

## SERMON OF HIS EMINENCE PAUL-EMILE CARDINAL LÉGER

VERY REVEREND AND REVEREND FATHERS:

I bid you a most cordial welcome to this venerable sanctuary which has witnessed during more than three centuries, all the joys and all the trials of this human family which Our Blessed Mother has protected in a singular manner.

Your piety and devotion to the Mother of God led you to choose Ville-Marie as the meeting-place of your congress in this Marian Year; and it is that same piety which brings you to this humble chapel of *Bon Secours*.

When Blessed Marguerite Bourgeoys understood that God had confided to her the superhuman task of being the mother of the colony established on the Island of Montreal, she turned toward the Mother of all graces and in order to obtain her help and guidance, she promised to erect a chapel in honor of her Assumption.

The city of man, according to the mind of the founders of the colony, had to rest upon the city of God. Therefore, before organizing the temporal life of the city, they built with their own hands, this monument, the proof of their faith and of their piety.

The most powerful Queen of Heaven did not turn a deaf ear to these supplications. For three centuries, her maternal heart has lavished her love upon her subjects; and these very walls have been the witness to many signal favors—temporal and spiritual—granted by Mary to her children.

The climax of this glorious history in which Mary's love is told over and over again in her help and in the fidelity of her children toward her, took place in Rome in November 1950. On the 1st of that month, the Holy Father, in the Holy Year, proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption. The piety of the first inhabitants of Ville-Marie thus received the approbation of the supreme authority of the Church. Those hardy pioneers had not been mistaken when they placed within the walls of this Church a number of medals which were struck in honor of her Assumption.

Thirteen days later, the same voice of authority was heard around the world. It was the voice which proclaimed the authenticity of the sanctity of the pious sodalist of Mary-Marguerite Bourgeoys is declared Blessed. The mother of our city, the foundress of the Congregation, the initiator of this place of pilgrimage received the reward

of her works. She had glorified the Assumption; Mary profited by the definition of the dogma by the Church, to unveil before the world the riches hidden in the soul of her humble servant.

Pope Pius X once told his priests that their teachings should shed the perfume of Jesus Christ. In other words, as St. Paul has also said, theology is a living science. The theologian must not imitate the maker of artificial flowers in his workshop, but he must be the able gardener who plants and waters and watches the growth of the flowers which fill his garden. Revelation is a grouping of truths which form a whole. This whole is living—it is the word of God. This word of God has been confided to the Church which has received the mission to transmit it from generation to generation, unaltered, unchanged. It is of utmost importance that this word reach each and every soul in its integrity, without error, virginal and without stain or blot. With the apostle St. Paul, "Therefore we too give thanks to God without ceasing, because when you heard and received from us the word of God, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but, as it truly is, the word of God who works in you who have believed" (I Thess. 2:13).

We now understand more clearly the admonition of Pius XII to the Bishops at the ceremonies of the canonization of Pius X: "There have never been, there cannot be, there will never be any other interpreters of the Word of God but the Pope and the Bishops, because, alone, the Pope and the Bishops have been called by God to announce the message of Salvation to the world, and if any others preach and teach, it cannot but be in virtue of a delegation received from them."

But how can it be conceived that the Blessed Virgin does not play a personal role in the maintenance of the integrity of Revelation in its transmission, its development and its explanation? This Word which has been confided to the Church, is Her Son. But a Mother cannot remain indifferent if the life of her child is in danger or if impious hands seek to mutilate his body.

The theologian who wishes to expose the doctrine of the Church in avoiding all and any deviation in thought must ask Mary to enlighten his mind and direct his hand. History teaches us that which liturgy affirms: — Mary has always destroyed heresy.

In 431, at Ephesus, the Fathers of the Council, the Bishops united under the authority of the Pope, proclaimed, in an atmosphere of joy and triumph, that Mary is the Mother of God. This proclama-

tion and affirmation of our holy faith was as the corner-stone of the entire catholic dogma.

Chronologically the Council of Ephesus took place between the councils of Nicea (325) and of Chalcedon (451); but the knowledge of Mary's being, promulgated at Ephesus, guarantees us the knowledge of Christ's being, defined at Nicea as the true son of God and at Chalcedon when the two distinct natures united in the same person of the Word, were made clear. Mary was the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth. She shall forever be the Mother of the Church, the Mystical Body of Jesus. Mary had given her flesh to the Eternal Word of the Most High. Mary was to be the guardian of this word of salvation by which men became the members of the Body of Christ.

But the robe without stain and without seam was to be torn by the great heresy of modern times: the Reformation. In his revolt against Rome, Luther breached Christianity and brought about a gap, the tragic consequences of which we still do not suspect. Deprived of the privilege of infallibility, the Reformation could no longer be considered the guardian of the word of salvation. The word of God became the word of man, subject to the fluctuations of passion and to the shortsightedness of the human intellect. In a word, the Reformation became the greatest effort tried by man to save himself by his own means: man could attain perfection by his own efforts originating within himself. Hence the Renaissance: — the Revolution and the triumph of Reason.

On the 8th of December, 1854, Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It was the answer of the Church to the rash affirmations of a world which believed it could do without God. The Immaculate Conception reminds the world that man is born in sin and that revolt is within him, between his own faculties, his own instincts, his own reason.

Mary is presented to us as the sole moral success, because from the very first instant of her existence, she was full of grace and most beautiful.

The Immaculate Conception rose like a sun of hope on the horizon of the twentieth century which was to witness the direst catastrophes of history and to breed a philosophy of nihilism which would engulf man in the darkness of bitter despair. If sin has made us miserable, the Immaculate Conception teaches us that the mercy of God is infinite and His redemption without bound. Moreover where sin

abounded, there came a superabundance of grace and over and above the misery of mankind, there existed the Heart of God capable of curing his ills and of transfiguring him.

However, the darkness of error became darker and man, in the twentieth century, endeavored to take the place of God and in a satanic impulse wished to transform the earth into a paradise. Marxism becomes the abyss of all iniquity and the abomination of desolation of human life. If ever marxism put into effect its plan to erase the name of God from all intellects, the earth would become the first circle which Dante saw in Hell: for hope would have definitely disappeared from all hearts.

In such a world become a desert, the Church sang out the voice of the dove. On November 1st 1950, Pius XII, gloriously reigning, proclaimed the Assumption of Mary. The magnificent chanting of "I believe in the resurrection of the body" became a reality, a stronger power than the modern world with its steel structures and cement foundations.

This victory of the body over death is a sign of glory for all those who shall have been victorious, in their soul, over the death of sin.

The Assumption is the answer of the Church to a terrestrial world; it means that we belong to heaven and that this immortal glory is given to us for all eternity.

In her own way and manner, the Blessed Virgin raised to heaven in her body and in her soul magnificently tells us that the whole of creation is reintegrated in God. She is an anticipation of the consummation of all things at the end of time, toward which we are led more efficaciously, if one may say so, by her maternity of grace become a maternity of glory, in the brilliancy of a haloed year in the light and splendor of her Immaculate Conception.