

The Blessed Mother in the Life of Blessed Zdenka Schelingova

Sister Zdenka was led to a reverence for Mary at home in Catholic surroundings in the village of Krivá in Orava, where she grew up in the with her family. This reverence deepened during her formation for consecrated life. Sister Zdenka, as a Sister of Mercy of the Holy Cross, lived from the spiritual heritage of the founders – Fr. Theodosius Florentini and blessed Mother Mary Teresa Scherer. In the hourly prayer, she daily recommended herself to the heart of our blessed Mother Mary and to the wounds of the Lord Jesus. In Mary's heart and in Jesus' wounds, she found a safe shelter and protection. Reverence for Mary has its firm place in our community's spiritual heritage, especially respect for Mary and for her Immaculate Heart; and this had an influence on Zdenka's spirituality. Sister Zdenka was a true admirer of Mary. The meditations and prayers to Mary she wrote in her notebook, witness to it. There are prayers to the Sorrowful Mother, to the Mother of Perpetual Help and to the Immaculate Mary. We can also find deep meditative texts. These thoughts can become a source for meditation and encouragement for us also. "Everyday you have to be a continuous *fiat* according to the example of Mary, and so renew and carry his incarnation in your heart." In Mary, Sister Zdenka found an example of how to be at the Lord's disposal daily and follow his intentions. It is a continuous actual programme for everyone who wants to live in accordance with God's will and make progress in the spiritual life. It means to say "yes" to God every day. As Mary, we can also bring Jesus into this world in acts of surrender to God's will. With Jesus in our hearts, we can live in service of charitable, merciful love. Sister Zdenka appealed to Mary also with this request: "O, Maria, give me deep humility and courage to serve others. Magnify, my soul, its Queen and extol her majesty!" She knew that the humble Virgin can teach us humility; that the serving Virgin can teach us willing service to others. Sister Zdenka loved Mary and she turned to her in intimate prayer. She asked her to be her leader and the protector of her chastity. In confidence in Mary's interceding, she gave her life into her protection. In Zdenka's notebook, among prayers to Mary, this prayer to the Immaculate has a special beauty and depth. "Immaculate Virgin, who attracts virgins by the scent of your virtues, be not only our Queen and example, but also a mighty intercessor. And show that you are a Mother for us. You are a famous example of the life of reconciliation, to which we are glad to be called. You, who so ardently wish us to love Jesus, reveal to us your mysteries of love!" For Sister Zdenka, Mary was the Queen, example, intercessor and in the end Mother and Teacher of love to Jesus. How many inspirations are also here for those of us consecrated, but for all admirers of Mary, too. Have recourse to Mary as to the mediator of all graces; Mary is the certain and safe way to Jesus. She will lead us nowhere else, but only to him. She herself gets lost in humility, only Jesus should be honoured in human hearts and lives. We can also read in the blessed Zdenka's notebook: "The purest Virgin, as an Immaculate Dove, you took the needs of people to the Most Holy Wounds of Jesus. Ask your Son to accept us into the deep wound of his Heart together with you...You grasp Jesus' Heart in order to give him to us. Grasp our hearts also and give them

to Jesus... Remember us in the kingdom of your Divine Son. Immaculate Virgin, give us Jesus, give us love!" A desire for learning love for Jesus in Mary's school appears in Zdenka's notes also in another place: "Mary, Mother of Beautiful Love, teach me to love Jesus!" Mary always points us to what is essential, what is important for our salvation – to love Jesus and live his joyful message in serving people. Sister Zdenka was fully conscious of it, and that is why the reverence for Mary had an important position in her spiritual life. Let us also pray with blessed Zdenka: Mary, remember us in the kingdom of your Divine Son. Immaculate Virgin, give us Jesus, give us love! You, who so ardently wish us to love Jesus, reveal to us your mysteries of love!"