



FRUIT OF HER WOMB

Our whole devotion to our Blessed Mother is actually based on this one physical fact: That at one time Mary and Jesus were one, as closely united as a candle and its flame. Then when He was finally born, and She carried Him in Her loving arms, did She not still continue to be His Mother? Not just the Mother of His bearing, but the Mother of His rearing, the Mother who fed and clothed and cared for this Divine Child when He could not care for Himself. Is there any reason to believe that Mary was not the traditional Mother, the Mother of nights without sleep, work without end, dedication and sacrifice without thought of self?

Most of us, if we are honest, admit to a kind of built-in-selfishness. We are willing to serve, but we expect to be paid. We do things but we expect something in return. For that matter, even the poor old Apostles, before Pentecost, even they in the beginning, followed Our Lord with eyes that were peeled for personal advantage. There is one time when St. Peter kind of lays it on the line with Our Lord: "Behold we have now left all things and followed Thee...*quid ergo erit nobis?*" "So what's in it for us?"

You will never read anything remotely like that in the Scriptures about Our Lady. Because She was not just His disciple, but His mother. The love of a good mother is pure gold. Intellectually, her child may be a mental blank; physically a hideous deformity; morally a black sheep; but the less logical reason there is for a mother to loves, the more her arms go out. The less there is to hold, the more she wants to hold it!

An ordinary mother's life is a rosary of many little troubles, with now and then the larger bead of some king-sized setback, and always somewhere a stand-out cross. That is why on the feast of the Mother of God on January 1, the Church bids all mothers take heart and remember the Mother of God herself trudged through the road before Him. Why talk about the Motherhood of Mary now when the feast is after Christmas? To ask Our Blessed Mother to prepare us now for the birth of Her Son in our hearts on this Christmas morning! To Her the Stations of the Cross were not ornamental church fixtures or pious sentiments, they were part of Her life. No understanding mother will ever think that Mary had it easy—not if She remembers the Baby born on the road; the Child hurriedly rushed off for dear life into Egypt; the Boy so heartbreakingly lost in the bid city of Jerusalem; the Man misunderstood, mocked, and finally juridically murdered before His Mother's agonizing gaze!

But Mary was His Mother all this time: from the time of the little crib to the time of the wood of the cross; from the time the incredible Star hung like a lamp over the hills of Bethlehem till the golden sun of Calvary went suddenly dark as though it did not want to see what was happening on the skull-shaped hill of Calvary. It was quite a long time in between, one Man's lifetime, and Mary was His Mother all this time.

There was a special name for Her, too. Since Her motherhood was so unique, so is Her title, in all the languages of the world. Go to any art museum, in any country, even in poor countries. Even there you will see, if only as a work of art, one picture repeated over and over. Out of a picture frame looks a Mother, serene and saintly, a Baby cradled in Her arms, His tiny head resting securely against Her heart. Ask who She is, and anyone will tell you that this is the Madonna! The word itself is like a lovely string of pearls, every letter some shining virtue of our ideal in womanhood, sweet and gentle and holy and pure! Such was Mary, the Madonna of His blessed birth amid Christmas joys, but also—and never, never forget it—the Mother of Sorrow, of anguish and agony at Calvary!

But had She not been this, how could She ever be the comfort and the courage for other Mothers? They could never aspire to be, like her, the Mother of God and kneel by a miraculous crib. But they could and often would stand by a torturing cross. Sometimes I think that as pens are made to write, and watches to keep time, mothers are made to suffer. The walls of their lives are hung with the stations of the cross. Their hearts are like a burnt out match which has spent itself to light the way for her children and made up of many sorrows sent up in adoration and resignation to God. Only God knows how many times Our Blessed Mother has interceded for us in the past 2,000 years of Church history. But this we do know: that neither on earth nor in Heaven is there anyone who has more influence with Jesus Christ than His own dear sweet Mother. Closest to the crib at Bethlehem, closest to the cross at Calvary, is She not also closest to the throne in Heaven? No wonder we can pray with confidence, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, *for you are our mother, too!*" May She deepen our love for her Divine Son this Christmas season so we can give Him our hearts this Christmas!