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Dear Friend of Saint Joseph Abbey,

ON AUGUST 24, 1907, a young priest, sick and exhausted, entered the Chapel of the Apparitions at Paray-le-Monial, France. “I prayed, and suddenly I felt within myself a strange shock. I was struck by a blow of grace, at the same time very strong, yet infinitely gentle. When I arose, I was completely cured. Then, kneeling in the sanctuary, absorbed in an act of thanksgiving, I understood what Our Lord wished of me. That very evening I conceived the plan to reconquer the world home by home, family by family for the love of the Heart of JESUS.” The name of this priest was Father Mateo Crawley.

Edward Maxim Crawley-Boevey, the future Father Mateo, was born on November 18, 1875 in Arequipa, Peru, the son of an English Protestant father and a very pious Spanish mother : every day she attended Mass and received Communion, every evening she led a family rosary. When Edward was only 18 months old, his parents moved to England and, fearing he could not endure the voyage, left him in the hands of his maternal grandparents. They did not return for seven years, with the two eldest children, and three younger ones born in England. Edward, who had grown up as an only son in a very Catholic, Spanish-speaking environment, suddenly found himself with five brothers and sisters, the older of whom had received an English education. In late 1884, Mr. Crawley decided to move the family to Valparaiso, Chile. So young Edward left his native land, to which he would seldom return. From his earliest youth, he kept the memory of a family filled with the warmth of Christ, despite his father’s defiant attitude toward the Catholic faith. Little by little, the resolution grew in Edward to introduce families to the Kingship of JESUS CHRIST.

Edward showed a precocious zeal for the salvation of souls. As a young boy, he loved to “say Mass” and to give sermons to his sisters. He excelled in the art of speaking about the faith, to the point that he was hired by a neighboring family as a preacher for the months of MARY and of the Sacred Heart. His words touched the father of this family who, dying, asked to become a Catholic. As no priest was available, Edward had the joy of baptizing this man on his deathbed. This conversion greatly moved Edward’s own father, who would later convert and become a fervent practicing Catholic.

In 1885, the boy was placed in a school run by the Fathers of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of JESUS and MARY, also known as the “Picpussiens”. This Congregation was founded in France, in the midst of

the Terror of the Revolution, by Father Pierre Coudrin and Mother Henriette Aymer de la Chevalerie, in order to make reparation to Our Lord by imitating His life and adoring the Blessed Sacrament, the source of the Religious’ missionary fervor. The desire for the priesthood grew in Edward, who wanted to dedicate himself to saving souls. So, on October 4 of that year, after having congratulating his mother during a family celebration, he presented her with a piece of paper, on which he had written, “As a present, I promise to allow Edward to enter religious life at the age of 15.” “You’ll sign it, won’t you, Mother?” asked Edward. With tears in her eyes, Mrs. Crawley read the piece of paper and signed it. Obtaining his father’s consent was more difficult, but after asking the opinion of Edward’s schoolteachers, he told his son : “You are going to leave us to become a religious. Voluntarily I allow you to leave, but on one condition : If you desire to become a priest, it is my wish that you become a saintly priest.”

Being restrained

In Santiago, on February 2, 1891, Edward received the religious habit and the name Brother Joseph Stanislaus. His novitiate took place in a former hacienda (plantation), isolated in the midst of a vast wilderness in Los Perales. For the first four months, the novice suffered greatly from this life to which he was not accustomed. After practicing mortifications of the flesh beyond his strength, he finally realized he must temper his zeal and be restrained in his mortifications. On September 11, 1892, Brother Stanislaus was allowed to take religious vows. A bit later, to avoid being confused with a Father with the same first name, he took the name of Brother Mateo (Matthew). During his years of study, he was called to serve as secretary to the Father Provincial. One day, Brother Mateo discovered in the archives a painting of Our Lord carrying in His left hand a globe ; rays flowed from His Sacred Heart to the

Equator. It was before this painting, done at the request of Garcia Moreno, at the time President, that the country had been consecrated to the Sacred Heart of JESUS. This painting was to hold an important place in Brother Mateo's apostolate. On December 17, 1898, he was ordained to the priesthood in the cathedral in Santiago, shortly after having suffered the loss of his father.

During his first mission in the city of Valparaiso, Father Mateo was moved by the spiritual destitution of the people. He therefore opened a social center where young people, after leaving high school, could complete their Christian and civic formation, and become the leaven of a spiritually regenerated society. At this time, many people advocated political solutions to society's problems. Father Mateo understood that the evil eating away at society was secularism, "which is the absolute and total exclusion of God and of the natural moral law from all domains of human life" (John Paul II, February 23, 2002). "Secularism is therefore diametrically opposed to the Kingdom of Christ, which is the source not only of the believer's happiness, but of the harmony of public life itself" (Benedict XVI, Inaugural speech at CELAM, May 13, 2007). Father Mateo proposed to fight this evil by establishing a law school where the education would be based on principles of the moral law and the Christian conscience.

"What is real?"

