



### 35. Sources of the “Inscriptio”: MTApicture, St Augustine, Crowning

*Hitler came to power in 1933. Soon circumstances came to a head in two directions: On the one hand, a climate inimical to the Church developed in Germany. This was particularly felt in Schoenstatt from 1939 when the Pallottine College was confiscated by the Nazis and turned into a teachers’ training college that propagated the Nazi ideology. On the other hand, Hitler’s politics clearly showed that he was steering Germany into another war.*

*The Schoenstatt Family responded to these developments in a politically prudent way by renaming the “Schoenstatt Movement”. It became a “Marian community of prayer and sacrifice”, which was innocuous enough. However, more importantly its response was spiritual. The crowning trend started. The Blessed Mother was no longer invoked only as Mother and Educator, but also as Protectress. On 18 October 1939, the Silver Jubilee of Schoenstatt’s foundation, she was crowned as “Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt”.*

*Parallel to this, and as an answer to the challenge of the political situation, the question was raised as to what the Schoenstatt Family could offer the Blessed Mother according to the law, “Nothing without you, nothing without us”. The attitude of the “Blank Cheque”, as a deepening and development of the covenant of love, formed. It meant saying “Yes” to all God’s dispensations before they happened, so it was something like making out a blank cheque and giving it to the Blessed Mother. She should complete it as she thought fit. The act of consecration in the spirit of the Blank Cheque was solemnly undertaken on 18 October 1939.*

*In the meantime World War II had broken out on 1 September 1939. Through the worsening situation the Sisters felt challenged to offer the Blessed Mother even more, above all in order to protect the original shrine and the founder. This gave rise to the “Inscriptio” trend, an attitude to ask for the cross and suffering if this is in keeping with God’s plans. This then became the overriding subject in connection with the founder’s actions on 20 January 1942 (cf. “Carmel Letters” in Text 19). In the text that follows Fr Kentenich does not enlarge on what the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio mean. The text is valuable, and was chosen because it illustrates how spiritual currents or trends arose under the watchful eye and guiding hand of the founder.*

*At the same time the text reflects on a critical interpretation of the MTA picture’s artistic qualities,*

which was initiated by Fr Engel, a Schoenstatt priest. It showed that in the arrangement of the figures and the concentration of the hands the emphasis in the picture is on Mary's heart. This was then connected to the Augustinian concept of inscribing one heart into another, and led to the technical term "Inscriptio".

The text is taken from the "Inscriptio Congress of 1941", so it reflects the observation of a process that was well under way. It can be found in: *Pfingsttagung 1941 (Pentecost Congress 1941)*, in H. Hug, *Inscriptio*, 177-187.

### **How did the Inscriptio movement come into existence?**

The question is correctly formulated. I have not asked, "Who made it?" but, "How did it come into existence?" At the beginning there was no idea that simply had to be carried out, no matter what; no, it developed.

We have to distinguish between an outward and an inner history. When we have explained both elements, the answer will automatically have been given to the second question: What do we understand by the Inscriptio movement?

We know the ancient law: If I know how something developed, I also know what it is. There are two starting points we can see as two seeds that were planted into the ground without any particular plan.

### **The first seed: The explanation of the MTA picture**

The first seed is Fr Engel's debate about our MTA picture. As you know, many people look upon our picture as kitsch. Now, on the basis of studies, Fr Engel has proven that the picture is a work of art. I am only emphasising this to show that the little seed that was planted in this way drew special attention to the subject of the heart in this picture. You suddenly have to notice that in fact the picture shows the two-in-oneness between Christ and the Blessed Mother. This two-in-oneness has been the heart and centre of our faith from the beginning.

The picture is obviously the meaningful expression of what we want. What has the picture said to the Family as a whole from the beginning? This can be shown by the brief prayers that entered the Family about 1917: "Mother with your Child divine ..." Look at the very warm connection between Mother and Child, "Mother and Child united in love ...", "Mother Thrice Admirable ..." <sup>135</sup>

If you would like to work through for yourselves what I said yesterday in very general terms about symbolic thinking, you will find that for us Schoenstatters the picture speaks an extremely deep and strong symbolic language. We can read all the great thoughts into, or out of, our MTA picture. We have to see to it that the symbols we love also speak to us. When we look at the MTA picture

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<sup>135</sup> The quotations are taken from the following prayers: Mother Thrice Admirable, teach us, your knights, how to do battle, spreading devotion to you despite the number and might of the foe, so that the world renewed through you may pay homage to your Son. Mother with your Child from heaven, Descend upon our nation's plains, So that in following your footsteps It may find true and lasting peace. Mother and Child united in love Through you alone can our nation be healed. (Cf. *Heavenwards*, American edition, p. 173).

it should be a book we open for ourselves in which we can read in descriptive language what we have worked out for ourselves, and what resounds in our souls.

