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TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

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MARIAN SEMINAR



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The saying in Kannada goes like this “**Devarru Ohbharu Allavu namagallu**”. (God is one but has many names.) Similarly, the Blessed Virgin Mary is one but she is revered by many names. This aspect of hers makes us bow our heads and honor her in our daily life. The month of October is dedicated in honor of “**Our Lady of the Rosary**”. So let us love to recite the Rosary and pray to her.

This feast was instituted by Pope Pius V in the year of 1571. It was said that Christians were victorious because of the Help of the holy Mother of God invoked by saying of the Rosary. This celebration urges all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary who was in a special way associated with the incarnation, passion and glorious Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

This year is even more special because we celebrate the centenary of the apparition of Fatima. These hundred years are of Grace for the Church and for all us. That is why we the Montfortian have greater joy in celebrating these events in our congregational life also. St Louis Marie De Montfort, our founder father has called us to pray the Rosary three times a day, May we be awakened by this call to pray three or even four Rosaries; that is the mysteries of Joy, Light, Glory and Sorrow. The Rosary is said to be the breviary of the people. Why not of the Religious too? We the consecrated people should be examples to our brothers and sisters in prayer. St. Louis Marie De Montfort says that when we call Mary then she will in return call Jesus. Do we really say Hail Mary from the bottom of our heart or do we do pay lip service in our daily Rosary time. It is the month of October that invites us to re-dedicate our time for the Rosary.

When we pray the Hail Mary, we pray “Blessed are you among women”. Why is she the blessed among women? St Louis Marie De Montfort gives us different reasons. Mary alone could bring Jesus into this world. Her womb alone was the first tabernacle where Jesus stayed and Mary is the first person to pray by looking down to God that is Jesus on her lap. Fourthly she is the only person who was carried to heaven body and soul.

Therefore let us honor the Blessed Virgin Mary especially in this month by praying the Rosary without fail. As St Louis Marie De Montfort has said through Mary to Jesus so also without Mary no Jesus. When we pray the Rosary, we do proclaim the gospel. Thus we become carriers of good news to one another.

Jerome Gonsalves, smm

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Thomas Mathew

Alan SMM

To Jesus Through Mary

DIRECTOR

Montfort Marian Centre

Montfort Fathers, Maria Bhavan

Christ School Road, Bangalore - 29

Mobile : +91 9448845137

E-mail : mcibgl17@gmail.com

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The Holy Rosary

Janet Rego

In 1571, Pope Pius V called for the whole of Europe to pray the Rosary for the victory at the Battle of Lepanto, Austria, in which the Christian belligerents included the Papal States and this Christian victory at Lepanto, was a favor, won due to the recitation of the Rosary. At first this Christian victory at Lepanto was celebrated as the feast of “Our Lady of Victory” on 7th October, but was later renamed as the “Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary”. This feast is an invitation to celebrate and give thanks to the countless benefits and blessings of the Lord bestowed upon us through the intercession of our Blessed Mother and the Queen.

According to tradition, the Rosary was given to St. Dominic (died in 1221), the founder of the Order of Preachers or Dominicans, in an apparition by the Blessed Virgin Mary, in 1214, in the Church of Prouille. St. Dominic preached a form of the Rosary in France, during the time when the Albigensian heresy was destroying the Faith in that region. Tradition has it that the Blessed Virgin herself asked for the practice to fight against heresy and sin. In 1470, one of Dominic's future disciples,

Alain de la Roche, instituted the “Rosary Confraternities” (a spiritual international association of the Catholic Church, under the care and guidance of the Dominican Order) to promote the recitation of the Rosary. The form of the Rosary we have today is believed to have commenced since then. Saints and Popes over the centuries have highly recommended the Rosary, the greatest prayer in the Catholic Church after the Mass and Liturgy of the Hours.

During the apparition to St. Bernadette at Lourdes, and the three children - Lucia, Jacintha and Francesco at Fatima on May 13, 1917, Mary instructed them “Say the Rosary every day

to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war”. In her final apparition, she said, “I am the Lady of the Rosary” and therefore, this Marian apparition got the title of “Our Lady of the Rosary”. The word Rosary means “crown of roses”, a spiritual bouquet given to the Blessed Mother. St. Louis De Montfort, who had a great devotion to Mary, tells us that reciting the Rosary produces spiritual roses, which will never wilt or die.



The Rosary usually in the Dominican form is a prayer used especially in the Catholic Church, named for the String of Knots or beads used to count the component prayers. Today, it is said by using the



Rosary beads. Through the devotion of the Rosary, we are led to Christ in a unique way, among the other devotions in the Church.

St. John Paul II tells us “The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at the heart a Christocentric prayer. It has all the depth of the Gospel messages in its entirety, of which it can be said to be a compendium”. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant graces, as though from the very hands of the “Mother of the Redeemer” (Apostolic Letter on the Most Holy Rosary, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, introduction). St. John Paul II implored the faithful to pray the Rosary, especially for peace in the world. He wanted them to pray faithfully to grow in holiness. It is a prayer of great power and importance in the Christian life. It is one that is capable of healing wounds in our world and that focuses on Christ by seeing through the eyes of His and our Mother. He said the Rosary, a great spiritual weapon, transforms our life.

The Mysteries: The Mysteries of the Holy Rosary center on the events of Jesus Christ's

life. When we recite the Mysteries - Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful and Glorious - we accompany Mary with the intention of making reparation to Her Immaculate Heart, and we honor and learn to

imitate the Mysteries and the virtues of the life, death, passion and glory of Jesus and Mary.

As a general rule, depending upon the season, the Joyful Mysteries are recited on Monday and Saturday, the Luminous Mysteries on Thursday, the Sorrowful Mysteries on Tuesday and Friday, and the Glorious Mysteries on Wednesday and Sunday.

