

The spirituality of the Kingdom of God and the figure of Mary

We continue to publish reflections on the theme of our next General Chapter: “The Kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). Living and proclaiming the hope of the Gospel”. Here is the contribution of Fr. Vianney KIM Myoung-Ho, a Korean religious living in France.

Is there a link between the spirituality of the Kingdom of God and the figure of the Virgin Mary? If we want to uncover the connection between the royalty of God and the Mother of God, we need to clarify what characterizes the Kingdom of God. It is through a simple biblical approach that we will try to discover it. Then we will see how the Virgin Mary realized, by her life of faith, “the virtues of the Kingdom” so that this is just not a far-flung reality, a reality of the afterlife. We will try to grasp its virtues through Scripture, without exhausting its source.

The paradoxical aspect of God’s kingship

The omnipotence of God, creator and origin of all things, has a profound biblical and theological anchor in the Christian faith--- hence the confession of the sovereignty and kingship of God over all the universe. In the Nicene-Constantinople creed, the Church solemnly proclaims the omnipresence of God the Father over all things visible and invisible: « *Patrem omnipotentem, factorem caeli et terrae, visibillum omnium et invisibillum.* »

At the same time, if we wish to uncover the depth of this profession of faith of the Church, we must go further. Let us remember the words of the gospel of John (1,18): “No

one has ever seen God; the Only-Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made Him known.” Therefore, to access the mystery of the Kingdom of God we must think of Jesus of Nazareth.

Let us reflect on the moment when Pilate interrogates Jesus, in the gospel of John. Pilate addresses Jesus and asks: “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus responds: “My kingdom is not of this world. (. . .) You say that I am a king. I was born and came into this world to testify to the truth.” (Jn 18, 37-38) In this affirmation, one must grasp what is essential in the characterization of the kingship of Jesus of Nazareth. As Jesus said, the kingdom of this world is not like the kingdom of God, he affirmed that his kingdom was not of this world. We must understand that the kingship of God is very paradoxical in our eyes. Jesus established his royalty by a means that is beyond the common sense of men.

In the history of man, to show the power of royalty, one must show sufficient force over others, and one must crush others to show that we are superior to others. The royalty of Jesus does not work that way. His royalty mobilizes a movement the most profound in our hearts and in our spirits.

The ultimate Word of Jesus on the Cross as a foundation

The royalty of Jesus appeared as a paradoxical reality that surpasses human nature and challenges our



most profound liberty. In the Christian faith, the supreme moment of the work of the redemption of Christ is the cross. That is why the foretaste of his Kingdom can only be manifested in and through the cross of Christ. It is in this sense that the power of his kingship is manifested in the weakness of the cross.

If, with the eyes of faith, we accept to see the raising of the cross as the ultimate moment of Christ's Reign, we must consider the worth of his words spoken on the cross: "Jesus therefore, seeing his mother, and standing by her, the disciple whom he loved, said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'This is your mother.'" From that hour the disciple welcomed her into his home." (Jn 19, 26-27) Jesus himself entrusts Mary to us as mother so that, as disciples of the Lord, we may welcome her into our homes. Like this motto of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort: "Ad Jesum per Mariam", this path was recommended by many saints and theologians. This spirituality is not something ancient and obsolete. In this sense, we can understand this statement of the theologians: "The veneration of Mary is the most certain and quickest means to get closer to Christ."¹ There is no doubt that the Mother of God helps us to get to Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior and Mediator.

Following the interpretations of the Fathers, we know that "the disciple well-loved" represents all the disciples of Christ, and in some way, represents all of humanity. The universe is invited to accept the final words of Jesus "Behold your mother!" From now on, we must see how

Mary's life, in a more systematic way, as a witness to the reign of Jesus Christ. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we wish to share these simple meditations in contemplating the figure of Mary. We see the figure of the Virgin Mary as a figure of charity, of humility, and of communion.

The figure of the Virgin Mary as witness to the coming of the Kingdom

The Virgin Mary is a figure of true love. Her whole life can be summed up in this way: love for God and love for the future. Throughout her life, she contemplated and welcomed the Word of God that had taken on life. She followed the Redeemer until the end to the foot of the cross. With charity, she went through the trials of humanity in this life: she spoke her "yes" in the mystery of the Incarnation, she praised the wonders that God gave her in life; she kept all the events in her heart and meditated on them (cf. Lc 2,19; 2, 51). In the story of the wedding feast of Cana, Mary shows her intercessory role: she notices the lack of wine and, by her action, directly intervenes in the fulfillment of a sign (cf. Jn 2,3)² Mary thus commits herself to this New Covenant that is being made with the guests at the wedding: "Do all that he tells you." (Jn 2, 5). She recognized the night of faith; she certainly did not understand everything behind the mysteries which were beyond her. She walked by groping, by hesitating, for love of God.