Two-in-oneness: Heart in heart, the harmony of the two hearts. The eyes of both look in the same direction. We can also read a profound two-in-oneness from the way the Mother's veil is wound round Mother and Child. From the beginning that has been the great mission we have upheld: The union between the Blessed Mother and our Lord. As we pray in the *Ave Maria*: "The fruit of your womb, Jesus". Our Lord, as the fruit, must always be connected with the Blessed Mother. So we don't see the Blessed Mother apart from our Lord, but the Blessed Mother is the organic point of transition, as we put it.

I want to add another thought that tells us about the great Biblical task: "Joseph, get up, take the Child and his Mother". Or, the Wise Men, "The star halted ... They found the Child and his Mother". That is actually the focal point of the picture: the profound union of hearts between Mother and Child. You will find that there is in fact a tremendously strong relationship between the features of Mother and Child. This indicates not just a great resemblance between our Lord and his Mother, but also a very deep interdependence between Mother and Child. The Child grows strongly through the Mother, but the Mother is also dependent on the Child. Besides this I can see two things in their facial expression: The strength with which they face life, and the child-like attitude of our Lord towards the heavenly Father. What matters is that we return repeatedly to central thoughts.

Let me summarise: The first seed that was planted in the ground is this explanation of the picture. It was done without my influence, if you disregard the fact that I asked Fr Engel to explain the picture to the Sisters.

### **The second seed: Augustine's definition of love**

What about the second seed? I have on occasion quoted St Augustine's definition of love: Love is *Inscriptio cordis in cor*.<sup>136</sup> I mentioned it in passing, just as I throw out an idea from time to time.

Those are the two seeds. When I noticed that they were growing, I took them up. I would like to show you the laws of growth briefly.

Let us remain with the definition of love, that is, the Augustinian definition. What is the history of this definition? It has an original history, a main history, and an aftermath.

### **[The pre-history in the individual courses and the Movement]**

In the first place we have the Apparitio Course.<sup>137</sup>

If I may be allowed to make a pastoral remark: It is essential today to see to it that despite all discipline the freedom of the personality is not inhibited by spiritual currents. This is secured organizationally with us by two community forms: above ground the house communities and the Mother House, under ground the courses.

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<sup>136</sup> Inscripting one heart into another.

<sup>137</sup> The course ideal of one of the Sisters' courses.

The Apparitio Course constantly kept the goal in view: We want to be apparitions of the Blessed Mother. This “becoming apparitions of the Blessed Mother” increasingly concentrated on co-ordinating their inner, spiritual lives with the Blessed Mother.

Then our Carissima Course came along. They had preceded the Apparitio Course and said: Actually we already had all that without really wanting it expressly.

Besides this there was the thought I repeatedly emphasised: The most beautiful place where someone can feel at home is the heart of a noble-minded person.

All this was a remote preparation for St Augustine’s definition. You notice that there was a preparation for the words “*Inscriptio cordis in cor*”, the co-ordination of hearts, although at the time I never even thought of it.

As an aside: the new motto for the year<sup>138</sup> drew any number of central ideas very strongly into the foreground, for example, the idea of actions and the idea of the King. From the beginning we emphasised in a special way: *Omnia opera*. And along with the idea of action we at the same time strongly emphasised the idea of the King and the Kingdom. Both stress the idea of Christ, and place Christ as the King in the foreground. Methodologically this is important. I told myself: Stop, you have to be careful to ensure that this fervent love for Christ is not detached from love for Mary. So I again took up the idea of the Queen.

Another pastoral remark: You know that at the time the Sisters’ Family crowned the Blessed Mother. Since then group after group has undertaken such a crowning. You will now probably understand the importance of these crownings in the sense of symbolic language. We need such heartfelt expressions today. Almost every house community crowned the Blessed Mother again on their own. But that is symbolical. Each part of the crown was sacrificed for. Don’t think that such processes have to be objective. They are meant to inspire the imagination and move the heart. We have to cultivate everything that promotes the community. Think for a moment how many personal and communal sacrifices are behind such a crowning. What mattered to me was to combine the Christological with the Mariological. I have always seen this as my task. Since 1912 I have always upheld the deep and loving union between the Blessed Mother and our Lord.

