardi del «cuore di Maria». L'intento della nostra proposta è quello di offrire un quadro di riferimento biblico-teologico «unitario», che aiuti ad approfondire il senso della categoria biblica di «cuore», attraverso la dimensione della sponsalità di Gesù e della Vergine Maria, così come emerge dal contesto delle narrazioni evangeliche e dalla loro interpretazione teologica<sup>1483</sup>. Dopo aver presentato brevemente la rilevanza della categoria biblica di «sponsalità», proporrò la dimensione nuziale

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<sup>1477</sup> Per una sintesi della riflessione sul «cuore» in collegamento alla spiritualità, cf. K. RAHNER, *Teologia del Cuore di Cristo*, ADP, Roma 2003 (edizione rivista, con introduzione di A. Marranzini); C. A. BERNARD, *La spiritualità del cuore di Cristo*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo (MI) 1989; J. GALOT, *Il cuore di Cristo*, ADP, Roma 1988; T. SPIDLIK, *L'arte di purificare il cuore*, Lipa, Roma 1999; H. J.M. NOUWEN, *Da cuore a cuore. Preghiere al Sacro Cuore*, Queriniana, Brescia 1998; R. CANTALAMESSA, *Gesù Cristo il santo di Dio*, Paoline, Cinisello Balsamo 1990.

<sup>1478</sup> Il culto al Sacro Cuore di Gesù si vede anche nella festa liturgica della «santa lancia» celebrata nel 1353 o nella festa delle cinque piaghe. Cf. A. HAMON, *Histoire de la dévotion ai Sacré-Coeur*, 5 voll, Paris 1923-1940. Per il magistero ecclesiale, ricordiamo le tre encicliche che trattano direttamente del mistero del Cuore di Cristo: Leone XIII, *Annum sacrum* (25.05.1899), sulla consacrazione del genere umano al Sacro Cuore; Pio XI, *Miserentissimus Redemptor* (08.05.1928) sulla riparazione; Pio XII, *Haurietis aquas* (15.05.1956): la presentazione sintetica della dottrina comune.

<sup>1479</sup> Cf. A. BERNARD, *La spiritualità del cuore di Cristo*, 7. L'autore evidenzia la differenza tra la spiritualità incentrata sulla scena del costato trafitto (il tema della passione di Cristo) e la devozione al Sacro Cuore di Gesù (e di Maria), incentrata sulla considerazione del cuore come tale. Nondimeno i due aspetti differenti implicano sia sul piano tematico e che su quello storico un chiaro collegamento (cf. *Ibidem*, 27).

<sup>1480</sup> Bernard rileva come tutte le discussioni tra i teologi evidenziano questa duplice prospettiva (cf. *Ibidem*, 7).

<sup>1481</sup> «L'oggetto integrale del culto è costituito da questi elementi: la Persona divina di Cristo, l'amore divino comune al Padre e allo Spirito Santo; [...] tutta la vita interiore di Cristo-uomo, in quanto il cuore fisico è ricettacolo dell'amore umano e divino» (*Ibidem*, 13).

<sup>1482</sup> Bernard ha sottolineato il valore del supporto sensibile-immaginativo che ogni devozione comporta per la vita spirituale. (Cf. *Ibidem*, 15-17).

<sup>1483</sup> Sull'argomento, cf. M.-F. LACAN, «sposo-sposa», in X. LÉON-DUFOUR *Dizionario di Teologia Biblica*, Torino 1976, 1243-1247; I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Studi di cristologia giovannea* (Dabar 4), Torino 1986, 167-190; IDEM, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, (Dabar 6), Genova 1988, 177-228.



del «cuore di Cristo» e alcuni riferimenti al motivo della nuzialità nella Vergine Maria, così come emerge dalla rielaborazione teologica rintracciabile nei Vangeli.

#### 1. Cuore e sponsalità nell'Antico Testamento<sup>1484</sup>

Quando si parla della parola «cuore», si rimanda necessariamente al significato proprio del termine che non fa riferimento più al contesto biblico, ma dipende dalla lingua e dalla cultura<sup>1485</sup>. Nella rivelazione biblica il termine cuore (ebr.: *leb*; gr.: *kardia*) è collegato a immagini e figure varie che alludono all'intima coscienza dell'uomo, alla sede profonda della sua misteriosa identità, nella quale egli coglie la pretesa del proprio essere e della propria verità progettuale<sup>1486</sup>. Il cuore non significa direttamente l'amore, ma il centro della persona, che in Cristo è «tutto amore».

Strettamente collegata con la categoria del cuore è il motivo della «sponsalità», che viene rappresentato nella relazione tra sposo e sposa e nei simboli che costituiscono una tale relazione di amore<sup>1487</sup>. Nella Bibbia l'immagine sponsale è molto utilizzata sia nella prospettiva antropologica che in quella teologica, soprattutto per parlare della fedeltà all'alleanza. L'amore fedele di Jahwe è amore di uno «sposo» per la sua «sposa»<sup>1488</sup>. Nell'ambito dei profili relazionali tra persone, sicuramente l'esperienza sponsale fornisce il simbolismo più efficace e significativo che esprime il mistero del cuore umano, il segreto della felicità e della vita, la fecondità della fedeltà e della misericordia<sup>1489</sup>. Circa il motivo della sponsalità e dell'esperienza matrimoniale nella letteratura del Pentateuco si possono ravvisare diversi racconti e motivi sponsali, tra i quali spicca quello costitutivo della creazione dell'uomo-donna in Gen 1-2<sup>1490</sup>. Il tema del cuore unito con quello dell'amore per Dio è soprattutto evidenziato nella riflessione teologica del libro del Deuteronomio<sup>1491</sup>.

Più che nel Pentateuco, è nella letteratura profetica e sapienziale che il tema teologico della nuzialità conosce uno sviluppo più accentuato. E' Dio stesso a definirsi come «sposo» (cf. Is 54,5) per esprimere simbolicamente il suo amore a favore di ogni creatura ed in particolare del popolo eletto. Infatti Jahwe non si rivela solo mediante il suo nome misterioso a Mosè (Es 3,14), ma si fa conoscere anche mediante altri simboli quali il pastore, il padre, il guerriero e soprattutto lo «sposo». Oltre alla storia struggente espressa nel Cantico dei Cantici, dedicata all'epopea dell'amore come simbolo teologico della relazione tra Jahwe e il popolo, l'immagine sponsale è presente in altri importanti luoghi, in contesti e con protagonisti diversi, particolarmente nei profeti.

<sup>1484</sup> Cf. AA. VV. *Lo sposo e la sposa*, numero monografico di *PSV* 13 (1986) 11-283.

<sup>1485</sup> Per K. Rahner la parola «cuore» significa una realtà al tempo stesso corporale e spirituale, significando «il centro più intimo della persona umana del quale dipende tutto il resto e nel quale sfocia “tutto l'essere concreto dell'uomo”» (cf. K. RAHNER, *Teologia del Cuore di Cristo*, 161).

<sup>1486</sup> Per un approfondimento sull'uso biblico del termine cuore, cf. J. BEHM, «*kardia*», in *GLNT*, V, 193-213; A. SAND, «*kardia*», in *DENT*, I, 1909-1913; cf. la voce «cuore» in *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del Nuovo Testamento*, a cura di L. Coenen - E. Beyreuther - H. Bietendhard, Bologna 1976, 432-443. Nell'enciclica *Haurietis aquas* l'idea del cuore rimanda ad un suo significato univoco che è quello dell'amore, allargando la nozione al triplice amore di Cristo (cf. HA, nn.30-36).

<sup>1487</sup> Per l'analisi biblica sulla «sponsalità», cf. J. JEREMIAS, «*nynphē/nynphios*», in *GLNT*, VII, 1439-1458; «Lo sposo e la sposa», *PSV* 1 (1986) 11-206.

<sup>1488</sup> L'idea di Dio-sposo non va interpretata in un senso mitico, come nella cultura religiosa Cananea dove si collega la sponsalità della divinità al motivo della fecondità. «Il Dio di Israele non è lo sposo della sua terra, ma del suo popolo; l'amore che li unisce ha una storia; le iniziative gratuite di Dio e il trionfo della sua misericordia sulla infedeltà del suo popolo sono dei temi profetici» (M.-F. LACAN, «sposo-sposa», 1243).

