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## Holy Cross History Conference 2011

“Emulating/Honoring Holy Cross Religious for Their Ministry or Spirituality”

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Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, Ohio

### The Marian Spirituality of Servant of God Patrick Peyton, CSC

Presented by: Laetitia Rhatigan, Mission Director Family Rosary Albany, NY

#### 12 Minute DVD

The twelve minute DVD presentation (Servant of God, Patrick Peyton, CSC),<sup>1</sup> has allows for a brief biography of Peyton's life beginning with his birth in County Mayo, Ireland in 1909. His early life in Ireland, his relationship with his family, his cure from tuberculosis and his years of formation in the Congregation of Holy Cross were each important milestone in the development of his Marian Spirituality. The film provides a cursory view of the extent of Peyton's ministry from its beginning in Albany, New York 1941, through its world expansion. It presents clips of his ministry in radio, TV, film and his worldwide ventures with the Crusades for Family Prayer. His efforts and successes in his mission to support the spiritual well-being of the family though prayer and especially the prayer of the Rosary were extraordinary and worthy of awe and admiration. For those who continue Peyton's ministry and especially for members of Holy Cross a special sense of pride can be taken in being associated with his life and work.

On June 1, 2001 at the request of the Congregation of Holy Cross, the Bishop of Fall River, Massachusetts, with the approval of the Vatican, officially opened the Cause of Canonization for Patrick Peyton. He is now known as “Servant of God.”

#### Power Point Presentation

The second phase of this presentation is being delivered through a power point presentation focusing specifically on Father Peyton's Marian Spirituality. The first section of the presentation is meant to establish an understanding of Marian Spirituality.

#### Plate One: How can Spirituality Be Marian?

In the encyclical letter, *Redemptoris Mater*, March 25, 1985,<sup>2</sup> Pope John Paul II wrote on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church. In speaking of the life of Christ's

<sup>1</sup> Servant of God, Fr. Patrick Peyton, CSC, DVD, Produced by the Family Rosary Crusades, Philippines, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Redemptoris Mater*, ( The Mother of the Redeemer): On the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church. An Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II, (March 25, 1987)

disciples, John Paul II mentions that there is a Marian dimension to this life which is expressed in the entrustment to the Mother of Christ at Golgatha. He speaks not only of the doctrine of faith but also of the life of faith and locates this source in the historical experience of individuals and communities. This document is important since it is one of few times that a Marian Spirituality is specifically mentioned in Church documents.

Authentic Marian Spirituality is guided by specific criteria; it is essentially ecclesial leading to intercession, imitation, and evangelization. Spirituality is a consequence of theology (knowledge of God), who relates to us through grace which is the vital principle of spirituality, (experience of God).

Spirituality is comprehensive and includes the memory of the Church, the Pascal Mystery of which Mary is an integral part. Whenever speaking about Mary we should look to the memory of the Church and strive for a living contact with her. The Church sees in Mary its archetype and eschatological icon. She is the model and exemplar of being a Christian and living the Christian life.

### **Plate Two: Devotion and Spirituality**

Devotion gives honor and praise. Spirituality is a life of faith and includes intercession, imitation and evangelization. In 1958, when Peyton presented his films on the Life of Christ at the Belgium World Fair, the then Bishop Suenens after watching the films invited Peyton to his home to question him, he basically wanted to know if Peyton was a fanatic or a crazy man. He cross-examined Peyton regarding his understanding of Mary. Peyton said it was the first time he had to formulate the difference between the will of Our Lady and her personal honor. He said her personal honor, recognition and admiration were secondary and her will to bring all to her Son were primary. He wrote, "So while I confessed to Bishop Suenens my own deep and unshakable love for Mary as a living mother, I assured him that my labors and sacrifices were to advance her holy will regarding the family and its worship of her Son."<sup>3</sup>

The bishop was completely satisfied with Peyton's understanding of Mary.

