

## FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL

### ON MARY (Part 5)\*

#### EVANGELIZATION, FAMILY AND MARY

September 8, 2009

Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Our life and mission is all about evangelization and family renewal. In this, our Mother Mary plays a very important part.

Our salvation was won for us by Jesus. But people experience this salvation through the work of men (Rom 10:13-15). This is the work of evangelization. In this work of salvation, the family is crucial. As Pope John Paul II has said, “The future of humanity passes by way of the family.”

Thus, according to the plan of God, salvation is linked with the family. And, as we shall see, both salvation and family are linked with Mary.

#### *Salvation, family and Mary*

First, salvation is the work of a Savior. The Savior is Jesus. But how did Jesus come into the world, to be able to do his work? He was born of Mary! The Savior of the world spent nine months in the womb of Mary! If it were up to us, once God had decided on saving the world, it should have been done with great urgency, as people were dying in their sins. But God chose to have His Son in the womb of Mary. That says something very important about motherhood and family, and the place of Mary in salvation history.

Second, salvation is the work of the Trinity. The Father is the Creator, and according to His eternal plan, He wanted His creatures to be with Him eternally in paradise. But paradise was lost. However, God’s plan does not change. He created out of love, He desires us to still experience that love, and so He sends His own Son out of love.

His Son Jesus then is the Redeemer. He is the one who wins for us our salvation on the cross.

Now the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier. He enables us to be God’s instruments of bringing salvation to the whole world. He is the one who grants us grace to be holy, so that we can be effective witnesses. He is the one who builds us up as Church, the very body of Christ on earth. He is the one who sends, guides, anoints and empowers us for mission.

Now the Trinity is a family. There is the Father and there is the Son. In turn, the Holy Spirit is the love that binds Father and Son together. Without love, we would just be blood relatives living in a common structure, but we would not have a family and a home. Thus the Trinity is a family, with the essential binding characteristic of love. The Trinity in fact is our model for Christian family living.

But for us humans, when we consider the family, we need another person, and that is the mother. That role belongs to Mary. She is the mother of Jesus. She is also the daughter of the Father and the spouse of the Spirit. Mary in relation to the Trinity is unique in that she is spouse, mother and child all at the same time. In effect, she reflects and manifests what is family. Then the Trinity plus Mary make up the divine family.

Third, life in the family, according to God's plan, is the necessary preparation for evangelization.

We do not read much about Jesus in the Bible before his public appearance. We have a record of his birth and then when he was twelve years old and lost in the temple. From then, Jesus spent his years in quiet obscurity together with his family, before starting out on his public ministry.

As he grew older, he lived an ordinary family life (if anything can be considered as ordinary for the Lord). He did his chores. He learned the trade of a carpenter. He learned the scriptures from his parents. He grew in godly virtues. He had human relationships. He learned about proper priorities. Jesus was formed by God through Joseph and Mary, and later, when Joseph had passed away, the task remained with Mary.

Again, since God had already decided and had actually already sent His Son to save us, we would have expected that Jesus would be about his task right away, or at least when he attained manhood. People continued to die in their sins, awaiting their salvation. But no, Jesus did not start his public ministry until he was 30 years old. Why? Again, God was stressing the importance of the family, and the essential role of the family in preparation for public ministry.

The family is where we are formed. The family is where parents pass on the faith to their children. The family is the first place where we meet Jesus. It is the school where we learn Christian virtues, and grow in them. It is the place where we become secure in God's love, manifested in the love of our parents, and become ready to bring that love to the world. It is where we grapple with the challenges of our changing circumstances in life, and learn how to cope in the Lord within an environment of love. It is the place where we learn unilateral, unconditional, self-sacrificial love.

Public ministry will greatly challenge us. It is our life in the family and our Christian home that will prepare us.

Fourth, the work of salvation necessarily involves us in spiritual warfare. The whole world is under the dominion of the evil one, and Jesus has defeated this enemy through the cross. When we evangelize, people can experience this salvation. Thus we are assaulting the dominion of the enemy. Thus those who evangelize are in the thick of the spiritual warfare that rages in the heavens and on earth.

Now this spiritual warfare is a family affair. It involves God. It involves Mary.

The Bible speaks about this spiritual warfare from the beginning and at the end. In the beginning, the devil assaulted God's work by tempting Adam and Eve, causing the loss of paradise. In the end, we look at the final battle between good and evil, and await the final triumphant return of our Lord Jesus. Indeed, the whole Bible is about salvation history. In both beginning and end, Mary is there.

In the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis, we read about how the original sin came about. Our first parents sinned. When our first parents fell, God put enmity between

the serpent and the woman (Gen 3:15). In that scene the only woman was Eve. But we know that God was prophetically speaking about Mary, the new Eve. There would be enmity between her offspring and the devil's. Jesus would strike a mortal blow to the head of the serpent.

Then in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, we again see mother and Son and the devil. The woman clothed with the sun is Mary, and she gives birth to Jesus. The devil (now a dragon instead of a serpent) tries to devour the child but fails. War breaks out in heaven. The dragon pursues mother and child, and failing to destroy them, wages "war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus." (Rev 12:17). Those are us Christians. Those are the evangelizers.

So spiritual warfare is a basic consequence of the work of evangelization, which is the work of salvation. In this, our mother Mary, her Son Jesus, and all of us who are children of Mary, are involved.