<sup>1489</sup> Cf. F. MARIETTI, *Il cuore di Gesù. Culto, devozione, spiritualità*, Milano 1991, 39-45; A. TESSAROLO, «Il simbolismo del “cuore” nell'Antico Testamento», in AA. VV., *La spiritualità del cuore di Cristo*, Dehoniane, Bologna 1990, 49-64.

<sup>1490</sup> Cf. A. BONORA, «Uomo e donna in Gn 1-11», *PSV* 1 (1986) 11-26; S. CIPRIANI, «matrimonio», in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Biblica*, a cura di P. ROSSANO - G. RAVASI - A. GIRLANDA, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo (MI) 1988, 919-930.

<sup>1491</sup> Rimane un classico per l'approfondimento di questo tema N. LOHFINK, *Ascolta Israele. Egesi dei testi del Deuteronomio*, Paideia, Brescia 1968.

Il protagonista più noto è il profeta Osea e la sua esperienza matrimoniale (Os 1-3) da cui si evince la profonda simbologia sponsale applicata al giudizio profetico dell'infedeltà del popolo all'alleanza con Dio<sup>1492</sup>. La grande tensione narrativa e lirica del racconto profetico descrive una storia di felicità e di miseria, dall'amore all'infedeltà, che rende il profeta protagonista in prima persona dell'avventura e della sventura del proprio destino sponsale. Dio è presentato come colui che «rifà l'alleanza», corteggiando la sua fidanzata, parlando al «cuore» della sua sposa traviata: «Perciò, ecco, la attirerò a me, la condurrò nel deserto e parlerò al suo cuore» (Os 2,16). Parlare al cuore nel nostro contesto indica una espressione di corteggiamento che tocca la sfera affettiva e progettuale delle persona. La storia sponsale del profeta rivela il progetto della salvezza di Dio, concludendo con l'amore che salva il suo popolo dall'infedeltà: «Io li guarirò dalla loro infedeltà, li amerò di vero cuore, poiché la mia ira si è allontanata da loro» (Os 14,5)<sup>1493</sup>.

La simbologia sponsale collegata con il tema del cuore è presente in Geremia ed Ezechiele, con tratti simili al profeta Osea<sup>1494</sup>. Il profeta Geremia esprime la passione di Dio per il destino del popolo, in un momento critico della storia d'Israele (la distruzione del Regno e l'esilio). Infatti l'intera relazione del profeta, le emozioni e i sentimenti che vengono espressi, i simboli matrimoniali e i dialoghi intimi testimoniano la valenza espressiva della relazione con Dio, che viene presentato come un amante appassionato e sofferente per l'esperienza del tradimento<sup>1495</sup>. Il peccato di infedeltà del popolo è inciso sulla tavola del «cuore» (Ger 17,1), espressione della «caparbieta del cuore» inclinato al male (cf. Ger 9,13; 11,8; 13,10; 16,12; 17,9; 18,12; 23,17). Ma Jahwe è il Dio che «saggia i cuori» (Ger 12,3; 17,10) e che li trasforma nel suo amore eterno. L'intero libro di Geremia è segnato dalla scoperta dell'amore eterno di Jahwe (Ger 31,3) che il profeta sperimenta personalmente (Ger 20,7) e che annuncia come mistero di una «nuova alleanza» mediante l'interiorizzazione della legge nel «cuore» del suo popolo (Ger 31,31-33).

Similmente il profeta Ezechiele, nel contesto dell'esilio babilonese rielabora la storia d'amore tra Dio e il popolo mediante la metafora di una fanciulla abbandonata che viene salvata e curata da Dio ed una volta divenuta adulta, preferisce prostituirsi con tutti rifiutando l'amore di Dio (Ez 16). Una simile metafora è ripetuta in Ez 20 e 23, in cui il profeta presenta la storia del traviamiento del suo popolo e le conseguenze della sua infedeltà. Nondimeno una volta che il popolo si è ravveduto, Dio è pronto a cominciare una nuova storia e ristabilisce con lei una nuova alleanza (Ez 16,60-63)<sup>1496</sup>. Il motivo del «cuore» è tuttavia affrontato nell'oracolo di Ez 36, 24-28, in cui Dio rifà l'alleanza sponsale con il suo popolo, cambiando radicalmente il suo cuore, da un «cuore di pietra» ad un «cuore di carne» (cf. anche Ez 11,19).

Seguendo la medesima metafora sponsale, nel Secondo Isaia, si riafferma con parole poetiche e profondamente umane l'amore gratuito e fedele di Jahwe per Gerusalemme, personificazione della sposa attesa ed amata dallo sposo (Is 54, 4-7). Gratuito e fedele, eterno ed immutabile l'amore dello sposo trionferà e trasformerà ogni peccato della sposa rendendola candida e verginale (Is 61,10) ed offrendole un'alleanza eterna (Is 62,4).

Nella letteratura sapienziale il simbolismo sponsale è applicato alla sapienza e al suo amore. La sapienza è strettamente congiunta con Dio (Prv 8,22) e si comporta nei confronti dell'uomo come una madre e una sposa (Sir 15,2). Per essere amici di Dio occorre conquistare la sapienza (Sap 7,14) mediante una stretta relazione personale che nasce da un atto di volontà e di vita (Sap 7,28; 8,2.9). L'amore per la sapienza è fortemente spiritualizzato e prepara l'immagine sponsale che sarà propria nella rivelazione del Nuovo Testamento. L'itinerario del simbolismo matrimoniale nella prospettiva profetica e sapienziale rappresenta una chiave di lettura per interpretare la poesia

<sup>1492</sup> Cf. S. VIRGULIN, «La sposa infedele in Osea», *PSV* 1 (1986) 27-40.

<sup>1493</sup> Cf. L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL - J.L. SICRE-DIAZ, *I profeti*, Borla, Roma 1984, 1042-1045.

<sup>1494</sup> G. Ravasi parla di «cinque profeti dell'amore nuziale»: Malachia (cf. *Mal* 1,1-3); Isaia (cf. *Is* 1,21; 5,1); Geremia (2,2; 31,3); Ezechiele (16; 23); Secondo Isaia (54,1-10); Terzo Isaia (cf. 61,1-12); (cf. G. Ravasi, «Il rapporto uomo-donna simbolo dell'alleanza nei profeti», *PSV* 1 (1986) 45-55).

<sup>1495</sup> L'immagine prevalente è quella dello sdegno dello sposo (Ger 2,1-2). Il ricordo dello sposo è pieno di amarezza per il giudizio che egli esprime poco dopo (Ger 2,17-20).

<sup>1496</sup> Cf. L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL - J.L. SICRE-DIAZ, *I profeti*, 821-832.

matrimoniale del Cantico, anticipato dal noto Sal 45, dove vi è la celebrazione dell'amore sponsale mediante la presentazione della bellezza e dello splendore della sposa al cospetto regale<sup>1497</sup>. Più ampiamente nel libro dei Salmi il tema del cuore, ripetutamente utilizzato nel Salterio, diventa una vera e propria «espressione» dell'interiorità dell'uomo e della sua relazione con Dio<sup>1498</sup>.