The Virgin Mary is a *humble servant of the Lord*. Her humility can always inspire us in our lives. In relationships and

dialogue, we should possess the virtues of Mary. If the mystery of the Incarnation is beyond our human intelligence, it is a mystery of our Christian faith that cannot be invented by human intelligence or by calculation. We acknowledge the God who made himself a child: he came not only for the just or those well off, but for the sick and the sinners. The humility of Mary allowed God's plan to be fully realized: "Let it be done unto me according to your word." (Lc 1, 38). We can adopt Mary's attitude that accepted the will of God, holding close to her heart the Word of God and contemplating the face of her son. The magisterium, the Church Fathers and the theologians, are not finished delving into the mystery of God and man. We will never be finished uncovering its depth. That is why we need to remain humble like Mary and attentive to others and to the poor.

Mary is the *mother of communion* in the plan of humanity, since she welcomed the Word of God in faith as the person representing the whole of humanity. The Church Fathers often compare Eve, as mother of the living, and Mary as the mother of the New Covenant. "The knot caused by Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; what the virgin Eve had tied by her disbelief, the Virgin Mary untied with her faith."³ The knot caused by Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience; she is part of our race, of our humanity; she encourages us on the right path. As Karl Rahner says simply: "Mary is on our side. We revere her, we praise her, we love and venerate her magnificent dignity. We need to return to her as mediator toward Jesus Christ, as she



is still one of us.”⁴

In our many Marian shrines (such as Lourdes), we see that pilgrimages are not solely centered on the figure of Mary : these shrines are authentically Christocentric. The men and women who come to the Marian shrines, as they experience the pilgrimage, discover the depth of the mystery of Jesus Christ, embedded in the mystery of the Trinity. These are places of the utmost evangelization. They are also place of dialogue with unbelievers, those of other faiths, and those with other convictions. For this reason, the Virgin Mary is not a source of separation or division but rather a source of communion.

Epilogue

In beginning this text, I asked the question: is there a particular relationship between the Kingdom of God and the person of the Virgin Mary? It is true that the doctrine of the omnipotence of God is not easy to understand in a natural way. In fact, in order to access the sovereignty and kingship of God, one would have to observe the very figure of Jesus of Nazareth in connection with the presence of the Virgin Mary.

In his dialogue with Pilate, Jesus shows the paradoxical as-

pect of his reign: « *My kingdom is not of this world.*” *We should not stop with this affirmation. The gift of the Holy Spirit that rests in our hearts calls us to an intimate freedom.* « The love of God has been expanded in our hearts by the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Rm 5, 5) In our inmost hearts, we are invited to contemplate the most crucial moment of human history: the sovereignty and the royalty of the cross. The visible link up until the moment of the redemption is the work of the cross, when Jesus gave himself up totally to the will of the Sovereign God. It is by the cross and on the cross that the kingdom of God expands.⁵ It is because of the words of Jesus on the Cross to John and his mother have a degree of such importance compared to other passages of the Bible. They allow us to contemplate and re-read the figure of Mary as a figure of charity, humility and communion.

Throughout her life, Mary shows us what the style of the workers of the Reign of God should be. She thus becomes a witness to the coming of the Reign of Christ which was established, once and for all, by “the wood of the cross”.⁶

Fr. Vianney KIM Myoung-Ho
(Cachan, France)

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger, *Marie, première Église*, Médiaspaul, 1998, p. 121.

² John-Paul II developed the role of the mediation of Mary in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater*. Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger continue with the same premise in *Marie, première Église*. It is clear that Jesus Christ is the Single Mediator (cf. 1 Tm 2,5). At the same time, John Paul II emphasizes the originality of this mediation of Jesus, which is not exclusive but inclusive, that is, it makes possible forms of participation. The unique originality of Christ does not exclude solidarity, the participation and communion of men and women of God. The mediation of Mary lies in her participation to Christ’s mediating function (cf. *Redemptoris Mater* 38). This mediation participates and depends on the unique mediation of Christ. Mary continues to intercede for us to Jesus, her only Son.

³ Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*. quoted in *Lumen Gentium*, 56.

⁴ Karl Rahner, *Marie mère du Seigneur*, Éd. de l’Orante, 1960, p. 52.

⁵ Hans Urs von Balthasar developed this idea in his trilogy, especially in *La Gloire et la Croix III, Les Aspects esthétiques de la Révélation* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1990), pp. 214-215.

⁶ The idea of the extension of God’s reign through «the wood of the cross» was developed by St. Augustine in the *Enarrationes in psalmos*, Discourses on Psalm 95.