### **[The main history: Summary of Sermon at the Crowning]**

Allow me to give you a brief summary of the content of the sermon at the crowning: We differentiated between royalty in a narrower and wider sense. In the narrower sense applied to the Blessed Mother: She is the most perfect, wholly human being, the climax, as for example, we say the rose is the queen of flowers, or the lion is the king of the beasts.

We have to discover a whole host of individual examples from life. We say, for example, the Queen of the Apostles. Perhaps I should give you a disposition: The Blessed Mother is, firstly, the most excellent, and secondly, the most perfect apostle, in comparison with the other apostles. She made the biggest contribution to carrying out the task of the apostles. Similarly we say that the Blessed Mother is the Queen of Martyrs. To start with, her queenship is here meant in the wider sense. She is the one who takes precedence when compared with other royal figures. She is the most excellent martyr, she outdoes all others. That is a paraphrase of a statement of St Bernard,

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<sup>138</sup> The motto for the year 1941 was: “*Omnia opera mea Regi crucifixo et glorioso*” – “Whatever I do is for the crucified and glorified King!”

which I quoted earlier: “The work that is only surpassed by the master workman”. The master workman surpasses everything. So she is the climax, the greatest achievement, of the whole of creation.

Now we have to distinguish between being a queen not just in the wider sense, but also in the narrower sense. By virtue of her autonomous right and title she is the co-regent in the Kingdom of her Son. So where do we find the right and title for this queenship?

The Blessed Mother is the Co-Regent. We see her as the one who is omnipotent in her intercession. She is the unique, official Helpmate of our Lord in his entire life-work. A powerful statement that contains the whole of Mariology! All that we know about the Blessed Mother, everything we can discover about her, flows from this source.

The Blessed Mother is Queen by virtue of inheritance, by virtue of the right of conquest, and by virtue of the right of election. Please repeat these titles to yourselves so that they come alive again.

### **Mary is Queen – Our Lady**

Perhaps I should present the idea of her queenship by using the title “Our Lady”. What does it mean? It means an elevation, I might even say, a deepening and interiorisation of the idea of her queenship.

We are told that a King of Hungary endowed a foundation for the Blessed Mother and gave it a picture entitled “Our Lady of Stuhlweissenburg”, giving her his entire kingdom as her fief.<sup>139</sup> The story relates that since then it has been the custom for every noble to genuflect when he saw a picture of Mary, or spoke the name of the Blessed Mother.

What is this starting point meant to illustrate? Our Lady. We want to weigh up and meditate on the words of the title. We see the Blessed Mother as **Woman**, as **Lady**, and as **our Lady**.<sup>140</sup>

**Woman/Lady:** We see the Blessed Mother as what we call “*domina*”. In the sense that it was used in the Middle Ages it is synonymous with Queen. If we have all undertaken the crowning, we have to ask ourselves: How are we to secure the effect and attitude of this crowning? The idea of crowning the Blessed Mother was very common in the Middle Ages. We are surprised how little Catholics today know about such symbolic actions. The Blessed Mother is “Our Lady”, our Queen. Athanasius once said that it is obvious that if Christ is the King of the world, the Blessed Mother has to be the Queen of the world. St Bernard said: All that belongs to the living God also belongs to his Mother. And if Christ is God, and God is above all that is created, it is natural that the Blessed Mother is also the Queen of all that is created. These are ancient lines of thought.

### **A threefold crown – Reasons for Mary’s Queenship**

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<sup>139</sup> Such an endowment usually involved a larger property, a church or cloister, or a charitable institution. A “fief” is a property entrusted to someone, that is, it was lent to him or her. The person who transferred the property was the overlord. What is described here reflects the medieval way of life, and was often applied spontaneously to our relationship to God.

<sup>140</sup> The German title is: Our dear or beloved Lady, but the English title, which is very common, is our Lady.

I went on to explain that the Blessed Mother wears a threefold crown. She owes the first crown to the Living God by right of inheritance. She owes the second crown to herself by right of conquest. She largely owes the third crown to us and the devil by right of election.