Nondimeno il canto all'amore più conosciuto nel mondo biblico è racchiuso nel poema del Cantico dei Cantici, dove l'esaltazione dell'amore umano viene riletta nella prospettiva teologica dell'amore di Dio per il suo popolo<sup>1499</sup>. Il libro del Cantico si presenta come la celebrazione poetica del fidanzamento, anche se si possono accettare entrambe le interpretazioni: sia quella dell'amore naturale in una coppia, sia quello dell'amore religioso tra Dio e l'uomo, mediante l'alleanza. Si tratta di un «inno alla fedeltà oblativa» tra un giovane ed una giovane, che si appella ad una fedeltà più grande, oltre l'orizzonte di un'esperienza intima e privata: la fedeltà dell'amore divino per ciascun uomo. Lo scenario ideale del Cantico dei Cantici sognato in prima persona da una giovane innamorata, le sue poetiche espressioni di amore, il dialogo affettivo e celebrativo (il motivo del «vino» collegato alla passione inebriante e alla festa sponsale) che ritrae scenicamente la relazione tra lo sposo e la sposa fanno da cornice alla riflessione sulla donazione fedele ed oblativa e consentono di rileggere anche gli altri testi matrimoniali in una nuova prospettiva esistenziale. Il libro racconta di un poema d'amore collegato a sentimenti e simboli naturali. I protagonisti si ambientano in una campagna primaverile, in un clima di gioia e di canto, il più adatto per un fidanzamento che esprime la freschezza e l'impetuosità della relazione, come un'irrompere della vita (Ct 2,10-13). Il racconto dell'unione e del desiderio viene narrato dalla fidanzata che contempla e desidera l'incontro con il suo sposo, i sentimenti sono profondi e ricchi di simbolismo: nel cuore della notte la giovane, «malata d'amore» si alza dal letto e percorre le strade della città in cerca del suo amato (Ct 3,1-3), senza desistere neppure dinanzi ai pericoli notturni e agli oltraggi (Ct 5,7). La fidanzata esulta di gioia nel sentire la voce del suo diletto e il fidanzato la contempla invitandola a mostrargli il suo viso e a far sentire la sua voce (Ct 2,4-14). Emergono dalla lettura del Cantico importanti aspetti della relazione sposo-sposa: a) l'immenso bisogno di vivere l'uno per l'altra mediante una continua ricerca e un desiderio di contemplazione e di gioia; b) la forza straordinaria dell'amore spinge la fidanzata a «cercare» l'amato con coraggio e fedeltà, mostrando come l'amore è un cammino di ricerca nella fedeltà e di impegno personale che deve poter superare tutti gli ostacoli esterni; c) il senso profondo dell'amore è simboleggiato dalla reciprocità del donarsi l'un l'altro nel segno di una fedeltà indissolubile, rappresentata dall'immagine del «sigillo» o dell'anello (Ct 8,6-7).

L'abbraccio tra lo sposo e la sposa non indica una chiusura egoistica, ma il compimento di una fedeltà che unisce due libertà in un unico progetto di felicità e di speranza. Si tratta di una relazione che nasce dal «cuore» e che si «sigilla nel cuore». La dimensione sponsale che unisce i «due cuori amanti» si traduce nel tendere alla ricerca della pienezza d'amore che è la meta del cuore umano, la più intima aspirazione per scoprire il segreto e la grandezza della vita e della sua completa realizzazione. Amare allora significa «far vivere». Vita e amore sono sue realtà dello stesso mistero umano-divino. La fedeltà sponsale è fedeltà alla vita e alla sua realizzazione. Si comprende molto bene il motivo per cui tra le varie immagini umane e i diversi simbolismi applicati alla persona di Dio è prevalente la simbologia nuziale. Infatti la relazione tra Jahwe e il suo popolo trova una adeguata raffigurazione narrativa proprio nei comportamenti e nei sentimenti umani di due sposi, che esprimono la ricchezza del mistero intimo dell'amore misericordioso e vitale del Padre celeste e della sua fedeltà incondizionata all'uomo e al suo destino<sup>1500</sup>.

<sup>1497</sup> Cf. G. RAVASI, *Il libro dei salmi*, I, Dehoniane, Bologna 1986, 795-818.

<sup>1498</sup> Cf. A. TESSAROLO, «Il simbolismo del "cuore" nell'Antico Testamento», 55-64.

<sup>1499</sup> Cf. L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, *Antologia della poesia biblica*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1992, 189-209; T. ELLIOTT, «Lo sposo e la sposa nel Cantico dei Cantici», *PSV* 1 (1986) 57-68.

<sup>1500</sup> La prospettiva teologica della nuzialità è stata utilmente impiegata, tra gli altri, in G. MAZZANTI, *Persone nuziali. Communio nuptialis. Saggio teologico di antropologia*, Bologna 2005; IDEM, *Teologia sponsale e sacramento delle nozze. Simbolo e simbolismo nuziale*, Bologna 2002.

Infine la meditazione dei sapienti sottolinea fortemente il carattere interiore dell'unione del cuore con l'amore di Dio. Così non fa meraviglia vedere come Dio comunica al credente una sapienza che è «sua figlia» (Prv 8,22) e che si comporta nei confronti dell'uomo come una «sposa» (Sir 15,2). Affinché il credente possa diventare saggio, egli dovrà cercare e desiderare di vivere con la sapienza (Sap 7,28; 8,2.9): la sapienza è la «sposa» che solo Dio può dare, che rende immortale e virtuosi gli uomini (Sap 8,6.21). Si nota come il simbolismo coniugale, fortemente accentuato nella letteratura profetica, qui viene notevolmente spiritualizzato, preparando così la strada alla rivelazione neotestamentaria, nella quale il tema della sponsalità si concentra sul mistero di Cristo, di Maria e della Chiesa<sup>1501</sup>.

## 2. La dimensione sponsale del cuore di Cristo e di Maria

### 2. 1 Il *Nymphios* in Mt 9,15 (Mc 2,19; Lc 5,34)

In continuità con il motivo sponsale rilevato nell'Antico Testamento, la metafora della sponsalità è applicata alla riflessione cristologica ed ecclesiologica neotestamentaria. Il binomio «sposo/sposa» (ebr.: *kallāh*; gr.: *nymphē-nymphios*)<sup>1502</sup> appare nel NT quasi esclusivamente in senso traslato<sup>1503</sup>. Nei Vangeli sinottici troviamo l'impiego di *nymphios* in Mt 9,15 (parr.: Mc 2,19-20; Lc 5,33-35), dove è Gesù stesso a definirsi «sposo», parafrasando la propria venuta salvifica nella storia con l'immagine di una festa nuziale. Il *logion*, attestato in triplice tradizione, è contestualizzato nel racconto della rivelazione cristologica che segue la chiamata di Matteo Levi, mentre il Cristo è a pranzo con altri invitati «pubblicani e peccatori» (Mt 9,10). Esso riporta la controversia di Gesù con i farisei sul tema del digiuno (Mt 9,14-17)<sup>1504</sup>. Alla domanda polemica degli scribi e dei farisei sulla necessità del digiuno e sul fatto che Gesù siede a tavola in compagnia di persone impure, il Signore rivela la «novità» della salvezza di Dio. La risposta di Gesù è articolata in tre sentenze (vv. 15-17). Nella prima si giustifica il comportamento dei suoi discepoli, facendo ricorso all'immagine dello sposo e delle nozze durante le quali gli invitati-discepoli non possono digiunare (v. 15)<sup>1505</sup>. Le due successive sentenze di carattere parabolico (vv. 16-17) fanno leva sulla contrapposizione tra «vecchio» e «nuovo», attraverso la duplice immagine della toppa-vestito (v. 16) e del vino-otri (v. 17). Dio è come il medico venuto per guarire gli ammalati (Mt 9,13), come lo sposo che fa festa insieme agli invitati (Mt 9,15), e questo comportamento rivela la novità dell'azione divina che contraddice lo stile vecchio e sterile del modo di pensare degli scribi e dei farisei<sup>1506</sup>. Tutti sono invitati ad entrare in una nuova prospettiva e a cogliere l'opportunità della salvezza e dell'ingresso nel Regno di Dio.

La rilevanza dell'attestazione cristologica è dovuta soprattutto alla presentazione della persona e della missione di Gesù come un evento nuziale, con un chiaro riferimento al contesto veterotestamentario della relazione tra Dio e il suo popolo. Nella venuta del Cristo, che chiama gli

<sup>1501</sup> Cf. M.-F. LACAN, «sposo-sposa», 1246.

<sup>1502</sup> Il termine *kallah* nei LXX ha anche il significato di «nuora» (cf. Gen 11,31; 38,11; Rut 1,6). Nel NT il termine *nymphē* ricorre in Mt 10,35 (par. Lc 12,53) come allusione alla nuora; Mt 25,1 (variante); Gv 3,29; Ap 18,23; 21,2.9; 22,17. Il termine *nymphios* ricorre in Mt 9,15 bis (par.: 2,19-20; Lc 5,34s); Mt 25,1.5.6.10; Gv 2,9; 3,29; Ef 5,22-23; Ap 18,23; 19,7-9; 21,2.9; 22,17. La sposa è chiamata *gynē* (donna), poichè secondo il diritto matrimoniale la fidanzata è già legata all'uomo alla stregua di una donna sposata (cf. J. JEREMIAS, «*nynphē/nynphios*», in *GLNT*, VII, 1442; la voce «cuore» in *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del Nuovo Testamento*, 985).

