



Mount Saviour Chronicle

THE BENEDICTINE MONASTERY OF MOUNT SAVIOUR
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Dear Friends of Mount Saviour,

With the Christmas Chronicle, our greeting for the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord is this picture of Our Lady, Queen of Peace. As you well know, this figure standing in our crypt is to us an unending source of consolation and inspiration. We hope the picture will help you share in our joy during this Christmas season when we all return to that hidden sanctuary, the womb of the Virgin. There humanity was wedded to the Son of God as He came forth like a bridegroom coming from his bridal chamber, rejoicing as a giant to run His course.

The message of the Angel found Mary in the seclusion of her little "cell" in Nazareth, far removed from the clamorings of the world; a virgin who did not know man. She was there "all by herself", but she represented the whole of mankind, and what she did still affects everyone of us. A monastery like ours strives to be like Mary, the hidden sanctuary, where, in the silence of listening and pondering hearts, the Word of God is wedded again to human nature. Like her, we seclude ourselves; yet we do not stand alone, but represent all those who in a special way are attached to our monastery; the parents who have given their children, the Oblates of Mount Saviour, the Friends of Mount Saviour, the St. Scholastica League, and all our benefactors who so generously help us overcome our material difficulties. We wish them to realize, especially during this Christmas season, that we stand for them, interceding for them, sharing with them our joys and blessings. The Word that is born in our hearts is born for them as well. It is for this reason that we devote this issue of the Chronicle to the ways in which the various groups, which have formed around Mount Saviour, take their part in our monastic life.



Today there is a growing tendency to consider monasteries not occupied in any special external task as a "luxury", as wasted time and energy, not only as having no importance for the lay people, but even as an obstacle to the development of the new kind of spirituality for which a new world situation asks. The Catholic layman of our days is forced to live in a completely secularized environment, dominated by a militant atheism concentrating all its energies on coping with the ills of mankind solely on the natural plane. One concludes this new kind of spirituality cannot be inspired by monasticism, because the monastic ideal advocates retirement from the world.

An episode in Holy Scripture may provide an answer to the supposition. I mean the well-known story of Israel's first battle against an enemy which is told in Exodus 17, 8-13: "Amalec came and fought against Israel in Raphidim. And Moses said to Josue: 'Choose out men: and go out and fight against Amalec: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill having the rod of God in my hand.' Josue did as Moses had spoken, and he fought against Amalec; but Moses, and Aaron, and Hur went up upon the top of the hill. And when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel overcame: but if he let them down a little, Amalec overcame. And Moses' hands were heavy: so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it: and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands on both sides. And it came to pass that his hands were not weary until sunset." Evidently this episode has much bearing on our situation today, and we should learn the lesson it teaches us. Josue and his group, in whom we may see the Christian laity of our days, do not ask Moses and his companions to stop praying and join forces with them, nor do they stop fighting because they

Moses praying. They use all the natural means at their disposal to combat the enemy, trusting in the prayer of Moses to represent them before God in the supernatural order of grace, signified by Moses' rod and his outstretched arms, both pointing to the Cross of Christ. The two tasks of fighting and praying are clearly distinguished. Why? Could we not say, in an emergency like this, the best prayer would be to fight well? Think what would have happened had Moses and his companions come down from the hill to fight with the rest. Would not everyone have attributed the victory to the power of an armed force rather than to the grace of God? The same would happen today if the monks, who hold up their arms in prayer like Moses, were to come down from their hills to fight with the others in the plain. Through their life as a *separate* group, wholly dedicated to the *explicit* and *immediate* glorification of God, the monks stand as witnesses to this world, testifying to the reality of grace and to the transcending sanctity of God, but most of all they act as *mediators* between God and man.

This idea of mediation and representation is alien to many people today. They think their debt to God is a personal obligation and having someone else meet it for them appears to be an easy escape. Trusting in the intercession of a Saint, or asking monks to pray for them, implies they are avoiding their own responsibility. They do not realize it is God's own forgiving love which acts through His mediators. Abraham interceded with God for the men of Sodom, and obtained the promise that the city would be destroyed for the sake of ten righteous to be found there (Genesis 18, 32). Moses spoke for his people after their apostasy, "and the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." (Exodus 32, 14) But

Abraham as well as Moses only foreshadows the one great mediator, Jesus Christ. He is "the right person" whom we must know to have access to the Father, for "the Father loves the Son and has put all things at His disposal. He who believes in the Son possesses eternal life; he who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life. No, the anger of God lies upon him." (John 3, 35-36) This quotation, contains the principles which underly the mystery of mediation. He who believes in the Son becomes spiritually a part of the Son, and the Father sees him in the light of His Son. In this way, the believer himself becomes a mediator as did Moses. When he took the rod and spread out his arms, the Father saw in him the figure of His Son. Here lies the secret of monasticism and of the blessing it is for others. Monastic life is not a question of practicality, it is a mystery of love. Compelled by the love of Christ, the monk enters into the form of the Son through obedience to his spiritual father. He inclines the ear of the heart to his teachings, and in this school of divine service, his heart expands in true liberty until he runs, in the unspeakable sweetness of love, the royal road of God's commandments. He not only saves his own soul, but because he is pleasing to the Father through his likeness with the Divine Son, his prayer of intercession becomes powerful like that of Moses.

We do not forget, however, that with Moses on the mountain were Aaron and Hur to steady his arms. They represented the people, because, "a mediator cannot be a mediator where there is only one", (Galatians 3, 20). In order to mediate between two sides he has to have a foothold in both. Obviously, without a foothold among the people, a monastery cannot act as mediator between God and His people. Furthermore, this "foothold among the people" should be a personal, spiritual one. Does it then consist in the adoption of monastic spirituality by the people, alienating them to the world in which they live? Monasticism has never tried to impose specific forms of monastic life upon such people for the simple reason that it does not regard piety as an individual problem only, but as a social matter involving the entire Church. Within the one Church there are different ranks. Some are Marys, others Marthas. Some virgins, others married. Some priests, others laymen. God looks at each one not as an isolated individual, but as an integral part contributing to the perfection of the whole. Therefore, a friend of Mount Saviour wishing to join the monastic community in spirit is not required to become like the monks, but to encourage them with his help, realizing that the gain is mutually shared. He does what only laymen can do, utilizing his own profession, financial means, and skill to alleviate the burden of external work for the community. For example, when ladies of the St. Scholastica League prepare a dinner on a feastday, the monks are thereby free to completely fulfill the performance of the Work of God in choir. Who could doubt that by doing so they pray through the monks? This is certainly true because the Divine Office is the official prayer of the Church, not a private devotion. People have forgotten there are two kinds of prayer; private, offered by the individual, and public, performed in the name of the entire Church and *activating* the entire Church. Public prayer is conducted for the people, who share in it through the support they give those who are devoted to it. However, this support has also to be a spiritual one.

There is another step to be taken by those who associate themselves with Mount Saviour. They should open themselves to the spiritual beauty of the "Church in

prayer", and try to apply the basic principle of the Rule to their own spiritual life. "Their minds should be in harmony with the Word," and by that St. Benedict means the inspired word of the Scriptures, especially the Psalms. Is this an imposition on a busy layperson hindering him in fulfilling his task in the world? If he can assist at Sunday Mass with intelligent devotion, it saves him from wasting that precious time. The few hours he spends on spiritual matters should be used to imbibe the authentic things: clear, undiluted theological teaching concerning the essentials of the faith; the official public worship of the Church; the Word of God in the Old and the New Testaments. These are the "musts" for the past, present and future. The monks, who try to help the laity to understand these essentials better, cannot be considered backward.

The question then arises, if those who join Mount Saviour as secular Oblates are being bound to the VI Century, and lost for the present and future. It is true that for an Oblate the Rule should become the norm of his spiritual life. But the Rules does not impose any spiritual exercises prescribing retirement from the world. It conveys a spiritual attitude rather than insisting on "rules". The central theme of the Rule is "nothing should be preferred to the love of Christ" (ch. IV). It is essential for the Oblate to put Christ into the center of his life, and to perfect it by a continually increasing obedience to Him. The Rule institutes a "school" where this obedience is taught. Written for *beginners*, its principles are so simple, so essential that they are applicable to the life of the ordinary Christian. The means of sanctification are the same for the monk as for the layperson: prayer, family life and work. For the use of each one of these means, the Rule imparts extremely practical advice, but nothing that would take the Oblate away from his place in the world. It does not undervalue the things of this creation, but trains the mind to understand their spiritual significance and their true dignity as tools in God's household.