Was giving priority to faith in Christ, as Father Mateo wished to do in his new institute, to abandon the urgent reality of the great economic, social and political problems? Was it not a flight from this reality? To this objection, we reply with these words from Pope Benedict XVI: "What is this 'reality'? What is real? Are only material goods, social, economic and political problems 'reality'? This was precisely the great error of the dominant tendencies of the last century, a most destructive error, as we can see from the results of both Marxist and capitalist systems. They falsify the notion of reality by detaching it from the foundational and decisive reality which is God. Anyone who excludes God from his horizons falsifies the notion of 'reality' and, in consequence, can only end up in blind alleys or with recipes for destruction. The first basic point to affirm, then, is the following: only those who recognize God know reality and are able to respond to it adequately and in a truly human manner. The truth of this thesis becomes evident in the face of the collapse of all the systems that marginalize God. Yet here a further question immediately arises: Who knows God? How can we know Him? ... For a Christian, the nucleus of the reply is simple: Only God knows God, only His Son who is God from God, true God, knows Him. And He *Who is in the bosom of the Father has made Him known* (Jn. 1:18). Hence the unique and irreplaceable importance

of Christ for us, for humanity. If we do not know God in and with Christ, all of reality is transformed into an indecipherable enigma; there is no way, and without a way, there is neither life nor truth. God is the foundational reality, not a God Who is merely imagined or hypothetical, but God with a human face; He is God-with-us, the God Who loves even to the Cross. When the disciple arrives at an understanding of this love of Christ *to the end*, he cannot fail to respond to this love with a similar love: *I will follow you wherever you go* (Lk. 9:57)" (*ibid.*).

In 1906, a violent earthquake reduced the city of Valparaiso to ruins. Father Mateo devoted himself day and night to the countless destitute who had lost their homes. His health could not endure the stress—he was so exhausted that his doctors forbade him all work for a year. So his superior decided to send him to Europe, a trip that marked a turning point in his life. Thus, in June 1907, he had the honor of being received in a private audience by Pope Saint Pius X. At the feet of the Holy Father, he revealed to him the plan so close to his heart, and asked permission to conquer the world for the Sacred Heart through the consecration of families. After hearing him out, the sainted Pope replied, "No, my son. I command you, do you understand? Not only do I permit you, but I order you to give your life for this work of salvation. It is a wonderful work; consecrate your entire life to it."

The Enthronement of the Sacred Heart

He returned to Chile and, in October 1908, conducted the "enthronement of the Sacred Heart," in the house of a distinguished benefactress, using Garcia Moreno's painting. According to Father Mateo, the enthronement of the Sacred Heart, a ceremony in which an image of the Sacred Heart is hung in the presence of a priest to preside over the life of the family, involves not only that family's own devotion to the Sacred Heart, leading to the complete transformation of family life thanks to family prayer, but also involves visiting other families, to win them over to Christ as well. The following years saw the spread of the work through the establishment of secretariats in various countries. In 1911, there were already an estimated 120,000 families in which the Sacred Heart had been enthroned. These families distinguished themselves by a powerful spirit of faith and prayer, as well as their zeal for the apostolate.

One of the fruits of this devotion was the conversion of Admiral Latorre, the national hero of Chile after winning a naval victory over Peru. Father Mateo socialized with this man who was indifferent to religion. One day he came to his home: "Admiral, I have come today to give you absolution."—"So this is a declaration of war in the name of Heaven," the admiral replied, laughing.

“Yes, Admiral, in the name of Heaven,” replied the Father. Then, turning to the image of the Sacred Heart, he continued, “Look at this image enthroned in your home. He is your King and mine, the supreme Legislator of the powerful and the weak, of admirals and sailors. He is your wife’s King ; all those who live in this house adore Him on their knees, they live their faith, they obey His laws—all except you. In the name of the Sacred Heart Who loves you and Who has sent me here to offer you His mercy, surrender to His Heart.” Latorre, no longer laughing, asked for some time to think about it. The Father replied, “And if death came tonight, would you tell him to come back later because you needed some time to think about it? But right now, it is not death that knocks at the door ; it is Life, JESUS Himself.” The admiral knelt and confessed the sins of his life. One year later, Father Mateo helped him make a good death.

In 1914, Father Mateo found himself once again in Europe, where he preached and established secretariats. The foundation expanded, as did the difficulties. Some bishops raised objections to the word “enthronement,” thinking it contrary to the customs of the Church and lacking the necessary authorization. On April 6, 1915, Father Mateo was received in audience by Pope Benedict XV who, the following April 27, wrote him a letter of approval in which he defined enthronement as “the installation of the image of the Sacred Heart, as on a throne, in the place of highest honor in the house, so that JESUS CHRIST Our Lord visibly reigns in Catholic homes.” The meaning of this enthronement is not a momentary consecration, a passing family celebration ; it is rather truly placing JESUS on a throne in the heart of the family, so that He remains there as King, with the family uniting each day around His throne to offer Him its adoration and love.