<sup>1503</sup> Cf. J. JEREMIAS, «*nynphē/nynphios*», in *GLNT*, VII, 1439-1458. La terminologia sponsale usata nel NT va inquadrata a partire dal retroterra veterotestamentario e giudaico (cf. «cuore» in *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del Nuovo Testamento*, 985).

<sup>1504</sup> Cf. S. GRASSO, *Il vangelo secondo Matteo*, Dehoniane, Roma 1995, 251-255.

<sup>1505</sup> Si nota la ricorrenza del motivo del «vino» collegata alla metafora sponsale, così come è presente in Ct e soprattutto in Gv 2,1-12 (cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 216).

<sup>1506</sup> Rileva Grasso: «Mediante la progressione delle immagini (...) si afferma l'incompatibilità tra le strutture giudaiche, ormai inutili nel veicolare la salvezza anticotestamentaria e il nuovo regime salvifico inaugurato da Gesù» (GRASSO, 252).

uomini alla salvezza e alla sequela, si porta a compimento la promessa annunciata dai profeti: Dio attira a sé la sua sposa, parla al suo cuore e la ristabilisce nella relazione di amore e nella sua originaria dignità sponsale. Il testo si concentra sulla figura e sul destino dello sposo: gli invitati alle nozze (*oi hyuoi tou nynphōnos*) non possono fare digiuno mentre lo sposo è con loro. Non si parla della sposa, lasciando intendere che la sposa è la comunità dei credenti chiamata a vivere la gioia della presenza messianica del Cristo. Nella seconda parte della frase si accenna ai giorni futuri (*eleusontai de ēmerai*) nei quali lo sposo sarà loro tolto<sup>1507</sup> e allora digiuneranno. Anche se il motivo del cuore non è esplicitato, tuttavia nel contesto si coglie la necessità di una adesione alle nozze messianiche che implica l'apertura della propria intimità di fronte alla novità della rivelazione cristologica. Dio è venuto a chiamare i peccatori, i quali aderiscono nel loro cuore all'appello salvifico e fanno l'incontro con il Cristo, «sposo fedele» del nuovo popolo eletto<sup>1508</sup>.

## 2. 2 Il *Nymphios* in Mt 25,1-13

La dimensione sponsale è particolarmente segnalata nella parabola matteana di Mt 25,1-13, significativamente collocata nel contesto escatologico di Mt 25<sup>1509</sup>. Il racconto delle dieci vergini in Mt 25,1-13 rappresenta una delle parabole più suggestive e per alcuni versi inquietanti del discorso escatologico di Gesù, la cui applicazione è ricolma di insegnamenti e messaggi per ciascun credente. Soprattutto è opportuno avere presente l'idea che la vita cristiana è tutta protesa verso un incontro fondamentale con il Padre e che in conseguenza di tale attesa, la condizione della fedeltà a questo appuntamento finale è centrale nella vita di ciascuna persona che cerca Dio. La parabola matteana delle «dieci vergini», legata al contesto narrativo precedente, è collocata tra due parabole che parlano della seconda venuta di Gesù, la *parusia* (il maggiordomo: Mt 24,45-51; i talenti: Mt 25,14-30). La narrazione si presenta con una formula introduttiva: «*Allora il regno dei cieli sarà simile...*», tipica del vangelo secondo Matteo, seguita da una presentazione dei personaggi e del contesto (dieci vergini che partecipano ad un corteo nuziale). La storia viene presentata in tre scene importanti: nella prima scena si illustrano i preparativi che le vergini fanno per l'accoglienza dello sposo e la situazione di ritardo che fa addormentare le ragazze (vv. 2-6), nella seconda scena lo sposo arriva nel cuore della notte e si narrano gli ultimi preparativi per accoglierlo, con la constatazione che metà delle vergini non erano preparate all'arrivo dello sposo (vv. 7-9), nella terza scena si illustrano l'arrivo dello sposo e gli eventi che seguono fino alla conclusione (vv.10-13).

La vicenda assume connotati simbolici molto profondi ed attuali facendo emergere le diverse situazioni che caratterizzano le vergini protagoniste del racconto: le ragazze vengono definite già all'inizio in due categorie: «cinque stolte (*mōrai*) e cinque sagge (*phrōnimoi*)». Occorre notare che tale distinzione è alla base del giudizio finale del cuore umano, in quanto l'aggettivo saggio designa una persona che ha cuore ed intelligenza (così l'uomo che costruisce la casa sulla roccia, cf. Mt 7,24) a differenza della stoltezza che è sinonimo di empietà e di negatività (l'uomo che costruisce la sua casa sulla sabbia). Tutta la parabola è percorsa dalla distinzione tra i due gruppi di vergini, il cui giudizio non si basa tanto sulle lampade, quanto sulla riserva di olio.

Così il dinamismo del racconto verte essenzialmente sulla persona dello sposo, in cui trovano unità e soluzione le tre scene: nella prima scena lo sposo (o' numfi'oj) è presentato come «l'atteso che deve venire», nella seconda come «colui che sta arrivando» ed infine la terza come «colui che è arrivato». Il punto culminante del racconto è l'incontro delle vergini con lo sposo, che rivela l'errore delle cinque vergini stolte: non aver considerato il ritardo dello sposo, senza prevedere un supplemento di riserva di olio per le lampade. Questa omissione che sembrerebbe a prima vista trascurabile e che appena emerge nella prima scena, di fatto diventa discriminante e motivo di assenza nel momento focale dell'arrivo dello sposo (seconda scena) e causa della triste

<sup>1507</sup> L'impiego di *aparthē*/ (aoristo passivo di *apairō*) sta a designare la volontà divina a cui è legato il piano della salvezza dell'umanità, che si realizza mediante il sacrificio di Cristo, inteso come un evento sponsale.

<sup>1508</sup> Cf. W. TRILLING, *Da wahre Israel. Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums*, Göttingen 1964; cf. V. FUSCO, «Matteo», in *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Biblica*, 932-937.

<sup>1509</sup> Cf. H. WEDER, «*Metafore del Regno*», Paideia Editrice, Brescia 1991, 283-294; M. GOURGUES, *Le parabole di Gesù in Marco e Matteo, dalla sorgente alla foce*, LDC, Leumann 2002, 178-200.

esclusione dalla festa (terza scena). La sentenza finale: «*Vegliate dunque, perché non sapete né il giorno né l'ora*» (Mt 25,13), inserisce questa vicenda nel discorso sulla fine dei tempi che Gesù rivolge alle folle e permette di applicare il messaggio contenuto alla vita dei credenti i quali probabilmente rinunciano alla perseveranza e alla fedeltà nella vigilanza, presumendo di conoscere tempi e modalità del loro incontro con il Signore che viene. Osserviamo alcuni importanti elementi della parabola:

a) in primo luogo la parabola presenta il contesto di nozze. L'intera simbologia è riferita all'esperienza di una festa di matrimonio, dove la figura della sposa non viene menzionata (pochissimi testimoni introducono al v.1 «la sposa»<sup>1510</sup> come improbabile variante testuale) e in aggiunta si parla delle «vergini» che vanno incontro «allo sposo», alludendo simbolicamente alla metafora matrimoniale. Esse rappresentano concretamente l'atteggiamento della nostra vita, rivelano lo stretto rapporto che sussiste tra il credente e il regno di Dio, che è regno di amore ed esperienza nuziale. Così la figura dello «sposo» assume un valore metaforico: è Dio stesso, così come si rivela nell'Antico Testamento, che mediante il patto di alleanza con Israele invita alla festa e alla gioia sponsale. Così è possibile interpretare il valore del «Regno di Dio» in questa nuova prospettiva esistenziale: entrare nel regno significa interpretare la propria esistenza e quella della comunità intera (la valenza ecclesiale è data dal gruppo delle vergini) come un cammino verso l'incontro sponsale con Dio, la realizzazione dell'amore pieno e totale nella comunione con il mistero del Padre.