Many people today think of Religious Orders as creations of the Church to remedy the needs of a time, and therefore destined to lose their usefulness. This is not true, however, of the Rule of St. Benedict. When he wrote it, he did not intend to found an Order to clear the forests and start Catholic settlements. That Benedictine monks became the missionaries who laid the foundations of Christian civilization in Northern Europe is a great historical achievement and shows the forming power inherent in the Rule, but it was completely accidental. It did not justify their existence, nor does the absence today of forests to clear deprive them of their usefulness. Their essential mission does not lie in any external work, not even in the "liturgical movement". To found a monastery like Mount Saviour is, therefore, not a matter of creating an institution to serve an external, time-bound purpose. It is rather like digging a well, the well of the Spirit, in the living hearts of men. This was the main intention of St. Benedict, when he wrote his Rule, to remove the obstacles which prevent the waters of the Spirit from rising freely out of the depths of the soul. The founding of Monte Cassino during the upheavals of migrating nations was like a fulfillment of the dream of Mardochaeus in the 11th chapter of the book *Ezra*: "and this was the dream: Behold there were voices in tumults and earthquakes, and a disturbance upon the earth. And behold two great dragons came forth ready to fight one against the other. And at their cry all nations were stirred up to fight against the nation of the just. And

that was a day of darkness and danger, of tribulation and distress, and great fear upon the earth. And the nation of the just was troubled fearing their own evils, and was prepared for death. And they cried to God: and as they were crying, a little fountain sprang up and grew up into a very great river, and abounded into many waters." The two dragons are fighting again, and there is great fear upon the earth. The "nation of the just", the Church, cries again to God during the Advent season. We know, the fountain will spring up again. We shall see the Saviour born from the Virgin that knows not man.

O, Queen of Peace, intercede for your little well on the Mountain that it may abound into many waters for the quickening of its friends!

F. Cameron Wingem, O.S.B.

MARY IN THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

In a letter which he wrote as Pro-Secretary of State for the Holy Father to the Italian Liturgical Congress gathered at Vicenza in July of this year, His Excellency, Msgr. J. B. Montini, pointed out that true devotion to Mary should exercise its proper functions as a way to Christ, and to do so, it should be formed in the spirit of the Church's liturgy. The Christmas season offers the best opportunity to follow this directive, because it is during this time of Our Lord's Coming that the Church unfolds all the depth and tenderness of her devotion to Mary, drawing us into her that Christ may be born in us. The following remarks, taken from a talk which I gave at the Liturgical Week in Milwaukee, may help you to become, like Mary, a mother of Christ.

The liturgy of the Nativity extols the dignity of Mary as "Mother inviolate". The glory of Our Lady's virginal motherhood should, however, not make us forget the strong undertone of suffering which colors the term "mother", not only on the natural level, but also when we apply it to the Mother of God. "A woman when she is in travail has sorrow because her hour is come." (John 16,21) Every mother in giving birth to a child is bound to the order of space and time. She is not an absolute beginning. She depends on the will of man. Mary is Mother of her Divine Son only through the Will of God. "Her days were accomplished that she should be delivered". (Christmas Gospel) It is only in the order of time that Christ is "born from a woman". (Sunday within the Oct.) Mary, His mother, is according to St. Leo "the deaconess of His fleshly substance". Christ's birth according to the flesh is the beginning of His way as the "Suffering Servant". "As long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a servant". (Epistle, Sunday within the Oct.) As one "born from a woman He is under the law". (ib.) The prophecy of Simeon, which is read in the Gospel of the Sunday within the Oct. of the Nativity, reveals the "law" under which the Son of Mary lives in the flesh that He has received from His mother: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be contradicted". It also shows the intimate union between mother and Son under the same "law": "And

thy own soul a sword shall pierce". The Circumcision, eight days after the Nativity, is the seal which the law puts on the birth of Christ according to the flesh. It is a sign foreshadowing the complete fulfilment of the law on the Cross.