The Joyful Mysteries - are marked by the joy radiating from the event of the Incarnation. This is clear from the very first mystery, the Annunciation, where Virgin Mary is greeted by Archangel Gabriel as “Hail Mary full of Grace”

The Luminous Mysteries - moving from the infancy and the hidden life in Nazareth to the public life of Jesus, we contemplate in a special way the 'mysteries of light'. Jesus is the “Light of the World” (Jn 8:12).

The Sorrowful Mysteries - the Gospels give us a great prominence to the Sorrowful Mysteries of Christ with Christian piety, especially during the Lenten devotion of the

Way of the Cross which focuses on the individual moments of the Passion of Christ. This is the culmination of the revelation of God's love for mankind and the source of our salvation (Jn 3:16).

The Glorious Mysteries

- the contemplation of the "Risen Lord" from His crucifixion and death. The Rosary has always expressed this knowledge born of faith and invited the believer to pass beyond the darkness of the Passion so that we gaze upon Christ's glory in the Resurrection and Ascension.

Mother Mary has, through her apparitions revealed to us that the Rosary is a most precious prayer to the Father and a sure means of leading souls to Heaven. She says, "work in your heart with the most Holy Rosary and God who sees your heart, will bless you abundantly. Do not abandon the Rosary; it is the holiest of my jewels". The devotion of the Holy Rosary is followed by Catholics and the faithful all over the World.

The 15 specific Promises made by Mother Mary for those devoted to the Rosary (told to St. Dominic and Blessed Alan when she gave the Rosary) :



1. Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary shall receive signal graces.
2. I promise my special protection and greatest graces to all those who shall recite the Rosary.
3. The Rosary shall be powerful armour against hell. It will destroy vice, decrease sin, and defeat heresies.
4. It will cause virtue and good works to flourish, it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will withdraw the hearts of people from the love of the world and its vanities, and will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means.
5. The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish.
6. Whoever shall recite the Rosary devoutly, applying oneself to the consideration of its sacred mysteries shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise them in His justice, they shall not perish by

an un-provided death; if they be just, they shall remain in the grace of God, and become worthy of eternal life.

7. Whoever shall have a true devotion of the Rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.
8. Those who are faithful to recite the Rosary shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces; at the moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the Saints in Paradise.
9. I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.
10. The faithful children of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in heaven.
11. You shall obtain all you ask of me by the recitation of the Rosary.
12. All those who propagate the holy Rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my Divine Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.
14. All who recite the Rosary are my children and brothers of my only Son, Jesus Christ.

15. Devotion of my Rosary is a great sign of predestination.

The Virgin Mother will never abandon her children who recite the Holy Rosary. She has said "the family that prays together stays together". She is a great advocate and mother, who prays and cares for us with immense love.

October is the month the Church devotes to the Holy Rosary. The devotion of the Holy Rosary is a popular contemplative family and community prayer among the faithful. The Rosary has been a unique weapon in spiritual warfare and is especially suited in praying for peace throughout the world and a great defender in family life. It praises God through the 'Our Father', contemplates the life of Jesus and Mary, and seeks Mary's motherly intercession and guidance, which brings us closer to Jesus. It is a prayer and devotion that has changed the lives of many. The Rosary serves as a guide and constant reminder of how our lives must be shaped by our desire to be more and more like Christ. Our Mother quietly shares this truth with us in the movements of the Rosary through the Mysteries of Christ's life, death and Resurrection.

Message for the Seminar

Michael Sahayaraj, SMM

There is a feeling among Christians especially us as Catholics, that Mary and Mariology does not seem to be a major concern among the academic theologians. However, recently there has been a modest emergence of the figure of Mary in different areas and traditions. A Renewed interest in Mariology indicates that Mary can play a constructive role in contemporary theological discussions. It also affirms that Mary deserves her place in theological contemplations.

Even at the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Marian imprint on the Scriptures was evident to both Catholics and Protestants. At the time of the Reformation, Anglican Archbishop Thomas Cranmer produced a prayer book to be used in evening prayer. It included Mary's song, the Magnificat, from Luke chapter one. The effect of its use was to celebrate Mary as the model, the pioneer, and the archetype of the saved sinner. The shift here is seen from Mary as a focus of devotion to Mary as the first beneficiary from the incarnation. Thus straightaway we reflect a changed perspective on Mary.

A true understanding of Mary and her role in our salvation history can come only from a

clear understanding of the scripture. Her role in the salvation history as St. Louis Marie ardently says "No Heavenly gift is given to men which does not pass through her hands, such indeed is the will of God, who has decreed that we should have all things through Mary..." (TD. 25).



Mary is the bridge between the Old and the New Covenants. She is the meeting point of the Old and the New Testaments. Mary's role in salvation history becomes apparent when we see that she is the living example of important themes in the Old and the New Testaments: as the Daughter of Zion, the Ark of the Covenant, the new Eve working with the new Adam.

For Biblical studies on Mary this is a time of rediscovery.

The biblical Mary of the apostolic community and the Fathers was deeply rooted in the Old Testament and the entire salvific message of the New Testament.

Mary does appear outside the New Testament, but the documents start looking very much like pieces of ancient fiction. The best source for her is a document from the



second century called the *Proto-Evangelium* of James. It's a parochial text and it talks in great detail about her parents, her upbringing, her age when she conceived Jesus and so on. The disappointing thing about it is that most of it is probably made up.

The fact that Mary is in the New Testament at all is significant because it deals with Jesus and the growth of the early church; there's actually very little reason to mention anything at all about Mary. The New Testament tells us very little about His father Joseph so the fact that she's prominent shows that there was some interest in Mary in the early church years.

The overwhelming presence of Mary in Scripture led both to the great definitions of Marian doctrine and the liturgical devotions. Without an understanding of the Scriptural portrait of Mary it is difficult to truly appreciate the Marian doctrines.