b) Il simbolo principale è costituito dalle lampade alimentate dall'olio. L'olio non cedibile può essere ben collegato al valore della fedeltà personale di fronte all'imprevedibilità dei tempi di Dio. La fedeltà appartiene all'identità stessa della persona. Ecco perché le sagge non possono condividere l'olio con le stolte. In altre parole omettere la riserva di olio significa presumere di calcolare l'arrivo di Dio, quasi pretendere di condizionare alle proprie disponibilità l'incontro con il mistero ineffabile dell'Onnipotente. Tuttavia nel racconto come nella vita, non sono le vergine a dover determinare l'arrivo dello sposo; il momento della sua venuta dipende unicamente da Lui e non da coloro che lo vanno a ricevere. La lampada diventa il segno di questa fedeltà all'incontro imprevedibile con il Cristo che viene. Non tutte le vergini ne hanno tenuto conto; il loro errore consiste nel non aver saputo aspettare nella fedeltà lo sposo, credendo di poter disporre della sua venuta.

c) Il ritardo della venuta dello sposo, descritto in termini antitetici alla parabola del servo spietato (Mt 24,45-51), dove il ritardo del padrone induce il servo malvagio a maltrattare i suoi simili e a vivere in maniera dissoluta (*kronizei*: Mt 24,48), appare come il grande imprevisto, la prova inaspettata della fedeltà del credente, il dilemma dell'attesa che distinguerà il saggio dallo stolto mediante un giudizio inappellabile. L'imprevedibilità della venuta dello sposo è accentuata dal simbolismo del grido di gioia e di stupore nel «cuore della notte», che indica il superamento di ogni previsione umana dell'incontro con il Cristo. Emerge una importante verità: la parabola presenta Dio (sposo) come colui che viene incondizionatamente nella storia di ciascuno, fuori da ogni determinazione cronologica, da ogni presunto potere di calcolo o di previsione. Così il giudizio sulle vergini consiste essenzialmente sul fatto di non aver accettato la logica della fedeltà verso «colui che è sempre imminente». L'invito alla vigilanza si traduce in appello alla fedeltà dell'ora presente, pur nel pericolo del sonno, delle distrazioni a motivo della lunga attesa. L'uomo fedele non è mai in ritardo, al contrario la durata della sua vita rappresenta un continuo appello a «cingersi i fianchi», secondo la raccomandazione di Gesù, Lc 12,35-38.

d) Il discernimento si compie già nell'ora dell'attesa, nel buio della notte. Il dialogo tra le sagge e le stolte ha la funzione di mettere in evidenza la sostanziale differenza di fedeltà ai «tempi di Dio»: il diniego dell'olio non va considerato in chiave egoistica, ma letto nella prospettiva matteana in base alla responsabilità personale di ciascuno (Mt 16,27) nel determinare l'esito della propria vita. Per ciascun cristiano il tempo dell'attesa è «adesso»: la valenza vocazionale della

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<sup>1510</sup> Alcuni mss. (D Q I it vg sy) introducono «incontro allo sposo e alla sposa», ma il peso testuale di questa variante è ritenuto dalla maggior parte dei critici insufficiente (cf. J. JEREMIAS, «*nynphē/nynphios*», 1442-1443).

propria vita inizia dalla consapevolezza che è arrivato il tempo di stare pronti, di vivere nella prospettiva irripetibile dell'incontro con Dio che viene, di interpretare nel mistero della fedeltà l'attesa operosa e vigilante del credente maturo che si sottrae ad ogni calcolo. Si tratta di imparare dalla ricchezza di questa parabola un nuovo modo di rapportarsi con Dio e con il mondo, in quanto tale consapevolezza ci insegna a non fuggire il tempo presente né le responsabilità della nostra storia. Così insegnandoci a saper vivere l'attesa di Dio senza calcoli né pretese, da questa parola di Gesù impariamo anche a saper vivere l'attesa nei confronti degli uomini, mediante il compimento dell'amore nel presente storico della nostra esistenza. La fedeltà a Dio si traduce in «fedeltà all'uomo», come l'annuncio del Regno chiede a ciascun cristiano di compromettersi fin da ora con il dono della propria vita.

e) L'immagine della festa di nozze per le vergini sagge si trasforma in una scena di tribunale per le stolte, così come Cristo dalla figura di sposo atteso e celebrato, diviene giudice inesorabile per coloro che hanno mancato l'appuntamento della loro vita. Impressiona la radicalità dei termini, la perentorietà della chiusura delle porte, il tono del rifiuto verso le vergini stolte espresso nella brevità del racconto, che richiama altri contesti evangelici (Mt 7,21-22; 25,37.44) nella prospettiva del giudizio finale. La festa dell'amore, simboleggiata dalle nozze del Figlio indica che fin dal momento presente incomincia l'attesa del regno e ciascun credente è chiamato alla fedeltà di Dio, che si traduce nella fedeltà quotidiana della croce in vista della resurrezione (probabile allusione al sonno e al risveglio delle vergini). L'invito a tenere le lampade accese implica ulteriori significati biblici: l'invito alla vigilanza in uno stato di pellegrinaggio, a camminare vincendo le tenebre in attesa di Cristo (2Pt 1,19). Impegnarti con Cristo è comunque essere nella fedeltà delle vergini sagge.

La ricchezza dei messaggi contenuti nella parabola delle dieci vergini ci induce a riflettere sul significato e sui modelli della fedeltà del cristiano. Il richiamo pressante alla vigilanza è invito alla fedeltà di una comunione duratura e vitale. Emergono tre prospettive della nuzialità collegata con la dimensione dell'interiorità e del cuore umano:

La prima consiste nella fedeltà all'incontro con Cristo. L'appuntamento della nostra storia è dato dall'incontro con il Signore risorto. La vita interpretata in questa prospettiva non può essere banalizzata da una semplice valutazione cronologica, ma chiede di essere compiuta nell'attesa dell'incontro determinante e progettuale di Dio con l'uomo. Nella parabola evangelica questa verità è simboleggiata da un corteo festivo «verso lo sposo» e il credente è paragonato alla vergine nella gioiosa e luminosa attesa di raggiungere la meta della sua esistenza. L'incontro finale ha come condizione l'esperienza della fiducia che Egli possa raggiungerci mentre nella notte rimaniamo pronti e fedeli.

La seconda prospettiva è data dalla fedeltà al momento «presente». Infatti l'invito alla vigilanza non è da interpretare nel senso della paura dell'ira di Dio, ma alla luce del mistero pasquale esso conferma l'importanza del «tempo presente», dell'oggi della salvezza. Per questo gli amici dello sposo non possono digiunare quando lo sposo è con loro (Mc 2,19), in quanto la vicinanza del Regno annulla ogni determinazione spazio-temporale ed afferma che il tempo dell'attesa di Dio è adesso. Essere fedeli all'ora presente significa non lasciarsi sfuggire l'incontro con l'Eterno, che ci chiede di incontrarlo «qui ed ora» nella concretezza della nostra vita e nella libertà della nostra coscienza. Il cristiano possiede la consapevolezza dell'impegno «dentro la storia», perché nell'attesa dell'incontro con Dio egli vive la pienezza dell'incontro con i fratelli, momento per momento.

Una terza prospettiva è costituita dalla fedeltà all'uomo e al suo destino di felicità. La fedeltà all'uomo è parte integrante dell'incontro con il Padre, così come l'amore per Dio è posto accanto a quello per il prossimo. La parabola delle «dieci vergini» chiede a ciascuno di noi la responsabilità di un'attesa comunitaria che possa annunciare il «vangelo della fedeltà» per ogni uomo.

### 3.1 Il *nymphios* in Gv 3,29

Oltre ai Vangeli sinottici anche nel IV Vangelo viene impiegata la metafora del *nymphios* in una chiara prostettiva cristologica. Il tema della sponsalità è particolarmente elaborato nel IV Vangelo, sia nell'episodio delle nozze di Cana (Gv 2,1-12) sia nell'ultima testimonianza del Battista contenuta nel *logion* di Gv 3,22-30. Preferiamo presentare il *logion* di Gv 3,22-30 a sè stante per poi affrontare l'analisi di Gv 2,1-12 unitamente alla pericope della morte di Gesù e del costato trafitto in Gv 19,25-37.