The family in the light of faith

Enthronement is thus a spirituality of marriage and family based on the sacrament of marriage as seen in the light of the Sacred Heart. Such a devotion is especially needed in our day, on account of the ever-growing threats against the family. Pope John Paul II proclaimed, on February 19, 1981 : “Because the Creator wished that life might have its origin in the love between a man and a woman joined in a union of sharing in matrimony, and because Christ raised this union of husband and wife to the dignity of a sacrament, we must consider the family, with its nature and mission, in the brilliant light of our Christian faith... The Catholic Church has always taught that marriage was established by God ; that marriage is a covenant of love between one man and one woman ; that the bond uniting husband and wife is by God’s will indissoluble ; that marriage between Christians is a sacrament symbolizing the union of Christ and His Church ; and that marriage

must be open to the transmission of human life. ... By my apostolic duty, I must reaffirm as clearly and strongly as possible what the Church of Christ teaches on this subject, and vigorously repeat its condemnation of contraception and abortion.”

In his letter to Father Mateo, Pope Benedict XV named three scourges that destroy the family : “Divorce which weakens its stability, the monopoly in teaching which eliminates the authority of the parents, and the search of pleasure which often contravenes the very laws of nature.” Enthronement brings to these evils the double remedy of effective love and enlightening faith. This enthronement, wrote Benedict XV, “propagates above all things the Christian spirit in the home by setting up in each family the reign and the love of JESUS CHRIST. And in doing this, you are but obeying Our Divine Lord Himself, Who promised to shower His blessings upon the homes where the image of His Sacred Heart should be exposed and devoutly honored. And because following Christ does not consist in allowing ourselves to be swayed by a superficial religious sentiment that easily moves weak and tender hearts to tears but leaves vice intact—it is necessary to know Christ, to know His doctrine, His life, His passion, His glory. To follow Christ is to be permeated with a lively and constant faith, which not only acts upon the mind and the heart, but likewise governs and directs our conduct. ... Nothing is more suitable to the needs of the present day” (*ibid.*). Benedict XVI echoes his predecessor : “The family was and is the school of faith, the training-ground for human and civil values, the hearth in which human life is born and is generously and responsibly welcomed. Undoubtedly, it is currently suffering a degree of adversity caused by secularism and by ethical relativism, by movements of population internally and externally, by poverty, by social instability and by civil legislation opposed to marriage which, by supporting contraception and abortion, is threatening the future of peoples” (May 13, 2007).

An even greater evil

During a preaching tour in France, Father Mateo alluded to the devastation caused by the war, adding, “Never forget that the ruin of Christian families is a greater evil still. The family is the temple of temples. The family is the source of life. If the source of national life is poisoned, the nation will perish. What we are trying to do is to inoculate families with the law of God and love of the Sacred Heart of JESUS. If JESUS CHRIST is inoculated in its roots, the entire tree will be JESUS CHRIST.”

Approved by the Church and confirmed by its miraculously rapid growth, the work of enthronement was marked by the cross as well. Constantly on the go, Father Crawley had to preach in many countries in various languages. In addition to exhaustion from the many

trips and changes in diet, he was stricken by gout, a condition he would suffer from for the rest of his life. In Italy, the secretariats for the foundation were entrusted to another organization : the Apostolate of Prayer. Some raised objections against enthronement, and the Father had to ask once again for another intervention by Benedict XV. In France, where the war had not yet ended, Father Mateo was denounced as an agitator. The government confiscated his passport and prevented him from leaving the country. His passport would not be returned until March 1919.

In 1923, during a preaching tour in England, Father Mateo encouraged Catholic institutions with these words : “ Our Lord has confided His most precious treasures to your care ; be not teachers only, but apostles, sowers of life and love. Many Catholics imagine that apostleship is the monopoly of priests. ‘What can I do—this is not my work !’ they exclaim. But you must not say this. It is not enough for you to be fervent Catholics, earnest and pious ; for you, apostleship is a duty, not a luxury... It is your duty to save the souls of others, and to do so, you ought to be something more than teachers. You must help Our Lord catch souls for eternity. The enemies of Christ struggle hard and sacrifice themselves in every way to prevent souls from entering Heaven. ... The enemies of our Divine King are often more zealous than His friends. ”

During these years, the Father wrote a book on the three outrages committed against Our Lord by modern society : the crisis of authority and the disorders that follow are an affront to the authority of Christ the King ; immorality and particularly shamelessness in dress offend against the sanctity of Christ ; the crisis of priestly and religious vocations diminishes the honor due to Christ. In Belgium, speaking to a crowd of women and girls, Father Mateo stated, “ There is no Christianity without chastity. There is no chastity without modesty. ”

In the Litany of the Sacred Heart, the Church invokes JESUS as “ King and Center of all hearts. ” Following Father Mateo’s example, let us beseech the Heart of JESUS to grant that all families may stay united in prayer, the reception of the sacraments, and mutual support. Thus will the whole world, at last under His ever so gentle yoke, know a time of peace that will favor the salvation of souls.

Dom Antoine Marie
O.S.B.

P. S. This monthly letter is free of charge. We gratefully accept the addresses of other persons who may enjoy receiving it. – Also available free of charge are: tract about the divinity of Jesus Christ; tract about the Truths of the Catholic Religion; scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, with explanatory notice; the promises of the Sacred Heart; the mysteries of the Rosary.

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