Today we all gather here to reflect on the theme Mary in Biblical Perspective. A true understanding of Mary and her role in salvation can come **only from a full understanding of the scripture.**

- Mary is the bridge, a meeting point between OT and NT covenants.
- Secret of Mary 1-2 Montfort shares with us the secret of Holiness: It is a Marian Mystical experience that leads us into a deeper union with Christ wisdom.

- **When we think of Mary the new Eve: The creative proposals from liberative thinking is:** Mary mother of new creation opens the door for recognizing God's Revelation and God's presence

The Marian center under the guidance of Fr. Peter Mascarenhas, SMM organizes various programs such as Seminars, Courses on Marian Studies, Spiritual Conferences etc. to rediscover Mary in our life. The Centre also undertakes to promote devotional practices such as organizing Marian pilgrimages, publishing Marian Magazines, conducting Marian retreats, Parish missions and Pilgrimages to Holy places both local and international. I thank you for your response and also request you to support this initiative and enrich yourselves in different aspects of Marian spirituality.

Let me conclude by quoting St. Louis Marie Montfort who refers to the gospel of Jn 19: 25-27 says "Let us bring Mary into our abode by consecrating ourselves unreservedly to her and to her Son, the incarnate Wisdom.

May this Marian seminar help us renew our vision in Christian life as Disciples of Christ and to live the spirit of Mary.

The Grotto of Our Lady of Favours

Dominic Pulickapadavil, smm

We the members of the COMPANY OF MARY have great devotion to Our Blessed Mother. We celebrate all the feasts of our Blessed Mother and pray the Holy Rosary daily.

The Grotto of Our Lady of Favours is situated at Guru Mandir (place of prayer or place of training the disciples of God) of Montfort Fathers, 22 Lalitha Mahal Road, Siddarthanagar post, Mysore, Karnataka, India..

A small grotto was built in the year 1987. Our students began to visit the grotto and pray the Rosary in the evenings. Slowly, all those who came here for daily Mass, began to pray at this grotto including people of other faiths.

All those who have asked a favour from Our Blessed Mother, never



went back empty-handed because she is the Most Favoured one of God, the Master piece of God's creation, the Immaculate and the most worthy Mother of Jesus Christ. According to St. Louis Marie De Montfort, to achieve anything, one must seek the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary who is our good mother and will intercede for us and grant us the favour we ask for, through her son Jesus Christ. TO JESUS THROUGH MARY.

As more and more people began to experience their prayers being heard, signs and wonders have taken place in their lives. They experienced the healing touch of Jesus through the Blessed Mother, the Guru Mandir community



began the Holy Rosary, and Novena Masses to Our Lady of Favours on First Saturdays and Holy Rosary and novena on all Saturdays. In Lk 4:18-19 we read that Jesus is sent to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. This is the mission of Our Blessed Mother

the most favoured one of God. And she is faithful to her mission until the salvation of all is achieved and for all Eternity.

The present staff at Guru Mandir, Rev. Frs. Dominic and Amal Raj seeing the keen interest of our students, Montfort associates and people of all faiths and for their spiritual nourishments, began to organise the Holy Rosary, the novena and Eucharistic celebrations on all Saturdays to spread the devotion of our Lady of Favours. The devotion continues to spread among the seminarians and the people of God by which all are motivated to pray through the intercession of Our Lady of Favours who gives her son to those who are in need of Favours.

May Our Lady of Favours intercede for each and every one of us and may the perfect love of God reign in our hearts. Let us thank and

praise the Lord for helping us to construct this Renovated Grotto and Bless and consecrate it



for the greater Glory of God on 12th October 2017. Most Rev. Dr. K. A. William, Bishop of Mysore blessed the Grotto and Fr. Michael Sahayaraj inaugurated the

grotto in the presence of our Montfortian Confreres, Priests, Religious and the people of God from the diocese of Mysore, Our Montfort Associates, Prabhuvani Retreat team led by Bro. Anand and team, and our friends, well wishers, and our students. May Our Lady of Favours invoke God's abundant Blessings upon each one of us, in our diocese of Mysore, our families, communities and the entire world at large... May all those who visit here and ask the favours from God through our Lady of Favours be filled with the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Spirit and receive spiritual and material blessings and divine Protection in their lives.

The Holy Name of Mary

Jeevagan Pascal

I lost my mother at the age of 9. My mother was a convert. She was so fond of Mother Mary. That's why she was baptized with the name **Mariam**. My memory of my mother is always of her reciting the rosary with the beads on her hand. That has been my inspiration to have special devotion to Mother Mary. I joined the seminary after my graduation. I was able to adjust to the seminary formation and the stay over there without being homesick for a week. Then I felt lonely and the separation from my family began to affect me. It was so hard for me to remain and continue my formation. So I decided to leave the seminary. But something within me kept me back in the seminary. I was upset and unhappy and not interested in life. For about two and half months I cried. Finally on 10th August 2006, around 10.15 p.m. I walked to the chapel from the dormitory without being noticed by anybody. I rushed to the feet of Our Lady of Rosa Mystica. Deeply depressed and with tears flowing down I knelt before Mother Mary clinging to her feet. I spoke to her saying.... Ma I lost my earthly mother at an early age. I was deprived of my mother's love, care and concern. All throughout my life you have been my Mother. Nobody can satisfy me and replace my mother's love and presence except you. I wanted to go back home but something is not permitting me to go. I am totally depressed and worried. I do not know what decision I should take. If God wants me for His ministry help me to say YES to His invitation provided you assure me that you will

be with me always in my life. You have to comfort me and protect me from all sorts of confusions, anxious moments, trails and temptations. And I swear that I will become a priest the faithful servant of God surrendering myself totally to His will to be fulfilled in me. I will be praising and acclaiming Your Holy Name (MARY) until my last breath after which I returned to the dormitory. On 24th April 2015 I was ordained in Our Lady of Assumption Cathedral in Vellore, Tamil Nadu. During the ceremony I was thanking God for having given us such a wonderful Mother to lead each and every one of us to God accompanying us in times of trials and temptations. I thanked Mother Mary for her love, embracing hands, consolation and protection all through the 10 years of my formation. And I praised and acclaimed the Holy Name of Mother Mary for all she has been to me. It continues till this moment... as a faithful priest to God the Almighty and to my loving and living Mother Mary.