### **Plate Three: Essentials of Marian Spirituality**

In the Encyclical Letter, *Marialis Cultus*,<sup>4</sup>1974, Pope Paul VI laid out the guide lines for the study and understanding of Marian Culture. He stated that it should be comprehensive inclusive of theology, scripture, ecumenism, liturgy and anthropology. Peyton was present for most of the sessions of the Vatican Council always lobbying the bishops regarding family prayer and the rosary. Peyton wanted to promote the rosary as liturgical prayers. He also lobbied the Council Fathers that family prayer be included in the document on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*). He wrote to Pope Paul VI, "My heart cries out for a papal document which could take the form of an encyclical...may I beseech Your Holiness to enhance, enrich, and raise to a higher level of efficacy the Family Rosary by proclaiming it a liturgical prayer." This and similar request persuaded Paul to address the Church on the subject of the rosary. The Congregation of Divine

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<sup>3</sup> Patrick Peyton, *All For Her*, The Autobiography of Patrick J. Peyton, CSC, (New York: Doubleday, 1967). 206.

<sup>4</sup> *Marialis Cultus*, Encyclical Letter, Pope Paul VI, 1974.

Worship was asked to prepare a draft of a papal document that would encourage the recitation of the rosary by families.<sup>5</sup> This eventually led to the encyclical *Marialis Cultus*.

Peyton's Marian Spirituality included all those aspects that the Pope included regarding authentic Marian spirituality. Theologically his love of Mary was rooted in her mission to bring all to Christ, anthropologically his focus on the family (the domestic church) and the realism of Mary as woman, mother, sister and intercessor for all including his ecumenical efforts. Always in the Family Rosary Crusades he included all peoples of prayer in the Crusades. He was always careful to use accurate Scriptural citations in all Family Rosary publications, always cautious to have his films and productions critiqued by a biblical scholar. Liturgically he promoted and celebrated Mary's role in Christocentric Feasts and of course in Marian feasts. He had a practice of initiating special programs and events on Marian feasts days. He understood the prayer of the rosary to be a means of preparing for the liturgy of the Eucharist.

#### **Plate Four: Profile of Peyton's Marian Spirituality**

Marian Devotion involves honor to Mary, praise and recognition of her privileges, especially her Divine Motherhood. Marian Spirituality as described by Pope John Paul II in the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, 1987, is the experience of a life of faith (not only the knowledge of the doctrine of faith), and includes a special Marian dimension. When he speaks of a life of faith he is referring to all Christian and human life and the self. As stated before the source of this experience is the entrustment of Mary at the Cross and following this the historical experience of individuals and communities.

Pope Paul VI in *Marialis Cultus* (Culture of Mary), 1974, encouraged theologians, biblical scholars, and pastoral educators in their writings, preaching and teaching regarding Mary that they should include aspects from Scripture, theology, anthropology, ecumenism, and liturgy.

In each of these areas Peyton was ahead of the curve. Biblically, he was always cautious to provide the biblical citations for the Mysteries of the Rosary; in film productions he would have a biblical scholar either on site or a reviewer of biblical accuracy. Anthropologically his understanding of Mary was as a woman, a sister a mother. His evangelization efforts were to the family and the spiritual well being of humankind. Theologically, especially obvious is his work at the Vatican Council II, where he lobbied the great theologians of the Council, liturgically he lobbied for the rosary and family prayer to be made liturgical prayers. Ecumenically he was inclusive of other faiths and religions, many times having a religious leader of another denomination on the podium of the Rosary rallies. His thought on family prayer was for all families regardless of their particular faith. His Marian understanding was tested and approved by bishops, Popes, and other theologians.

#### **Plate Five: Peyton's Marian Profile**

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<sup>5</sup> Hilda Graef, *Mary, A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 417.

For this plate I would simply like to present (read) some of Peyton's actual words regarding his understanding of Mary and his role in Marian evangelization.

### **His Home in Ireland**

Entitled: My Magnificat

"In the morning of my life, God made the world around me and the people I lived with a mirror to reflect His Beauty, Goodness and Love....In my father's village where I spent most of the nineteen years of my growing, I became very close to God. On Sundays, the roads like the spokes of a wheel reaching to its hub were dotted by small groupings of parishioners walking the winding roads to the chapel at the foothills of the mountains. In that chapel the priest, the Mass and the Tabernacle made Christ present. In my home, the Family Rosary prayed night after night, brought Mary to life."<sup>6</sup>

### **Peyton's dream of becoming a priest.**

"I was happy when I was sent to mind the cows, which meant that I was to confine them to grazing in one part of a field when the other part was planted with potatoes, oats, or hay. Then I could indulge my dream without fear of interruption, and I would think of God and His Blessed Mother and the beauty of heaven, and I would pray for the realization of my great ambition."<sup>7</sup>

### **First Evangelization to a farmer whose family did not pray the rosary.**

"I approached the man and said: 'Out in the fields killing yourself but you're missing the essential act of life, you're abrogating your spiritual leadership.' I think it was at this time that God and Mary chose for me what would later become my life's work, to bring into the homes of the Earth".<sup>8</sup>

### **Following a conversation with Father Hagerty, CSC regarding his cure from Tuberculosis**

"I felt that he was building a bridge for me over the chasm that spelt the difference between theory and reality, that he was leading me a cross that bridge so that I could see Mary, could walk with her, realize that she was real person who would listen, love, respond."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Patrick Peyton, 1990, (Manila, Philippines), AHCFM 05-01-25-24-00, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Peyton, *All For Her*, 29

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Peyton, "Talk in Milwaukee", April 3, 1968, AHCFM, 01-26-12.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Peyton, *All For Her*, p. 75.

I will not say that I saw Mary for the first time while he talked, but I know I saw her with new clarity and intensity, so that I could say in my heart: ‘Mother, I believe that you are alive, that you are real, that you are a woman, that you have eyes, a face, a smile, a memory, an intelligence, a heart.’<sup>10</sup>

## **Ordination**

He writes of his feelings at the time of his ordination, he expresses that his whole life welled up in a single vision before his eyes.

“It was a terrifying experience but a supremely salutary one. For when the vision passed, what remained was that I was now by ordination another Christ and that consequently Christ’s Mother was more than ever before, my mother. If in the past she had behaved with such delicacy toward me, what could I not now expect from her, now that I was another Christ, the very fruit of her womb?”<sup>11</sup>

## **About the films he produced**

“The longing of my life is that these pictures will be worthy of Our Blessed Mother, that her judgment, her sense of values will be fully satisfied by the perfection of these films.”<sup>12</sup>

## **Talk at a Rally in Spain, 1956**

“When I was a priest, I wanted to give everything to her; my priesthood, my body, my soul, my voice, my strength, everything for six long months after my ordination I begged God to show me the way by which I could thank Mary for all the good things she did for me, and God answered; His answer was quick and sure and certain.”<sup>13</sup>

## **Talk given in the Holy Land (Nazareth), 1971.**

“Mary is for me a great strength; she is my spirituality; she is my peace, she is my prayer; she is my purity; she is my sureness; she is my defense, my protection. From her heart and from her arms and with her strength I respond to the Most Blessed Trinity and to Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to my fellow-man, her strengths are mine-my feeble strength becomes strong in hers.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Patrick Peyton *All For Her*, p. 76

<sup>11</sup> Patrick Peyton, *All For Her*, p.85.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Peyton, “The Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary (Rosary Films), 1956-57, AHCFM 09-01-01=111.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick Peyton, Rally in Spain, 1956, AHCFM 02-04-03-68-00

<sup>14</sup> Patrick Peyton, Talk at Nazareth, May 24, 1971 AHCFM (Archive Holy Cross Family Ministries), 01-07-06-00