



Bisdom van Haarlem

The Lady of all Nations ... *Who once was Mary?*

Position of the Bishop of Haarlem, Msgr. Dr. Jozef Marianus Punt

At the moment a discussion is taking place concerning a clause in the prayer of “The Lady of all Nations”. The occasion for the discussion was a concern expressed by the Secretary of the Congregation of Faith, Archbishop A. Amato, regarding “one particular aspect” of this devotion, that is the clause “*who once was Mary*”. This concern was communicated to certain Bishops of the Philippines, to the religious community, “Family of Mary”, as well as to the Bishop of Haarlem, Mgr. Dr. J. Punt.

The concern of the Congregation is part of a long tradition. Initially the first local Bishop, Msgr. J. Huibers, who dealt with this devotion sixty years ago, struggled with this clause. At first he considered the removal of the clause, but upon later reflection he accepted it and granted permission for the ‘Imprimatur’. Up to this day, the prayer has as well received the Imprimatur of approximately seventy Bishops and Cardinals worldwide. This indicates that they saw no contradiction with any teaching of the Church. In 1996, the Prefect of the Congregation permitted the public release of the devotion. In 2002, the local Bishop recognised in its essence the authenticity of the apparitions.

Naturally, the Bishop contacted the Congregation and expressed his opinion on this matter. In the meantime, he has asked the authorities of the devotion to respect the pastoral concern of the Congregation by leaving out or praying silently the clause during public prayer until further notice. The Bishop realizes that for many people this may cause a tension between conviction and obedience, but he refers to the example offered by the visionary herself. Once she experienced a similar type of dilemma and then heard the following words from ‘the Lady’: “obedience comes first”. Of course, obedience does not exclude ongoing and open dialogue on this issue, he states. Also the great and actual importance of this prayer, that asks the “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father” to send “**now**” the Holy Spirit over our wounded world, completely remains.

In all this, the Bishop also sees a positive side. With this discussion a deeper dialogue is launched. Behind this clause, given after the proclamation of the Dogma of Our Lady’s Assumption, lies a fundamental question: Who truly is Mary in God’s plan of Salvation? What is Her role in the coming of the Holy Spirit? Who is She to be for this time and this world? It was to this dialogue that Pope John Paul II in 2002 explicitly encouraged theologians.

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August 8, 2005