It is good to know the meaning and the power of the name Mary.

Historically, especially in the Jewish tradition, names are very important and often contain great significance and meaning. A few of the many names that had great significance in the Bible are Abraham ("father of a multitude"), Sarah ("mother of nations"), Israel ("having power with God"), Peter ("rock") and of course

Jesus ("God saves"). When names are providentially given by God as recorded in the Sacred Scripture, they are often a clue to His future plans for that person and a sign of their role in salvation history. Mary's name is no different. She has the role par excellence in salvation history as the Christ-bearer, the Mother of the world's Savior.

What does the name "Mary" mean?

It is uncertain which ancient language "Mary" is derived from (whether Egyptian or Hebrew), what specific root word it stems from, and what senses of grammar are involved with its interpretation. However, there are several good candidates for root words that the name "Mary" could be derived from. Mary's name could be derived from any (or more) of these meanings: "bitterness", "sea", "bitter sea", "light", "Star of the Sea", "Lady of the sea", "myrrh of the sea", "mistress of the sea", "loved by the Lord", "Lady", "beautiful one", "beautiful lady", and "ruling one." What is interesting is that all of these candidates for the meaning of Mary's name fit with what the Church teaches about the theological significance of the Mother of God.

Biblical understanding

The Blessed Evangelist Luke significantly says: "And the name of the Virgin was Mary" (Luke 1:27). This most holy, sweet, and worthy name was eminently fitting to so holy, sweet, and worthy a virgin. For Mary means a bitter sea, star of the sea, the illuminated. Mary is interpreted lady. Mary is a bitter sea to the demons; to men she is the star of the sea; to the angels she is illuminator, and to all creatures she is lady. Mary is interpreted: "a bitter sea"; this is

excellently suited to her power against the demons. Note in what way Mary is a sea, and in what way she is bitter, and how she is at once a sea and bitter. Mary is a sea by the abundant overflow of her graces; and Mary is a bitter sea by submerging the devil. Mary is indeed a sea by the super abounding Passion of her Son; Mary is a bitter sea by her power over the devil. Consider that Mary is called a sea because of the abundance of her graces.

It is written in Ecclesiastes: "All rivers flow into the sea" (Eccl1:7). The rivers are the graces of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Jesus said "He who believes in me drink. As the scripture said, Out of believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water (Jn 7:38). All the rivers flow into the sea because the graces of all the saints flow into Mary. For the river of the grace of the angels enters into Mary; and the river of the grace of the patriarchs enters into Mary; and the river of the grace of the Apostles enter into Mary; and the river of the grace of the martyrs enter into Mary; and the river of the grace of the confessors enter into Mary; and the river of the grace of the virgins enters into Mary. All rivers enter into the sea, that is, all graces enter into Mary. Therefore "In her is all grace of the way and of the truth, and in her is all hope of life and of virtue".

Mary is a sea by the abundant overflow of her graces; and Mary is a bitter sea by submerging the devil. Mary is indeed a sea by the super abounding Passion of her Son; Mary is a bitter sea by her power over the devil. Consider that Mary is called a sea because of the abundance of her graces.

Six Ways to Understand the Variety of Marian Titles and Feasts

Event: It means what took place in Christian history, narrated in the Sacred Scripture, i.e., the feast day of the Annunciation, which celebrates the Angel Gabriel's appearance to the Virgin Mary. Dogma: The beliefs that we have learned through Church doctrine, such as the feast day of the Solemnity of the Assumption, where Mary goes to heaven in body and soul.

Geographic: A title received commemorating Mary's apparitions in certain places, i.e., the feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes, where the Virgin Mary appeared to St. Bernadette.

Mary's Life: This is related to her live experiences as the mother of Jesus, i.e., the feast day of Our Lady of Sorrows, which focuses on her intense suffering and grief during the passion and death of our Lord.

Symbolism: This indicates some of Mary's powerful roles as an intercessor, and the way she guides us towards Christ, i.e., Our Lady Star of the Sea feast day. Under this title, the Virgin Mary intercedes as a guide and protector of those who travel or work at sea.

Virtue: The titles that were given to the Virgin Mary in honor of her multiples merits, i.e., the Immaculate Heart of Mary, where Catholics have recourse to her inspired by her love and perfect purity.

The message of our Blessed Mother can be summarized as a call to a stronger faith in our Lord Jesus, a deeper prayer life, a life of penance for the conversion of sinners, and the

offering of her consolation and help to anyone that turns to her. Through the Virgin Mary's apparitions and miraculous intercession, believers have increased their faith, their hope, their love, and they have spread the devotion to others, too.

The top ten titles of Mary

As befitting the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, Mary has numerous titles and names. It's fascinating that one person can have so many titles, but how else could we grasp the aspects of Our Lady merely by her given name? The Gospel of John doesn't even name Mary, only refers to her as the mother of Jesus. We need more. And so, after surveying her many titles, we present the admittedly subjective Top Ten Names of Mary.

1. **Theotokos:** Mary's first and most important title means "God bearer." The title, defined by the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D., refers to the Virgin Mary as the Mother of the incarnate Son of God.

