



Allocutio



Presentata Curia 25th February 2016

Allocutio: Prayer.

In the early Church, so I am told, the period for lent was just one week. The Church followed a concentrated period of intense entry into reflecting on the great paschal mystery. It certainly reminds us of the central focus of Lent: the humble submission of Jesus to death on the Cross and his glorious vindication in the Resurrection.

Lent too can be a time for making this journey with Our Lady. When did her Lent start? Was it from the moment she conceived as murmurs went around about her being pregnant before she married. But her joyous entry to the House of Elisabeth suggests not yet.

So we come to Simeon. “And a sword will pierce your own heart too!” This seems the first reference to the Cross she must endure. The attack of Herod on local children which she barely escaped warned her that although foreigners might have respected her son, others close to home did not. Perhaps it was such a challenge that caused her and Joseph to agree that the backwoods of Nazareth was as good a place as any to stay even if the general view of many, expressed by Nicodemus was “Can anything good come out of that place!”

Mary, who according to many sources grew up near Jerusalem and served in the Temple as a young girl and who had dedicated her life to God’s service, became the humble wife of Nazareth. But she used go back there for Passover each year and that is where her next encounter with Calvary occurred, losing her Son for three days and three Nights, all a prelude of her losing him in death. Perhaps her losing of him for those three days and refinding him was her Transfigurative event. Because it prepared her soul deep down for that tragedy.

It is not easy to interpret Jesus words at Cana, “Woman, what is that to me, My hour has not yet come!” Is he insulting her? Or is he telling her that that moment of piercing of her heart is still some time off and works the miracle to assure her that the waters of death will be transformed into joy?

We also have those moments when she came looking for him, anxious, during the period of his ministry. Your mother is outside; she was concerned that he was out of his mind. Mothers do worry about their children. Mary’s nature was as a good mother, something which was most confirmed when on the Cross he gave her as mother to us all.

But I have often wondered where Mary was on Holy Week? We know she appeared beside him at the foot of the Cross. The Stations of the Cross suggest she met him when he was carrying his Cross. Many portrayals of events in art suggest she already had contact with John the Apostle and was kept abreast of things by him.



Allocutio



But these are all insignificant with the sword that finally went through her heart. We know that the first two chapters of St. Luke are highly dependent on her account so when Simeon uses the words, “And a sword will pierce your own heart too”, it may well be because what she really experienced brought back to her what she had been told, something she never forgot because she used ponder all the events that happened in her life.

Our minds can only make a stab at trying to grasp what she went through in her real Stabat Mater. But I suggest a journey of meditation with her through the passion will bring us to see our sins in a new way and also to understand the love that God has for us. She knew the wrong of it, she saw and experienced his love from the Cross and like him she didn't return evil for evil. Others threw jeers at Jesus. What would many a mother have done if not retaliate with their tongues. If Jesus hung in dignity on the Cross she joined him in a noble and dignified response to it all.

She knew this was that Lamb of God who had come to take away the sins of the world. She too would accept the barbs and the knives of lies that were thrown at her son and at her. As John Paul II pointed out in his great letter on her, it was her faith that shone out as she believed in the face of what seemed the very annihilation of what she had been told at the Annunciation.

I just suggest as a good Lenten exercise that we step into Mary's shoes or sandals and journey with her on the way of the Cross. It might give a useful perspective on the Cross to you.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill