



Allocutio



Presentata Curia 24th October 2013

Allocutio: Frank Duff's understanding of Our Lady's role.

I cannot at this time do justice to Frank. However little snippets will help to show how he took De Montfort and interpreted him.

He asks why did God make himself dependent on Mary? He answers that God planned that we humans would co-operate in the plan of redemption. "It was not his plan to treat man as you would a baby into whose mouth nourishment is placed . . . God's plan was to treat man as responsible; to call on him to pay as much as possible of his own ransom; to invite him to play the fullest part in the total affair of salvation." This makes sense of why God first asked Our Lady's permission. God is not going to impose his way. You knock on someone's door first; you don't barge in. You hope they will invite you in. And God has such respect for us, even though we have sinned, that he waits for us welcome him, to accept his invitation.

Frank does say that he prepared Mary to be the one who on all our behalf would welcome him in. In fact she is so beautiful in his eyes that he defers to her in everything. It is with her we must work, it is only with her that we will do the best in the work of salvation.

He is keen on seeing her as the new Eve. For if through one man came sin and death, through another, Christ, are all made alive. But equally since a woman played the role of assistant in the fall, so must a woman be central to the redemption. The New Eve.

Like de Montfort Frank Duff is at pains to say that Catholics do not equate Mary with Our Lord. She is a mere creature. Insofar as she has anything it is because God gives them to her just as he gives us life and powers and gifts and graces. She administers the high office he gave her but no more. It is folly to drop her however simply because she is less than Christ and just a creature.

In an article on Mary, Mother of God he says, "For the average idea of Mary's place is stark in its poverty. It is that Mary bore a son who is God and that ever since he likes to listen to her petitions - just as any great man would like to please his mother! Of course that is true but it is part of the truth. . . . For Mary is pivotal - now as she was from the first in the divine plan of redemption. She was part of the foretelling of the Messiah, and in due course she was part of his earthly mission; as she is now in his heavenly reigning. She is utterly less than he, but she has been assumed into his destiny and in the special form that she has always to give him, to initiate his steps, to indicate to him what is needful. That is the providential programme - we should accommodate ourselves to it." Somewhere else he suggest that she is like the heart in the Mystical Body of Christ. Christ is the head, but she is the heart, distribution the life-line of blood throughout the Body of the Church.

Into this he throws other ideas. He sees her firstly as a mother, mother of Jesus but that Mother Jesus gave to us all so that she is the Mother of our spiritual lives. She is the woman par excellence also because unlike other women she had no sin: her womanhood is perfect. In painting a picture of her he says that she probably is a person who would not even be smiling. "The expression would go deeper than that. I do not mean that she would never smile. . . . But the abiding note would be that interest, love, motherhood, and - hidden in all those things - strength. For she was a tremendous character, the strongest after her Son that ever lived. And in this connection it is to be remembered that it was from her that he got his human character and disposition. God did not do violence to that part of human generation." Her mind was supremely great but he adds, "She did not possess knowledge useless to her".



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That last point is worth thinking about. How much useless knowledge does our education system give us today? How much useless information is thrown out by the mass media, social media and the www? When I went to school in the 1950s we were told that religion was the most important subject since it was to help us get to heaven. And as Our Lord said, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?” That does not mean that knowledge about your profession is wrong, that learning about science and nature is wrong because in fact that road can show us many things about God and also about the limitation of human knowledge. But everything should be screened in the light of our ultimate goal: union with God.

He takes up de Montfort’s notion of slavery to Our Lady. It is the other name for devotion. This true devotion, like Jesus, involves being dependent on her. We hand everything in our lives over to her as a child would confide in its mother. We must do this without any reservation. We place our whole life and energies at her service so that serving her we may all the more serve the cause of her Son.

Religion is not just about what we can get from God but about what we can give. We owe her so much for bringing Jesus to us. We owe her for the graces she has helped win for us. In normal life we learn late how much we owe parents and we try to make up. Likewise we have to make some effort for Mary.

What would she like? That we be like her son, that we have in us his love. But we must try and portray Jesus and not falsify him. Our love must bear his love. And that includes loving his mother. Frank says, “We must live in a state of union with her, seeing everything and doing everything along with her”, so that she is doing those actions through us. Through her Jesus will give us the grace for this.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill