

Our Faith and Mary Symposium

IMRI, UD, Ohio, July 31 to August 1, 2013

Taking Mary into Our Homes ... John 19:25

S. Celia Chua, MIC

Introduction

I would like to explore the meaning of *home* in the context of our faith life and the devotion to Mary. First of all, we will take a closer look on the scriptural meaning of home. (Objectively) Then, I will attempt to describe home with another word, a synonym, of heart, the soul (motor) of human relationships with God , others and environment. (Experiential) Finally, I will highlight how Mary, the Queen of all families, an educator, the woman of unity and reconciliation and the mother of all humanity can assist us to live our Christian faith. We live in a world that is intercultural and intergenerational, diversity in unity of hearts.

1. The meaning of home in the OT: The covenant of God with His people. Symbol of the Ark of the Covenant

At the beginning of the creation history, God, the Creator prepared a home for living things including human beings and said it was good, very good. (Gn. 1-2) A milieu, the original creation, of a life where there is harmony between living things and God, others and nature. A set of rules of right and wrong entails a right relationship to avoid conflicts in the Book of Deuteronomy. This personal relationship is based on fidelity and compassion which is the theme of Covenant between God and human beings. The Old Testament people remember the loving covenant of God with His people in the Psalms and wisdom verses, until the coming of the Word, the Son of God in the Prologue of St. John..."He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (Jn. 1:9). " And there was no place in the inn." (Lk. 2:7)

2. The meaning of home in the Gospel: an intimate relationship with Jesus

A relationship with Jesus Home takes the meaning not only a dwelling place but also of a relationship with a person, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In John 14, 7, the Father's house invites us to look inwards into our hearts. Jesus, in His divine humanity, renders invisible (Father's house) visible in His presence among us, so that it is possible to establish a true and genuine

loving relationship with Jesus and our neighbors. The heart of the matter is the formation and education of Jesus' disciples. In the Gospel of John, the question, "Where do you live" (Jn. 1:37) is not to find where Jesus lived but to seek the path to an intimate, heart to heart. It is a fundamental condition to follow Jesus, to be with Him then to go forth and proclaim to the world the Good News. (cf Mk, 4:13)

3. The spirituality of home, the operation of activities, the heart, the motor of human life.

According to scripture, the heart is the center not only the activities but also the operation, the motor of human life. Heart and home can be interchangeable. Heart is the home of a personal life and is designated to guide a person to be wise, pure and good. It is the seat of conscience according to (Rm. 12:15). Heart can be transformed (Ezk. 30:26) only if a person is willing and open to salvation (faith). (Ps. 95:8. Prov. 25:14, 2 Chr. 36)

According to biblical and Hebrew anthropology, in one's heart simply about increasing one's knowledge. Heart is not the seat of love as it is modern society. Rather it is the seat of decision-making. When Mary keeps for all that she witnessed in her heart, she does not only make sense out of it, but also makes the appropriate consequent decision. It leads to a commitment in faith.

4. Mary's faith in search of a home: pondering in her heart to know God's Will and act accordingly.

How many times in the Gospel of Luke do we hear the phrase, " Mary ponders in her hearts" Mary treasures in her heart" Mary does not understand? What was going on in the heart of Mary? At the Annunciation, Mary realizes that the angel Gabriel has not revealed everything to her, and she hope to increase her knowledge of God's plan. Mary's faith or trust allows for questions too. Even after Mary asks her question, the angel does not disclose everything about Jesus to her. For instance, nothing is said about the passion and the resurrection of her Son to be conceived. Later, she will actually not understand also what the twelve-year-old Jesus will tell her in the Temple. (Lk. 2:50 and others) But Mary believes in God; she trusts God, so her fiat, yes to the angel is valid.

Mary's yes relies on God only, a God for "whom nothing is impossible." In placing her trust in God, in replying yes to God, Mary is rewarded with happiness of becoming both a virgin and a mother – even of a multitude. I think we can say that she was searching for God's Will... an

act of faith, in constant and consistency discernment. Mary is at ease; she feels at home in God's love, a home is where her treasures are... where the dwelling place of the Triune God, became the womb for her Son. She takes the Son of God into her life as human person, Emmanuel, a presence, an intimate relationship between a Mother and Son.

Faith is a trust with ups and downs, and these continue until Mary's final yes to the Word of God. Various commentators have seen the expression of this *final yes* in Mary's presence at the foot of the Cross on which her Son is dying. This is the height of Mary's faith, a difficult and painful moment in a mother's life. This interpretation, however, entails quite a lot of deduction based on the presence of a mother at the death of her son, even if the Gospel of St. John is highly symbolic. At the Cross, Mary does or says nothing. On the other hand, she is much more prominent and active at the wedding of Cana (Jn. 2:1-12), an episode where she is introduced first and where she takes the initiative. Unlike the episode of the Cross, the events at Cana are driven by Mary. The Cana episode is therefore more likely to be regarded as expressing Mary's final yes to the Word of God. At the coming of the Holy Spirit, Mary is among Jesus' disciples praying together in the upper room, filled with the Spirit of Jesus, they were courageous to teach, to proclaim, and to witness the Gospel in the name of Jesus, their only treasure.

As Jesus is leaving the earth (Ascension), the beloved disciple receives Mary as his mother. The disciple is performing an act of faith, an act of trust. Can we then say that to become a child of Mary, or taking Mary home is to become a true believer? (Other disciples have deserted Jesus!) Mary's motherly faith is at the origin of the faith of Jesus' disciples. As the faith of Abraham is the origin of the first people of God – Israel – of its faith, the faith of Mary is the origin of the second people of God – the Church – and its faith.

5. Conclusion:

Taking Mary into our homes can be connected with Mary's experiences of God. It is more than a place, it is an attitude, a way of life, a conviction, a belief, a trust in Jesus. Homes can be lived in the life of a couple, a family, a parish, a Christian community. What the heart of this Marian spirituality is, is to take Mary home as her child and as a disciple of Jesus. However, we are living in a multicultural place, a global world, an intergenerational community at times. Taking Mary into our homes and into our lives is to transform our heart (the motor of all our actions) and this demands some changes in attitudes. Like Mary, a role model of faith in actions, (*Lumen Fidei, Chapter 4, 2013*) the attitude of pondering of heart, a heart that is open to discern God's Will, is a gathering that is ready for reconciliation, pardon and unity, a place where the commonality of the members is the person of Jesus as the

center, the treasure of all who is the invisible God made visible, an encounter between the divinity and the humanity. To take Mary into our homes is also to be like Mary, have a heart that is like the parable of the sower, the fertile soil, ready to listen to the Word and act upon it. Lastly, to believe in Jesus Christ, this is the faith of Mary. This belief is connected to what we believe. "Because of her close bond with Jesus, Mary is strictly connected to what we believe. (*Lumen Fidei* #59) It is to understand the Church as the home of faith. (*Lumen Fidei, Chapter 3, 2013*) Wherever that church is, the heart of the matter lives where the Trinitarian God is In the Incarnate person of Jesus.