2. **Immaculate Conception:** The 1854 dogma issued by Pope Pius IX refers to Mary's sinless nature at the moment of being conceived by her parents. The Immaculate Conception was the first time a Pope claimed a dogma to be infallible, even though the idea of papal infallibility would not be officially proclaimed for another 16 years. This is the definitive title of the Blessed Mother.

3. **Blessed Mother:** This seminal title derives from Gabriel's greeting to Mary at the Annunciation, where she is called "blessed" among all other women.

4. **Mother of Mercy:** Saint Odo, a 10th century abbot, is believed to be the first to call Mary by this name. In the 11th century, this title was incorporated into the prayer *Salve Regina*.

5. **Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal:** Mary's appearances to Catherine Labour in 1830 marked the beginning of modern Marian apparitions. Mary gave Sr. Catherine the design for this medal. The words on the medal prompted clarification on the Immaculate Conception, which became dogma in 1854.

6. **Our Lady of Mt. Carmel:** This is Mary of the brown scapular. The scapular comes to us through the vision of St. Simon Stock. Many miracles have been attributed to the scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

7. **Our Lady of Guadalupe:** This is the image Mary left on the cloak of Juan Diego. Our Lady called herself *coatlixopeuh*, which means "the one who crushes the serpent." The word is pronounced "quat-la-supe," from which is derived the English version of "Guadalupe."

8. **Mother of Perpetual Help:** This painting shows the Madonna and Child attended by the archangels Michael and Gabriel. The angels hold instruments central to the Passion. The painting is heart breaking. The Christ Child, having glimpsed the instruments of torture, runs to His mother's protection. His right foot is bare, indicating that he was so frightened he ran out without his sandal.

9. **Our Lady of Czestochowa, or The Black Madonna:** Poland's national shrine to Mary. Legend has it that St. Luke painted this icon on a table that Jesus built. Popes and pilgrims alike have recognized the miraculous nature of the

image.

10. **Queen of Peace:** Mary officially received this title during World War I in a proclamation by Pope Benedict XV. The Pope added "Queen of Peace" into the Litany of Loreto in his call for peace among the warring nations.

7 Quotes from the Saints, Scholars, and Mystics on the Holy Name of Mary

- "Let me say something concerning this name also, which is interpreted to mean Star of the sea, and admirably suits the Virgin Mother." - St. Bernard.
- "Mary means enlightener, because she brought forth the Light of the world. In the Syriac tongue, Mary signifies Lady." - St. Isidore of Seville
- "Mary means Star of the sea, for as mariners are guided to port by the ocean star, so Christians attain to glory through Mary's maternal intercession." - St. Thomas Aquinas
- "Therefore a certain Star has risen or us today: Our Lady, Saint Mary. Her name means Star of the sea; no doubt the Star of this sea which is the world. Therefore, we ought to lift up our eyes to this Star that has appeared on earth today in order that she may lead us, in order that she may enlighten us, in order that she may show us these steps so that we shall know them, in order that she may help us so that we may be able to ascend. And therefore it is a beautiful thing that Mary is placed in this stairway of which we are speaking, there where we must begin to climb. As the

Evangelist says, Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, so immediately at the very moment of our conversion she appears to us and receives us into her care and enlightens us in her light and accompanies us along this laborious path.” - St. Aelred

- “God the Father gathered all the waters together and called them the seas or maria [Latin, seas]. He gathered all His grace together and called it Mary or Maria . . . This immense treasury is none other than Mary whom the saints call the ‘treasury of the Lord.’ From her fullness all men are made rich.” - St. Louis de Montfort

We ought to lift up our eyes to this Star that has appeared on earth today in order that she may lead us, in order that she may enlighten us, in order that she may show us these steps so that we shall know them, in order that she may help us so that we may be able to ascend.

- “This most holy, sweet and worthy name was ‘eminently fitted to so holy, sweet and worthy a virgin. For Mary means a bitter sea, star of the sea, the illuminated or illuminatrix. Mary is interpreted Lady. Mary is a bitter sea to the demons; to men she is the Star of the sea; to the Angels she is illuminatrix, and to all creatures she is Lady.” - St. Bonaventure
- “Look to the star of the sea, call upon Mary ... in danger, in distress, in doubt, think of Mary, call upon Mary. May her name never be far from your lips, or far from your heart

... If you follow her, you will not stray; if you pray to her, you will not despair; if you turn your thoughts to her, you will not err. If she holds you, you will not fall; if she protects you, you need not fear; if she is your guide, you will not tire; if she is gracious to you, you will surely reach your destination.” - St. Bernard

What a wondrous name “MARY” that brings comfort and consolation to our soul. What blessing and graces we obtain whenever we utter the name MARY. Our heart melts when we recite her name devotedly. Our soul receives happiness and serenity when we call out our Mother’s name. Our tongue gets purified whenever we say her name. Our lips get cleansed whenever we sing her name. All the saints had experienced this fact in their lives. That’s why she is called and praised Queen of all angels and saints. Above all God’s salvation is assured whenever we praise her name with love and devotion. This is possible for those who have special love for Mother Mary. We are called for holy life. I am sure special love and devotion to Mother Mary and to her holy Name will make us all holy by her special Grace and the power of her Name.

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Mary A Prophetic Woman

Sr. Archana CMC

I have a symphony to sing, tidings to proclaim, a link to connect and a ladder to climb in the title of Mary the mother of God who is a prophetic woman, a woman of the prophets and a living prophetess for all eternity. In a world riddled with contempt for life, hatred for what is right, reckless in its pursuit of pleasure and strife, torn apart in rivalry, entangled with corruption, groping in darkness, she is the luminous star that shines before us forever to inspire and guide us to walk in the light. She is ever so bright to shed the rays of grace on all who flee to her for help. She is in haste to extend her tender heart to heal the wounds of those torn in pieces. Her gaze always follows the ways of the ones who seek her protection. She is the woman who faced and knows the struggles and problems of humanity. She, who has experienced the utter frailties and bitterness of life, has a compassionate heart that swells up with love, kindness and mercy. Her image reflects divinity and invites all of us to be holy leaving behind our crooked ways. Her presence brings down the heavens for us to abide in Jesus' love. I have hundred mouths to affirm her prophetic role in the church. God chose Mary to be the arch of heaven, the spiritual vessel, to be the mother of the savior for



God's action in entering the human world as Jesus in order to save humanity. She could be called the heaven; she is greater than heaven in surpassing dignity. God made her a rich treasure-house, To-day the life-giving treasury and abyss of charity is hidden in immortal death. She meets it without fear, who conceived death's destroyer, who broke the bondage of all passion, sowed the seed of

obedience to God and the Father, and was the beginning of life to the whole human race. Mary in the lives of people is expressed through the title we recite daily in our litany, which is the expression of human experience. It is indeed the human experience revealed.

Her image reflects divinity and invites all of us to be holy leaving behind our crooked ways. Her presence brings down the heavens for us to abide in Jesus' love. I have hundred mouths to affirm her prophetic role in the church

Who is a prophet?

Prophets are not created in conferences and prophetic seminars, but rather in the womb and ordained by God Himself. "Before you were born I sanctified you..." The only fingerprints

that should be on the prophet's heart are God's (Jer. 1:5). A prophet receives a word from God for the world. The prophet must be open to receive the word and fearless in proclaiming it. A true prophet proclaims God's word and not his or her own. Those who work in the area of justice and peace tend to have an awareness of some of the great injustices of our day and want to do something about these situations. God is very compassionate, very caring for His people - especially when He makes Himself known in periods of crisis. The appearance of His prophets are often linked with major crises. So also we can see how God answered the cry of the Israelites in the midst of their crisis, in the birth of Jesus becoming man through the chosen blessed container, Mary. God allows Mary his mother to still appear to us in the midst of our crises with a great and challenging message assuring us with her presence and intercession.

Mary as a Prophetic woman:

Scholars have noted that Luke's portrait of Mary, Lk.1:26-56, characterizes her as a prophet. We think of Mary, not as outspoken and bold for justice, but as quiet and passive. Yet here in the Canticle of Mary in Luke 3:46-55, we get a different picture of Mary. Here Mary sings a song of praise to God who shakes up the status quo, who lifts up the humble like her, and chooses her, rather than a queen or princess, to be the bearer of God's Son. She foreshadows her son's prophetic ministry that will do the same thing. The strongest support for viewing Mary as a prophet is found in the Lukan infancy narrative,

especially in the three components of Lk 1:26-56: the annunciation, the visit of Elizabeth and the *Magnificat*. The literary characteristics of this text, its similarities to Old Testament narratives, and the theological motifs of Mary's speech are all suggestive of prophetic activity.

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Announcing a Birth was for Commissioning a Prophet

The Lukan annunciation clearly fits both the hero-commissioning and the prophetic call story patterns. This is not surprising since all three literary forms involve divine/ angelic epiphanies, which typically evoke a response of fear, followed by a heavenly communication, reluctance on the part of the hearer, and so on. The Lukan annunciation contains more of the elements of a prophetic call narrative than either Isaiah's or Ezekiel's call. Mary herself prophesied, and her oracle, the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:47-55), is perhaps the most loved and recited prophecy delivered by a woman prophet. Mary's words...resound across the centuries as authoritatively as the oracles of Isaiah, Amos, or Ezekiel. The Annunciation scene is nothing less than a prophetic vocation story on the model of the call to Moses at the burning bush. After questioning, she gives her free

assent, launching her life on an adventure whose outcome is unknown. Sign of her solidarity with God's project, her very pregnancy takes place through the overshadowing of the Spirit. When Elizabeth sees Mary, she is filled with the Holy Spirit, and cries out in recognition that Mary is "*the mother of my Lord*" (1: 43). The people of God likewise cried out when they welcomed the ark of the presence of God (1 Ch 15: 28; 2 Ch 5: 13). David exclaimed, "*How can the ark of the Lord come to me?*" (2 Sam 6: 9).

Mary Objects to the Prophetic Call:

In preparation for her prophetic song of praise to God in Lk1:46-55, Mary goes through all the classic steps of the call of prophets familiar to us from the Old Testament: God's initial call, God's task, prophet's objection, God's reassurance, prophet's acceptance of call. First comes her call and her commissioning to her prophetic task: "Hail, favored one . . . you will conceive in your womb"(Lk 1:28). The Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel saw visions and heard God's commission in the midst of them. Isaiah witnessed a great heavenly gathering, in the midst of which God tells him to go and prophesy to the people (Is. 6:9). Ezekiel saw an elaborate vision of a cloud and four-winged creatures in the midst of which God gives him a message to go and tell to the people of Israel (Ezek 2:3). Jeremiah is told by God: "I have appointed you to be a prophet to the nations." In Mary's case, God sent the angel Gabriel to confront her and tell her she has been chosen. The angel doesn't say, "Your mission, Mary, should you choose to accept it." The angel says to her, "And now, you will conceive in your

womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus." Like other prophets, Mary is informed what she is going to do. She is not consulted about what role she would like to play.

Prophetic nature in the Bible

The prophetic nature of mother Mary is proved in the Bible in the following: **BE PERFECT:** "That the man of God may be perfect..." (2 Tim 3:17). The Lord wants His people to find the place where they fit into His plan perfectly. We need to be perfectly fitted into the "joint" in which God wants us. He found Mary who is full of grace having no vile as a perfect person fitting to his plan in accomplishing his mission. **BE THOROUGHLY FURNISHED TO ALL GOOD WORKS.**"...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works..." (2 Tim 3:17). God wants us to be fully equipped with the armament that He has provided. The *Fiat* of Mary was the armor she used to furnish all the works entrusted to her. **BE INSPIRED BY THE SPIRIT:** "Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim 3:16). The man (or woman) of God will have a relationship with the Lord, in which God is so near, that He breathes into them revelation, comfort, instruction, reproof, rebuke, exhortation, teaching, etc. It was true with Mary as she always walked in his presence, heeding to the voice of the spirit, though not clear she hurried to move to Egypt when asked by Joseph to whom the angel appeared in a dream. Prophets assume their prophetic duties with a unique mix of life experiences coupled with an individualized personality shaped by their physical and mental limitations. Prophets, of

course, are human. However, many were the occasions when the prophet changed the course of history by being the right person for the right time in the right place with the right message. But for Mary, the message of God spoken silently, given flesh to it, witnessed the word for all eternity remain true and right at all time as the Orchard Test.

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Prophetic quality in Mary

Prophets must be full of the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Her entire life was led by the spirit. She was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit she could foresee and proclaim the *Magnificat* that exhibits what future generations will call her. She could foretell that the generations would call her blessed. A prophet must be totally obedient to God. Mary always obeyed the will of God. Her total obedience is proclaimed by Jesus "who is my mother and my brother and sister.. Anyone who obeys the will of my father... The prophetic person must be at peace with God. They must always speak out of their relationship with God and not out of reaction to a situation. We find

Mary in complete calmness even in the midst of the suffering and misunderstanding. Waiting is an important aspect of the prophetic ministry. Much time will be spent waiting on God. Mary had to wait long time for his word to be fulfilled. It comes out of a dedicated commitment to God and his purposes. The first loyalty of a prophet is to the truth. Mary had credibility, because truth and integrity permeated her entire life. Pride kills prophets. Vanity is the greatest threat to prophetic ministry. God will have to establish a deep work of humility in the life of anyone he intends to speak for him. Mary lived in Humility inviting us to lead a life of humility. As a prophet she announced the truth that God scatters the proud and raises the lowly. Loyalty to God must never be shaken, whatever the circumstances. Loyalty to God will manifest in courage and boldness. There are numerous examples of Mary standing boldly like a prophet in the face of the challenges and the authorities of the worldly powers. Fulfilling the prophetic ministry will take great boldness. God spends many years preparing a prophet, generally by putting them "through the mill". Sometimes the preparation of the prophet may include a time in the isolation of the wilderness which we find in the lives of Mary. Mary's heart was pierced not once but

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several times as her Son had to fulfill God's will of saving humanity.

Mary is a Prophetess forever

George Tavad's, *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary*, brings to our mind the avenue of historical memory and is indicative of the multiplicity of images and roles that have been envisioned for the mother of Jesus. Among them one could list the following: handmaid of the Lord, matriarch, ideal Disciple, Mother of God, Intercessor, Mediatrix, Second Eve, Eternal feminine, Queen of heaven, Virgin and Prophet. She is a prophet who lives forever. Mary distributes the graces of Jesus to humanity which were obtained by the Divine Redeemer and the immaculate human Co-redemptrix at Calvary. For this role of motherly "nourishing" in the spiritual order, she is referred to by the Popes of the last two centuries as the "Mediatrix of all graces." Mary also intercedes for all humanity in the spiritual order, especially at historic times of great danger and difficulty, bringing the needs of humanity to the throne of Christ her Son. She also intercedes for and announces the coming of the Holy Spirit, which she did so effectively in the Upper Room gathered with the first disciples before the First Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:14). For this role of maternal intercession, Mary has been referred to as the "Advocate" for the human family since the second century of the Church. Through her silence the voice of God is echoed and proclaimed to the whole universe and her words are still relevant and grace effecting. She is a prophetess for ever with the famous words at the wedding of Cana, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn

2:5).

Mary the Queen of Prophets:

There are many titles in our Litany which may well have been thought of in the early days of the expectation of the "Woman"- "Mother of Christ, or Messiah," "Cause of our Joy," "Vessel of Honor" and so on, for the Woman who would bring forth the Messiah would be all these things. So that in that first prophecy at the Gate of the Garden of Eden, Mary is by right of title just as much the Queen-Mother, the Queen of Prophets, as in the fulfillment thousands of years later when She was the Queen-Mother of Bethlehem. The first Prophet was God; Mary is the Mother of God. What a tremendous significance that gives to her title, "Queen of Prophets." Mary is Queen of Prophets not only because the prophets foretold Her, and in foretelling her revered her for the great office for which she was destined-that of "the Woman" of the Redemption-but also because She was a prophetess Herself, the greatest of all the prophets: "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior-for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." The *Magnificat* proclaims her a prophet without a peer. She fulfills the prophecy as she stands at the door of Elizabeth, looking back to the "Woman" of Genesis who was to crush the serpent's head, and looking forward to the Apocalypse, to the Woman Clothed with the Sun, the Woman called Blessed by all generations, not only the generation of the time, but the generation of eternity. Truly then, this title, Queen of Prophets, though not made much of generally, is one of the most important

She fulfills the prophecy as she stands at the door of Elizabeth, looking back to the "Woman" of Genesis who was to crush the serpent's head, and looking forward to the Apocalypse, to the Woman Clothed with the Sun, the Woman called Blessed by all generations, not only the generation of the time, but the generation of eternity.

in the Litany, the one that as a golden thread runs all through the Scriptures from first to last. And there is one final thought about Mary the Prophet. It is that she is a prophet for us. Many times since her Assumption she has come back to earth to give a message to mankind, to preach penance, to promise blessings. We ourselves shall never have the vision of her till, by the grace of God; we come to Paradise, but all our lives she has been prophesying to our souls, illuminating the way, showing us how we may come to her and Her Divine Son. Blessed are we if we heed this Queen of Prophets.