Fifth, we are children of God, but we know that our relationship with God as Father was cut due to original sin. Our relationship needed to be restored, which Jesus did. Before Jesus won salvation on the cross, he considered those who followed him as his disciples, and even as his friends. Jesus did talk about the Father, even teaching them to address God as Father, but they were not quite there yet in their restored relationship.

But on the cross, Jesus won for us our salvation, restoring us in our relationship with the Father. And having accomplished his work, having won for us our salvation, one of the final things Jesus did before he died was to entrust Mary and John to one another (Jn 19:26-27). He told Mary that John was her son, and he told John that Mary was his mother. And John took Mary into his home. John represents us. On the cross, Jesus restored our relationship to God as Father, and in doing so, he gave us our mother, Mary.

We have become God's children, through the cross, through Mary.

### ***Our response***

We are saved. In turn, we become God's instruments for the salvation of others. How do we respond to God's grace and God's call?

First, we must become evangelizers. CFC-FFL is an evangelistic and missionary community. That is who we are. That is our basic calling. That is our reason for being. We evangelize in the normal day-to-day circumstances of our lives. Thus every member can and ought to be an evangelizer.

We must evangelize with a passion. This is our priority. This is all about souls. This is all about the very work of God, for which His very own Son gave his very own life. This is about not letting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross be in vain for people who remain in darkness. This is about recognizing the great privilege given us by God to be instruments of His very work.

Our attitude and conviction must be that of Paul's. "For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16).

Second, we must look to the family. CFC-FFL does a work of family renewal. Our basic mission is to renew the family and to defend life. Our evangelization is grounded on the family.

So we strengthen our own families, then we evangelize other families. We form a network of families that support each other. CFC-FFL is a family of families.

Then we are set to evangelize the world, as Jesus has commissioned his disciples.

Third, we must be devoted to Mary. She is our model, our intercessor, our mediatrix. She is our mother. She bore the Savior and took care of him. She taught and modeled a life of grace to Jesus. She now sits as Queen of heaven and earth.

Like Mary, we must trust and not be afraid. Jesus is our savior and he is our strength and our courage (Is 12:2). Mary was pregnant out of wedlock, and such would have merited stoning to death. She was called to become the mother of God. She was greatly troubled. But she had faith and she believed and trusted.

We will always have problems and challenges in life. Especially as we respond to the call to proclaim Christ. We will be afflicted by a world that is in darkness that resists the gospel message. We will be attacked by the devil who seeks to preserve his dominion. In all these, like Mary, we must not be afraid, and simply trust in Jesus.

Like Mary, we must be obedient to God. Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (Lk 1:38). And later in Cana, she gave her only instruction, “Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn 2:5). Jesus then performed his first miracle, even though his time had not yet come. Mary obeyed, and Mary tells us to obey. If we obey God, then God will do great things in and through us, for that is in accordance with His plan and will.

Like Mary, we must be ready to suffer. Simeon had prophesied, “and a sword will pierce through your own soul also” (Lk 2:35a). And indeed how Mary suffered! She saw Jesus rejected by the people he came to save, even his own relatives who thought he was crazy. And Mary endured her beloved Son’s passion and tortuous death on a cross.

In our work of evangelization, we will encounter many trials and crosses. That is par for the course. The enemy is powerful. The darkness of the world is intense. Even God allows affliction to try us, to purify us, to draw us ever closer to Himself. Whenever trials and crosses come, as they inevitably will come, never back off, never give up. Rather, grow in endurance and perseverance. Rejoice in affliction. Press on to the prize.

Like Mary, we must always rejoice. We rejoice at the coming of our Savior. Just like Mary’s cousin Elizabeth and John the Baptist who was still in her womb. John even leaped in her womb! Our greatest joy is to have Jesus as our Savior. We rejoice also for the privilege of suffering for and with Christ. This is the way of discipleship, to take up our cross. We rejoice in the work given to us, and in the privilege of being God’s instruments of salvation.

### ***Evangelization, family and Mary in the life of CFC-FFL***

Evangelization, family and Mary are all intertwined.

We see this also in the life of CFC-FFL. It has taken crises and stages for us to see the fullness of God’s call to us.

When God raised CFC in 1981, God intended for us to be an evangelistic community. But this was not fully appreciated by our parent community, the *Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon* (LNP). Thus there was a crisis, and there was a split between LNP and CFC in 1993. With the split, CFC could now pursue its very calling, the very reason why God raised us up.

In 1993, we established our Family Ministries. Prior to this there was only the evangelization of couples. Now there was something for every member of the family. No one would be excluded. We came to a fuller realization of the importance of family as subject and object of evangelization.

Then, due to veering away, there was another crisis in 2007, and another split. CFC-FFL, pursuing CFC's authentic charism, emerged. It was then that we consecrated ourselves to Mama Mary.

1981 evangelization, 1993 family, 2007 Mary. At each stage we were brought deeper into our life of faith, and into a greater appreciation of the fullness of our call. Now we see more clearly. Now we pray that all the necessary elements are in place. Now, after more purification, God can finally do what He intended all along.

Our call is to be families in the Holy Spirit that will be His instruments for renewing the face of the earth. This is our work of evangelization, looking to the family, in a journey with Mary.

Happy birthday, dear Mama Mary.

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Note: For easier reference, I have put previous papers on Mary into this new category of "On Mary" as follows:

- Part 1 – On the First Anniversary of our Consecration to Mary
- Part 2 – On Mary, Mission and Martyrdom
- Part 3 – Mary Immaculate
- Part 4 – On the Second Anniversary of our Consecration to Mary