The feast of the Nativity, with its Octave, bears close resemblance to Holy Week in the Easter Cycle. Out of His sacrificial love for us God sent His Son to become our propitiation in the likeness of this flesh of sin. Christ's being born in the flesh means that a new oblation has appeared on earth, and from the very beginning the mother shares in His offering. The Epiphany season is of a different character. It corresponds to the "Blessed Fifty Days" after Easter. It is a time of maturity and fulfilment. The Gospel of the Vigil of the Epiphany begins with the significant words: "When Herod was dead". The contrast to the preceding period of the Nativity can not be more strongly emphasized, and it is heightened by the immediately following invitation: "Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel." The celebration of Epiphany begins with the "Exodus", the passing from Egypt into the Promised Land, in the company of the Child and His mother. It must be pointed out, however, that during this period of the Epiphany when the Son reaches maturity and unfolds His divine glory, His mother appears in a light quite different from that of the Nativity. She is now the "Virgin after birth". The order of the flesh, which naturally gave to the mother a prominent part, gives room now to that of the Spirit in which the Second Adam celebrates the wedding feast with His bride. As "Virgin after birth", Mary becomes the bride of the One to Whom she gives birth. When mother and Son meet at the wedding feast at Cana (Gospel of the second Sunday after the Epiphany), the latter does not call her "mother", but "woman". How often this term has been misunderstood. How easily do we grasp its meaning, if we understand it in the light of the Scriptures, as St. Ambrose does when he says: "Why do we hesitate when we hear the word 'woman'? Virginité has received this name first, because God had taken one of the ribs of Adam and built it into a woman. (Genesis 2,22) Eve had not yet known man, and already she was called 'woman'. Scripture does not hide the meaning of this term when it adds: 'Bone from my bone, flesh from my flesh: she shall be called 'woman', because she was taken out of man, not because she had been known by man. As long as she was in paradise she was called 'woman'". (St. Ambrose, De institutione virginis 36) The term "woman", far from being a degradation, is in reality a glorification of Mary in the deepest sense of the word. Her Son calls her "woman" whenever He deliberately transcends the order of the flesh and addresses her as His bride, "full of grace", completely taken out of Him, the Second Adam. The title of "mother" as applied to Mary is associated with the fact that she gave to her Son the likeness of the flesh of sin in which He died as God's "Suffering Servant". Whenever Christ reveals His glory as the Lord, He makes it clear that He transcends the order of the flesh and is not subject to any natural claims on the part of His mother. This is particularly evident from the episode of the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, which also forms a part of the feast of the Epiphany, and is read as Gospel of the Mass of the Sunday within the Octave: "His mother said to Him: Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said to them: How is it

that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" If the following sentence says that "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them", it is clear that His "descent" is His own free choice as, later, His death on the Cross will be.

It is only in the Gospel of the Epiphany itself that Mary is mentioned explicitly as Jesus' mother: "And entering into the house they found the Child with Mary His mother". The mother is there to witness to the true human nature of the Child Whom the Magi adore as God. However, the context of the Mass shows that the Church sees more in this scene. She combines it with the lesson from Isaiah: "Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for the light is come, and glory of the Lord is risen upon thee . . . Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all these are gathered together: they all come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side". (Epistle) In the Gospel this prophecy is fulfilled. Mary is Jerusalem. Her Child is the glory which is risen upon her. The Magi represent the Gentiles who shall come from far and wide to gather in New Jerusalem, their mother, to adore the Lord Jesus.

The deepest meaning of Mary's mission as "Virgin after birth" is revealed at the very end of the Christmas season, on the feast of her Purification, formerly called the "Feast of Meeting". It is again a wedding feast which is being celebrated here. "O Sion, adorn thy bridal chamber, and welcome Christ the King". By offering her Son at the altar in the Temple, she enters into closest union with the sacrificial love which burns in the heart of Jesus. She becomes truly the bride of the Second Adam. The Presentation of the Child in the Temple foreshadows the Hour of Golgotha where "the Woman" stands by the Cross and becomes the "mother of all the living" (Eve), and it points still farther to the end of the Easter season where we find Mary again in the temple of the New Covenant, the Upper Room in Jerusalem, praying with the Apostles while the fire of the Holy Spirit descends upon them, and the Church is born. Mary is truly "Virgin after birth" in that she offers her Son, and by doing so she becomes our mother.

It is vital that we share our joys with you as we do our burdens. We are extremely happy therefore to be able to announce the arrival of Carroll and Elizabeth Hayes and their two children, Joseph and Susan, who are now living at St. James. Our farm and its prodigious tasks will be administered by them, and, in a pinch, Elizabeth will provide overnight accommodations for one or two guests who wish to visit Mt. Saviour. Father Pierre Minard, as mentioned in the October Letter, has come to be our Novice Master, arriving on the eve of the Immaculate Conception. We know you will join us in extending these new members of our family a warm welcome.

We wish to express deepest gratitude to those who responded to our October appeal. Many sent lists for All Souls and November, or for the Register of the Departed, and with each list an alms. It is a great relief to be able to say the cows have all been paid for, and the bill for the barn roof is paid. At Thanksgiving, came generous gifts of food, and we hear more will come at Christmas. A number of friends have pledged monthly donations to the "Daily Bread Fund." May God bless and reward all who have helped us and who will do so.