La pericope di Gv 3,22-30 è contestualizzata nei primi tre capitoli del Vangelo, nei quali vengono riproposti motivi simili, in collegamento con la persona e la missione del Battista<sup>1511</sup>. Si tratta di un brano che presenta la figura del “testimone” (*martyrs*) nella persona di Giovanni Battista come “amico dello sposo” (*philos tou nymphiou*), nell'atto di rivelare colui che viene nel mondo<sup>1512</sup>. L'allusione metaforica è tratta dalla consuetudine ricorrente nel matrimonio giudaico<sup>1513</sup>, secondo la quale il più intimo amico dello sposo (paraninfo) assume l'incarico di provvedere alla buona risuscita delle nozze<sup>1514</sup>. L'immagine è inserita nel brano che contiene l'ultima testimonianza del Battista su Gesù. L'intera pericope comprende 3,22-36 e risulta tematicamente così strutturata: vv. 22-24: ambientazione della testimonianza (la Giudea ed Ennòn); vv. 25-30: disputa sulla purificazione e testimonianza sullo sposo; vv. 31-36: Gesù unico rivelatore del Padre<sup>1515</sup>. La metafora sponsale è contenuta nei vv. 25-30. Nei vv. 25-26 si mette in rilievo la funzione testimoniale del Battista (il verbo *martyreô* al perfetto) e l'azione del battesimo, entrambe indicative dell'importanza della predicazione e dell'attività preparatoria di Giovanni. Infine i vv. 28-30 racchiudono quella che da molti autori è considerata una “piccola parabola” nuziale.

Secondo Zevini<sup>1516</sup> il testi potrebbe essere compreso in una struttura concentrica:

- |     |      |   |
|-----|------|---|
| 28b | A    | Non sono io il Cristo   |
| 28c | B    | ma fui mandato innanzi a lui  |
| 29a | C a. | E' LO SPOSO CHI HA LA SPOSA   |
| 29b | b.   | ma l'amico dello SPOSO che gli sta vicino e lo ascolta<br>gioisce alla voce dello SPOSO |
| 29c | c.   | Ora questa è la mia gioia ed è perfetta.  |
| 30a | B'   | Lui deve crescere   |
| 30b | A'   | ed io diminuire   |

<sup>1511</sup> Secondo alcuni autori (Wellhausen, Goguel) Gv 3,22-20 potrebbe essere un doppione della scena di Gv 1. Brown ripercorre le attestazioni riguardanti la relazione tra il Battista e Gesù: Gv 1,19-21 // 3,28 (Giovanni non è il messia); Gv 1,30 // 3,28 (Giovanni prepara la strada e precede il Messia); Gv 1,31 // 3,29 (Giovanni rivela il Messia ad Israele, preparando le sue nozze) (cf. R. E. BROWN, *Giovanni*, 203-205).

<sup>1512</sup> Cf. R. E. BROWN, *Giovanni*, Cittadella, Assisi 1979, 198-207. Sulla figura di Giovanni Battista, cf. R. INFANTE, “La voce dello sposo: Gv 3,29”, *Vetera Christianorum* 33 (1996) 301-308; G. ZEVINI, «Gesù lo sposo della comunità messianica», *PSV* 1 (1986) 105-117; A. GUIDA, “Lo sposo e l'amico dello sposo (Gv 3,22-30)”, *Parole di Vita* 1 (2004) 41-45.

<sup>1513</sup> La consuetudine nuziale nel giudaismo era caratterizzata da due momenti: in un primo momento si ratificava l'atto di fidanzamento ufficiale, considerato propriamente come il vero contratto legale di matrimonio, che veniva stipulato in casa della sposa. Lo sposo si impegnava nell'accogliere la sposa mediante un versamento pecuniario alla famiglia (*mohar* = prezzo). Il secondo momento avveniva a distanza di qualche tempo (per lo più un anno), con l'introduzione solenne della sposa in casa dello sposo, nel contesto della festa matrimoniale (*nissu'in*). Lo sposo, circondato dagli amici e da un corteo festoso di musica e danze, si recava nella casa della sposa per condurla con sè ed iniziare ufficialmente la coabitazione. Nella cerimonia delle nozze, oltre agli sposi, vengono menzionate anche altre persone: “i figli del convito nuziale” (*hyioi tou nymphônôs*: cf. Mt 9,15; Mc 2,19-20; Lc 5,34-35). In questo contesto è contemplata la figura dell'amico dello sposo (cf. Gv 3,29), che assume la funzione istituzionale dello *shoshbîn*, cioè di colui che si prende cura della buona risuscita del matrimonio (cf. STRACK-BILLERBECK, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, I, München 1928, 45ss).

<sup>1514</sup> La medesima immagine è utilizzata da Paolo in 2Cor 11,2, in cui l'Apostolo rivendica per sè la vicinanza a Cristo a favore della sua comunità (cf. V.P. FURNISH, *II Corinthians* (The Anchor Bible 32/A), New York 1986, 499-509)..

<sup>1515</sup> Cf. A. GUIDA, “Lo sposo e l'amico dello sposo (Gv 3,22-30)”, 44-45. Per un approfondimento cf. «Giovanni Battista», numero monografico di *Parole di Vita* 1 (1994) 5-23.

<sup>1516</sup> Cf. G. ZEVINI, «Gesù lo sposo della comunità messianica», 108.



In A-A' si mette in luce la missione del Battista in chiave negativa: non è lui il messia ma quando verrà, il Battista dovrà "diminuire". In B-B' si accentua la venuta del messia e il dinamismo della sua crescita, mentre in C si tra il centro della struttura, sviluppata in tre parti: C.a la presenza dello sposo e della sposa || C.b la gioia per la venuta (la voce) dello sposo || C.c l'amico dello sposo ha compiuto la sua missione e per questo la sua gioia è perfetta. Commenta Zevini:

«In questa lice la testimonianza, che il Battista fa di Gesù come sposo, è decisamente l'affermazione culminante dello sviluppo tematico che l'autore del quarto Vangelo ha iniziato a Cana (cf. 2,9) e che conclude in 3,29. Con essa il precursore afferma la superiorità di Gesù, ne giustifica la novità nella dottrina e nella prassi convinto che è giunto il tempo delle nozze messianiche»<sup>1517</sup>.

Come abbiamo potuto constatare nelle precedenti attestazioni sinottiche, la valenza messianica della rivelazione è collegata alla metafora sponsale. Tuttavia l'allegoria nuziale nell'AT non identifica mai lo sposo delle nozze escatologiche con il Messia, ma lo riferisce sempre a Jahwe. Nei Vangeli abbiamo una nuova affermazione: l'avvento del Cristo nel mondo è considerato l'evento nuziale di Dio con umanità, il compimento della profezia messianica dell'Emmanuele riportata in Mt 1,23 nella quale si può intravedere l'allegoria nuziale del Re-Messia (cf. Sal 44, 145). Gesù è il "figlio dell'uomo" che celebra le nozze con la comunità di coloro che credono in lui. Egli è lo sposo della Chiesa, comunità messianica.

### 3.2 Il *nymphios* in Gv 2,1-12

Il motivo del *nymphios* e del *gamos* (matrimonio) è ulteriormente sottolineato nel brano delle nozze di Cana (Gv 2,1-12)<sup>1518</sup>. Nell'economia del racconto si coglie la centralità della rivelazione cristologica e il ruolo sponsale della figura di Gesù unitamente a quella di Maria<sup>1519</sup>. La pericope pone in risalto il «primo segno» (v. 11: *archē tōn sēmeiōn*) compiuto da Gesù proprio in un contesto sponsale. Da parte di molti autori è stato evidenziato il carattere «enigmatico» del brano giovanneo e allo stesso tempo la gamma di interpretazioni applicate al testo<sup>1520</sup>. L'evento accade all'interno della «settimana della rivelazione» di Gesù e precisamente nel «terzo giorno» (Gv 2,1). Le prime due pericopi sono contestualizzate in Giudea (la testimonianza del Battista: Gv 1,19-34; e i primi discepoli: Gv 1,35-51); mentre la rivelazione della gloria si svolge in Galilea e precisamente a Cana (Gv 2,12). La struttura del racconto segue una forma letteraria di tipo concentrico: Parte narrative (vv. 1-3); parte dialogica/discorsiva (vv. 4-8); parte narrativa (vv. 9-12).

Durante una festa matrimoniale, la improvvisa mancanza di vino provoca il miracolo di Gesù, in seguito ad un dialogo con la Maria, sua madre. I servi (*diakonoī*) riempiranno le giare di acqua fino all'orlo ed attingeranno per portare in tavola l'acqua diventata «vino buono» (v. 10: *kalon oionon*)<sup>1521</sup>. Le parole del maestro di tavola (architriclino) costituiscono un elemento di rilevanza nel contesto del dialogo con «lo sposo»: «"tu" hai conservato fino ad ora il vino buono»

<sup>1517</sup> *Ibidem*, 111.

<sup>1518</sup> Cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 177-215; IDEM, «Le nozze messianiche e il matrimonio cristiano», *PSV* 1 (1986) 87-104.

<sup>1519</sup> Cf. G. FERRARO, «Gesù e la madre alle nozze di Cana. Studio esegetico di Gv 2,1-11», *Theotokos* 1 (1999) 9-40; C. MILITELLO, «Nuptiae factae sunt», *Theotokos* 1 (1999) 97-117; F. MANNS, «Esegesi di Gv 19,25-27», *Theotokos* 2 (1999) 325-338; G. ROSSÉ, «Approcci esegetici al testo della Presentazione», *Theotokos* 1 (1998) 17-30.

<sup>1520</sup> Cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 178-183.

<sup>1521</sup> «Nella Scrittura la promessa del vino è spesso annuncio e simbolo dei beni della Nuova Alleanza. E' in questo senso che J.P.Charlier parla del "vino delle promesse". Questo simbolismo si presenta frequentemente in un contesto escatologico: il vino è uno degli elementi più importanti del banchetto messianico (...) Nel giudaismo posteriore il simbolismo generale del vino si specifica e si precisa sempre di più. (...) Se applichiamo questa simbologia sapienziale e messianica al "vino buono" dato da Gesù a Cana, diventa chiaro che questo vino è il simbolo della rivelazione escatologica che Gesù viene a portare» (I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 212; D. SESBOÛÈ, «vino», in X. LÉON- DUFOUR, *Dizionario di teologia biblica*, 1371-1373).

(v. 10: *eōs arti*)<sup>1522</sup>. Con la venuta di Cristo si introduce il tempo delle nozze dello «sposo» con la «sposa», poiché Gesù offre il vino buono dell'incontro matrimoniale, dando inizio alla manifestazione della «gloria» (v. 12: *ephanērōsen tēn doxan autou*).

La narrazione assume una notevole valenza simbolica, che implica collegamenti con aspetti e motivi dell'Antico Testamento. Oltre il segno miracoloso, appare chiaro come la collocazione della rivelazione cristologica in questo preciso punto del Vangelo sia funzionale all'intera economia narrativa e teologica di Giovanni<sup>1523</sup>. Per quanto concerne la nostra ricerca, occorre sottolineare che tra le varie interpretazioni teologiche del "segno di Cana" spicca la funzione simbolica della sponsalità di Cristo e di Maria, alla luce del contesto nuziale narrato. E' soprattutto I. De La Potterie a sviluppare questo tema, concentrando la sua attenzione sui segni messianici presenti nel racconto: la manifestazione messianica di Gesù, il vino messianico che richiama il simbolismo veterotestamentario della gioia e, connesso con la festa, il tema delle nozze messianiche e della Nuova Alleanza<sup>1524</sup>.

In definitiva nel contesto della festa matrimoniale, passano in second'ordine le figure dei due sposi e l'evangelista pone in evidenza la rivelazione messianica di Gesù, sposo dell'umanità e della Madre a lui associata. Infatti attraverso il titolo di "donna" (v. 4: *gynē*) riservato alla madre, unitamente al tema dell'ora (v. 4: «non è ancora giunta la mia ora») si può cogliere nel contesto una doppia funzione di Maria: la funzione nuziale e quella materna<sup>1525</sup>. Alla rilevazione della Vergine sulla mancanza del vino, Gesù non nega il segno ma risponde «rivelando» il progetto di Dio per l'umanità, illuminato dalla sponsalità<sup>1526</sup>. Il vero *nymphios* dell'umanità è il Cristo che obbedirà all'ora del Padre ed unito a lui, la madre (donna) che sarà profondamente associata al «matrimonio» della passione e della croce. Pertanto il «vino buono» ed abbondante delle nozze di Cana supera l'acqua della legge giudaica e diviene anticipazione della trasformazione piena e completa del destino umano operata da Gesù nel mistero pasquale<sup>1527</sup>.

### 3.3 La valenza sponsale di Gv 19,25-37

Collegato alla teologia sponsale di Cana è il racconto della morte di Cristo e la successiva scena del costato trafitto (Gv 19,25-37)<sup>1528</sup>. E' stato bene evidenziato il parallelismo tra Gv 19,25-27 e la scena delle nozze messianiche in Cana di Galilea. Alcune considerazioni possono aiutare a cogliere: il contemporaneo impiego (solo in questo contesto) dei termini donna / ora; il motivo dell'acqua / vino e dell'acqua / sangue; la presenza dei discepoli /del discepolo; la dimensione rivelativa delle scene nelle quali la madre indica di "fare la volontà del figlio" e il figlio compie fino in fondo la volontà del Padre. Inoltre la trafittura del costato (cuore) di Cristo, con il riferimento alla celebrazione pasquale in Es 12 all'agnello immolato, completa la rivelazione evangelica iniziata con l'affermazione programmatica del Battista in Gv 1,36. Secondo De La Potterie, «le due scene formano, per così dire, una grande inclusione nella quale si trova compresa tutta la vita pubblica di

<sup>1522</sup> Nella esplicazione strutturale, il de la Potterie evidenzia la corrispondenza tra «sposo», la figura di Gesù e il «tu» che il maestro di tavola rivolge allo sposo, ignaro di quanto accaduto (cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 190).

<sup>1523</sup> Per l'analisi di Gv 21-12 rimandiamo alla numerosa letteratura sull'argomento (cf. G. FERRARO, «Gesù e la madre alle nozze di Cana. Studio esegetico di Gv 2,1-11», 9-40).

<sup>1524</sup> Cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 210-218; cf. anche F.-M. BRAUN, *La Mère des Fidèles. Essai de théologie jhannique*, Tournai-Paris 1954, 54-66.

<sup>1525</sup> I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 222-224.

<sup>1526</sup> Si tratta di un «cambiamento di livello» che Gesù stesso opera secondo una prospettiva nuova: da quella contestuale del matrimonio tra due giovani a quella teologica della salvezza dell'umanità per opera di Dio (cf. *Ibidem*, 204).

<sup>1527</sup> Cf. G. DE VIRGILIO, "L'impiego di *hydor* nel quarto vangelo. Prospettive di teologia giovannea", *Studia Patavina* 3 (2003) 787-808.

<sup>1528</sup> Cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 229-251 (la maternità spirituale di Maria); IDEM, *Studi di cristologia giovannea*, Genova 1986, 167-190 (Il simbolismo del sangue e dell'acqua del costato trafitto in Gv 19,34).

Gesù...Questo parallelismo è importante. Il senso messianico delle nozze di Cana implica anche che l'episodio parallelo della Croce si situa in una prospettiva messianica»<sup>1529</sup>.

In Gv 19,23-24 si fa accenno alla tunica indivisa di Cristo e alle figure dei soldati. Collegato al motivo dell'unità, si presenta ai piedi della croce la scena della maternità spirituale di Maria, nella quale Gesù congiunge il vincolo dell'unità e raduna i figli dispersi della Chiesa. Le parole profetiche di Caifa in Gv 11,47-52 avevano preannunciato la morte di un solo uomo «per riunire insieme i figli dispersi di Israele» (Gv 11,52: *ina synaganē eis en...*).