**The first crown is the crown of dignity.** Who placed this crown on her head? The Triune God. Look at how much radiant dignity the living God has given her! Two statements will remind us of it again: firstly, she gave birth to God, and was allowed to command God. Let us look again at the MTA picture and see the Child of her womb: The Mother of God. But she was also allowed to command this God. How great her dignity must be; indeed we are told by theologians that because of God it is almost endless.

Let me stress another thought: The living God has endowed her with the laws of exemption and perfection. For her sake he lifted natural law. *Opus quod solus artifex supergreditur* – a work that is only surpassed by the master workman. The Blessed Mother remained a virgin: She was virgin before, at and after the birth [of Jesus]. He broke through the laws of nature. Since she remained a virgin at the birth, she suffered no labour pains. What a tremendous opinion the living God had of the Blessed Mother, who placed the crown of dignity on her head. Besides this she did not have original sin, so she did not become subject to a general law under which we all groan. A further law of exception: How can we envisage the Blessed Mother's death? Without the usual pains, the normal pains of dissolution. Her body never knew corruption.

I would like to ask you again to think through these thoughts for yourselves. I have to allow all the great metaphysical truths behind all these thoughts to resound. If you now ask me: Why was she given all these exceptions to the laws of nature? I have to answer: On account of Christ. The greatness of the Blessed Mother is ultimately nothing else than the shadow of our Lord. Since she was to become the Mother of God, she had to receive all these exceptions.

I am happy that the living God crowned her; and if I now crown her, it is a freely chosen and freely willed crowning. I not only place the crown on her head in order to have some entertainment, no, I have worked for my crown, and through it I want to recognize her dignity through my crowning.

**The second crown is the crown of moral nobility.** To whom does she owe it? Next to God she owes it to her own co-operation. She herself was outstandingly active in this regard. I could now discuss the Blessed Mother's entire life of virtue. In what does her moral greatness consist? In freedom from sin and imperfections, and being filled with divine virtues. This freedom from all unfreedom, and this richness of virtue, is not just a gift from God; it is at the same time the result of her co-operation, her enlightened co-operation.

**The third crown is the crown we and the devil place upon her head.** She appears before us as Queen in the narrower sense, a Queen in power and wisdom: She is the Co-Regent. From our perspective it is the crown of mercy. The degree of her dignity is the degree of her power and the degree of her influence over the devil and us human beings. She crushed the devil, she is the woman who crushes the serpent's head.

But she is also Queen in her influence over us. She is almost almighty, she is omnipotent in her supplication. She is the Queen in the kingdom of mercy. Who placed this crown on her head? Next to God, the devil. The devil gives the Blessed Mother the opportunity to show her power and her influence. Who else placed this crown on her head? Our helplessness and misery. Through our

poverty we awaken the riches of her power and kindness. So she owes all her greatness and radiant beauty also to me. Let us think in this context of Pestalozzi's words: The greatest misfortune for our present times is our lost sense of childlikeness, because it makes God's activity as Father impossible.<sup>141</sup> If you feel like it and have the time, please read the booklet "Love as the World's Fundamental Law". It shows how love presupposes equality and inequality in the sense of a reciprocal ability and need to be complemented. The living God requires me to be an empty vessel. I should nurture in myself an awareness that I am a poor sinner. The greatest misfortune is our lost sense of being God's child. A truly great misfortune of our present times is our lost sense of being children of the Blessed Mother. Just as God cannot give expression to his fatherly activity, so the Blessed Mother cannot give expression to her motherly activity if I am not an empty, open vessel. I have crowned her with my misery.

But also the devil has crowned her. The more the devil spreads his influence, the more the Blessed Mother can work. She could not crush the devil's head if he did not repeatedly show his activity in the Church and in the children of the Church.

We see the Blessed Mother as our **Lady**, hence not just as a woman, but also as **our Lady**.

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<sup>141</sup> Oblivion about God, the denial of mankind's childlike relationship to the divinity, is the source of the destruction of the blessing of morality, enlightenment and wisdom in the whole of mankind. Therefore, mankind's lost sense of childlikeness towards God is the greatest misfortune for the world, because it makes all God's education as a Father impossible; and the restoration of this lost childlikeness is the redemption of God's lost children on earth. (H. Pestalozzi, *Die Abendstunde eines Einsiedlers*, p. 321. No English translation could be traced. Quoted from *Kindsein vor Gott*, Patris Verlag 1979, p. 50).