

Father Director's Letter No. 12

Dear Knights of the Immaculata!

With joy and gratitude I would like to inform you that our new Superior General has allowed and blessed the establishment of the International Headquarters of the M.I. in Warsaw. He has also written a word of recommendation for the "M.I. Handbook", which has already been published in English, French and Spanish and will soon be available in German. It is a summary of all the concerns of the M.I.: above all, its essence and its justification, usefulness and topicality. A special chapter also explains the relationship of the M.I. to other Marian movements, as misunderstandings and mistrust repeatedly arise with them. Probably the most important section deals with the concrete existence of the M.I.: the enrolment into the M.I. and especially the perseverance of the Knights. It is always easy to start something, but extremely difficult to continue and preserve something. Every association stands or falls upon the question of how to keep its members on their toes and keep their first zeal or even deepen their initial zeal. This is surely also the big question for every Catholic and especially for every Knight: how can I remain faithful and become even more faithful?

The first answer comes from the outside: it is the responsibility of the M.I. direction to provide the Knights constantly with weapons and ammunition for the combat of souls, and to motivate them in various ways to become ever better instruments in the hands of the Immaculata. The whole structure of the M.I. has been designed to produce the apostolic materials and to hand them over to the Knights with an appropriate instruction manual: hence the regular magazines, letters, leaflets, the M.I. corners, *etc.*

Another answer must come from inside the Knight himself: what is the use of all these efforts if the Knight himself ignores them? If he does not take what is offered to him and neglects to consider it? Then we should not be surprised by the sudden realisation that he belongs to the sleeping knights, to the Knights in name only, who become unfaithful to their promise to do something for the Immaculata and for the salvation of souls at least once a day.

How important it is, therefore, that we pray for fidelity and generosity, but also that we keep contemplating the nature of the Knight, which is so ably summarized in the consecration prayer.

Let us try to understand this a little better:

Mary, the Mediatrix of all graces is the foundation of the M.I.: a privilege which teaches us that all the graces of conversion and sanctification earned by our Lord through his suffering and death on the cross are entrusted to Mary so that she can distribute them to people of good will "whenever she wants, to whomever she wants, howsoever she wants, as much as she wants" (St. Bernard). This mediation of graces takes place in two directions: first they flow down from the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the hands of the Immaculata. God's light and grace touches us, converts and sanctifies us. We have to respond to this creative and redeeming work of God: our whole existence consists in returning to God. Now, our return to God must take place in the same way in which God came to us, through Mary. This has been expressed since Christian antiquity by the famous axiom: "through Mary to Jesus". Even Our Lady in Fatima confirms this with the simple words: "My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that leads you to God".

God does not force man, but he wants our free consent to his salvific work on us. Therefore, Our Lady can realize her mission as Mediatrix in us only if we also want this clearly, if we accept her by an act of will, by a conscious and decisive "yes". The Mediatrix will unfold all her loving activity within us to the extent that we give ourselves to her through an act of surrender, the consecration of ourselves.

Let us specify more precisely what we give to Our Lady in our act of consecration. We have seen that in our spiritual life there are two great realities: our relationship with God and our relationship with our neighbour. This results in two different acts of consecration that complement each other:

a.) First we give ourselves to Mary so that she may become our mother and mistress and that we may become her children and slaves. This is the important and fundamental act of consecration, which basically already expresses our total surrender to Mary, but which is concretely limited to our own sanctification, our personal return to God through Mary. This is how Providence, by inspiring Saint Louis Maria Grignon de Montfort, wanted to explain total devotion to Mary which is wonderfully presented to us in the "Golden Book on True Devotion to Mary".

b.) Then we give ourselves to Mary so that she may take our lives in the world into her hands, namely the tasks that we have to fulfil. She should now be the main cause (always subordinated to God, of course) of all our actions and our relationship with others, and she should regard us as "instruments in her immaculate hands". The act of consecration of St. Maximilian Kolbe begins with a brief summary of the consecration of St. Grignon de Montfort. But the main thing is that we ask Mary to possess all our abilities in order to make them channels through which she can perform miracles of conversion and sanctification in souls. This enables her to "crush the head of the serpent", to "overcome all heresies all over the world" and thus to establish more and more "the dominion of the Sacred Heart of Our Lord".

And this is exactly what I would like to propose to you as the Yearly Resolution for 2019: that our consecration to the Immaculata - as her instruments - should penetrate more and more all areas of our lives, so that what we give her through prayer may also be put into practice in daily life.

This means, first of all, to pray, often contemplating the act of consecration, to savour every sentence, every word in it, so to speak, in order to grasp it as deeply as possible. Whole spiritual worlds are opened behind the words "Mary who loves us so much", "to whom God has entrusted the whole order of mercy", "instrument", etc. Our letters during this year should lead us above all into these spiritual depths.

But then comes the really important and difficult one: the implementation of our consecration in everyday life. This requires a single fundamental attitude: generosity! If one is usually petty and miserly, if one is constantly concerned only with one's own advantage, then one cannot follow the call of Christ the King, then every desire to love God and fulfil his will is nipped in the bud. Therefore, first of all, we must all try to be generous in our daily lives: generously accept a humiliation, generously endure the mistakes and imperfections of others, generously distribute the Miraculous Medal and flyers, generously pray the Rosary to its end, generously give something for the Immaculate Conception. Don't just do something sparingly, do it generously!

We all need to pray for this generosity in the manifestation of our consecration to the Immaculata, by laying all Knights at the feet of the Christ Child and His Mother, so that the bright light of Holy Christmas may fill all of us with graces, and that these may flow through our knighthood into the hearts of poor sinners.

With my blessing

Father Karl Stehlin

Buccaramanga, on the 25th of November 2018