La prima unità è costituita dai vv. 25-27 nei quali si fa riferimento alla maternità spirituale della Vergine Maria e all'accoglienza da parte del «discepolo che Gesù amava» definito «suo figlio». L'intenzione simbolica del quarto evangelista è rilevata dalla maggioranza dei commentatori: in Maria si compie la «maternità spirituale» che passa attraverso la profezia di Simeone (cf. Lc 2,35: «una spada trafiggerà la tua anima»). L'espressione del «cuore di Maria» (il termine impiegato è *psichē*), trapassato dalla spada si compie nell'ora del Figlio, sposo dell'umanità alla presenza del «discepolo amato». Il parallelismo tematico con le nozze di Cana è rilevante e ci consente di accostare il motivo sponsale del segno di Cana con la scena della crocifissione: le parole di Gesù costituiscono una rivelazione della figura di Maria «sposa» e del nuovo popolo messianico, la comunità dei credenti rappresentata dal «discepolo amato». Unitamente ai cuori di Gesù e di Maria, è proprio il «discepolo amato» a rivelare il suo «cuore spalancato» nell'accoglienza obbediente delle ultime volontà del Cristo morente. L'evangelista rileva al v. 27b: «da quell'ora [egli] la accolse nella sua intimità» (v. 27: *ap'ekēinēs tēs ōras elaben o mathētēs autēn eis ta idia*). In questa espressione si inserisce tutta la dinamica della fede cristiana e dell'accoglienza del mister pasquale, che culmina nella dimensione del «cuore» (in questo caso si utilizza l'espressione *eis ta idia*: lett. «nelle sue cose intime», oppure «presso di sé»). Si tratta di un chiaro dinamismo sponsale, così come è stato osservato nelle metafore profetiche e soprattutto nella relazione sposo-sposa descritta nel Cantico: la stanza interna del cuore dell'amata che accoglie l'amato come «colui che ormai gli appartiene»<sup>1530</sup>. Possiamo concludere rilevando come questa espressione giovannea pone in evidenza il cuore stesso del discepolo amato, che in questo contesto è rappresentativo del «cuore della Chiesa-discepolo». Il racconto culmina nella morte del Signore (vv. 28-30) e si conclude con la testimonianza del «costato trafitto» (vv. 31-37)<sup>1531</sup>. Da cuore trafitto di Cristo crocifisso sorga «sangue ed acqua»; nel cuore di Maria, trapassato da una spada di dolore si realizza la maternità spirituale della Chiesa; mediante il cuore del discepolo amato si compie il dinamismo cristiano della vita ecclesiale. L'amore di Dio in Cristo Gesù diventa espressione di maternità nel «sì» di Maria e comunione ecclesiale nell'accoglienza da parte del discepolo «amato». Si ha qui l'unione dei «due cuori», mediante la testimonianza e la partecipazione del discepolo amato, che accoglie la Madre nella sua intimità più profonda.

Riprendendo la metafora sponsale, nella scena del Golgota possiamo contemplare il compimento dell'amore di Dio per il suo popolo. Cristo è lo sposo della Chiesa, di cui Maria esercita la maternità spirituale. Allo stesso tempo, la Vergine Maria è presentata come «sposa» nell'atto di amare il proprio Figlio e in lui, la Chiesa sgorgata dal suo costato trafitto. La metafora nuziale trova una chiara conferma teologica in tutti e quattro i vangeli con conseguenze rilevanti nel Nuovo Testamento.

#### 4. Prospettive di teologia biblica

<sup>1529</sup> I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Maria nel mistero dell'alleanza*, 232.

<sup>1530</sup> La dimensione simbolica della ricerca «cordiale» del Cristo morto e risorto nel «giardino del sepolcro» in Gv 20,1-18, con la presenza della Maddalena, rivela connessioni con i motivi del Cantico dei Cantici (cf. I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Studi di cristologia giovannea*, 199-203; R. E. BROWN, *Giovanni*, 249-1261).

<sup>1531</sup> Per l'analisi di Gv 19,31-34, rimandiamo alle considerazioni di I. DE LA POTTERIE, *Studi di cristologia giovannea*, 183-190.

Riassumiamo il nostro percorso biblico in tre principali prospettive biblico-teologiche. a) La reciprocità tra cuore e sponsalità; b) La rivelazione divina privilegia il motivo della sponsalità quale espressione più adatta a rivelare il dinamismo della salvezza; c) La relazione tra spiritualità del cuore di Cristo e di Maria è definita dalla dimensione sponsale con cui nel NT (particolarmente in Gv) si presentano le figure di Gesù e di Maria.

a) Sussiste una chiara relazionalità tra l'idea del «cuore» e la dinamica nuziale della vita umana. Fin dalle prime immagini rielaborate soprattutto nell'ambito del simbolismo profetico, la relazione tra Dio e il suo popolo passa attraverso l'innamoramento e la fedeltà all'alleanza messianica. Dire cuore significa andare al centro della vita e dell'esperienza umana: ciascun uomo è chiamato a conoscere il suo cuore e ad orientarlo verso Dio. In questa esperienza affettiva l'apertura del cuore all'alleanza si trasforma in esperienza sponsale.

b) In particolare nella teologia del Nuovo Testamento ripresa dagli evangelisti si sottolinea la strettissima relazione tra «cuore» e dimensione matrimoniale. Non è più Jahwe a considerarsi «sposo del suo popolo», ma è il suo Messia, il Figlio unigenito ad automanifestarsi «sposo» che ama la Chiesa sua «sposa senza ruga, né macchia, santa e immacolata» (cf. Ef 5,26). L'unione dei cuori mediante il motivo dell'amore sponsale appare un tema ancora poco sviluppato, considerando la portata teologica con la quale si descrive la dinamica della salvezza in Cristo.

c) Cuore trafitto di Cristo, cuore trapassato di Maria: si tratta di una immagine di straordinaria attualità per esprimere l'idea teologica dell'amore di Dio per l'umanità e conseguentemente la risposta che i credenti sono chiamati a fare nei riguardi di Dio. Soprattutto nel Quarto Vangelo si pone in evidenza la relazione tra l'opera rivelatrice di Gesù e il ruolo di Maria, sua madre.

## 5. Conclusione

La nostra analisi ha cercato di cogliere in sintesi, un aspetto molto interessante della teologia della sponsalità<sup>1532</sup>, che nel nostro tempo sta conoscendo notevoli sviluppi ed applicazioni spirituali e pastorali anche in Italia<sup>1533</sup>. La centralità della rivelazione neotestamentaria è costituita dalla rilevanza del cuore di Cristo-*nymphios*, rivelatore dell'amore del Padre e conseguentemente del cuore di Maria, «donna del *gamos*», espressione più alta e nobile della tenerezza sponsale e materna, capolavoro della grazia di Dio.

Sulla scorta di queste considerazioni possiamo cogliere l'essenza del mistero cristiano, la sua vocazione fontale secondo una prospettiva sponsale, che pone al centro dell'intera esperienza dei credenti il principio dell'amore divino, di cui la realtà sponsale è la espressione più viva e penetrante. Infine la scena del Golgota rivela a noi la grandezza del cuore del «discepolo», l'amato del Signore, nel quale è tutta la comunità messianica della «nuova alleanza». In questa prospettiva «cuore» dice «comunione di sentimenti e di vita». Quella vita vera a cui ciascun cristiano è chiamata a partecipare, nella gioia delle nuove nozze, che Paolo ha segnalato nelle sue lettere<sup>1534</sup> e che la Chiesa perseguitata dell'Apocalisse ha celebrato nel silenzioso scorrere del tempo dell'attesa (Ap 19,7; 21,9; 22,17)<sup>1535</sup>.

<sup>1532</sup> Cf. G. MAZZANTI, *Persone nuziali. Communio nuptialis. Saggio teologico di antropologia*, 22-75; IDEM., *Teologia sponsale e sacramento delle nozze. Simbolo e simbolismo nuziale*, 112-166.

<sup>1533</sup> Si pensi ai risvolti notevoli che la riflessione teologica sulla sponsalità di Cristo e di Maria hanno nella pastorale familiare: cf. R. BONETTI (ed.), *Cristo sposo della Chiesa sposa. Sorgente e modello della spiritualità coniugale e familiare*, Roma 1999; IDEM, *Eucaristia e matrimonio unico mistero nuziale*, Roma 2000 (cf. anche P.L. GUSMITTA, *Amarsi sino alla fine. Eucaristia e Matrimonio: unico mistero nuziale*, Siena 2001).

<sup>1534</sup> Cf. G. BARBAGLIO, «L'allegoria sponsale in 2Cor 11,2», *PSV* 1 (1986) 135-151.

<sup>1535</sup> Cf. U. VANNI, «Lo spirito e la sposa», *PSV* 1 (1986, 191-206.