Mary Prophetic woman in Quran:

Just as Catholicism has and continues to interpret Mary in varying ways, the Islamic perception of Mary also has a rich history of interpretation. The figure of Mary is highly venerated not only in popular Muslim piety, but within the Islamic sacred text (the Quran) as well as the tradition of the Prophet. Mary is the epitome of virtue and a model for all people to aspire to - both men and women. The Quran refers to her as a woman "chosen by God above all other women" (Q 3:42), and that "no man could have been like this woman" (Q 3:36). Mary, however, is the only woman mentioned in

the Quran by her proper name as opposed to being associated with a male figure.

Conclusion

The Blessed Mother was certainly a prophetess, a prophetic woman - God's spokesperson on earth, who brought the word of God down to earth. She conceived the word and gave human form to it. She is a prophetic woman who was assumed to heaven with her body and soul. Heaven and earth contain the power of this prophetic woman's presence that radiates the grace of God. This prophetic woman continued to ponder the mystery of God yet to be revealed. Her presence in the upper room was the prophetic power and strength extended to the apostles to be united and bold. Mary's prophetic silence was the voice of the voiceless, her contemplation over the word of God is inspiration, her words are divine, her awesome presence radiates power, and her life is enlivening. She is the seat of wisdom from who flows the ocean of wisdom to enlighten the daily lives of people. She is the mother of the incarnated God who taught him to tread the path of holiness following the traditions and faith transmitted to her by her parents. She is the mirror of justice where her silence is the powerful voice of the people who is denied justice. She is the queen of heaven where abides God, all saints and angels. She is the Mother of God who holds the key to heaven, who remains as the door to receive the righteous, stays at our side today to defend us, protect and guard us from all the harms of the evil.

Mary in the Scripture

George Puthenpura C SSR.

Many of the scriptural themes relevant to Mary are given as prophecies or pre-figuration. Sometimes these are explicitly mentioned by the evangelist, (like in the Gospel of Matthew), but at other times, the faithful under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discerned the prophetic fulfillment (e.g. in the Gospel of Luke).

Among many possible choices there are two scriptural texts that would express forcefully and symbolize most meaningfully the mystery of Mary: expressing her extraordinarily graced personality, emblematic of her universal salvific mission linked with that of her Son until the end of human history. They are Gen. 3:15 which is also known as Proto-evangelium, and Revelation 12:1.

In the first text, Genesis 3:15, we preview, the reality of Mary's mission, in opposition to the serpent (the 'enemy'); in union with the messiah-redeemer (her seed) fighting and crushing the head of the serpent, in contrast with Eve, seduced and conquered by the serpent (Gen 3:13; 2 Cor 11:13). The prophetic vision embraces the entire salvific plan. In the words of Genesis 3:15, "there opens a vision of the whole of Revelation," St. John Paul II, points out "first as a preparation for the Gospel and then as the Gospel itself". The dramatic scene of Gen 3:15 speaks of mystery and in revealing it pinpoints our gaze on this 'woman', so heroic and sublime - the antithesis of poor Eve - who goes forth with her son to reverse the fortunes of fallen man.

In the second text, Revelation 12, we contemplate, in meta-historical synthesis, the reality of the person and the mission of Mary, the 'woman' radiant in grace ("clothed with the sun"), in royal majesty



over the angels (the crown of "stars") and over creation ('the moon under her feet'), the Mother of God incarnate ('the male child') and Mother of the Church ("the rest of her offspring"), which is the Mystical Body of Christ, begotten and co-redeemed by her, on Calvary amidst sufferings ("she cried out in the anguish of delivery"), the powerful adversary, Satan ("the great dragon"), checkmated and rendered impotent by the Mystery of the Immaculate Conception, of the Assumption and of the Queenship.

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In the light of Revelation 12, we can formulate these fundamental conclusions about the mystery of that 'woman':

Mary is the "**woman**" (Rev. 12:1), the same 'woman' of the Proto-evangelium (Gen 3:15), of whom 'is born' the Son of God; sent by the Father (Gal 4:4);³ the 'woman' present and

wholly absorbed in the sufferings of her Son crucified on Calvary (Jn 19:25-26).

Mary is the **'virgin'** who is shown alone with the Son, without husband, in the Proto - evangelium (Gen 3:15), then in Isaiah (7:14), and in Micah (5:12); her virginity prefigured by the 'burning bush' (Ex. 3:1-11), by the 'rod of Aaron' (Num 9:16-24), by the fleece of Gideon (Judg 6:36-40), by the 'enclosed garden, sealed fountain' (Song 4:12); finally described by Matthew and Luke in terms of the most essential biographical and historical facts of her life.

Mary is the **"Mother"**, pregnant and giving birth to a son, though remaining a virgin, (according to the prophecies of Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, Micah 5:1-2); and the woman "Mother of the Lord" or "Mother of Jesus", as she is called eleven times in the New Testament; she is the Mother of Mankind, represented by St. John on Calvary (Jn 19:25-27).

Mary is the **'spouse'**: not only the virginal, legal spouse of St. Joseph (Mt 1:18; Lk 1:27), but the virginal, real spouse of God the Father who willed her to be the Mother, according to His human nature, of His Only-begotten Son (Gal 4:4); the spouse of God the Son, the redeemer, who intimately associates her with Himself in His redemptive work, as the new Eve beside the 'new Adam'; the spouse of God the Holy spirit, who, overshadowing her enabled her to conceive Jesus (Lk 1:35).

Mary is the **woman immaculate**: namely, she is the only human creature unstained by sin, because, together with her Son, she is the unvanquished, victorious adversary of the

infernal serpent (Gen 3:15); not only this, but she is the only creature 'full of grace' (Lk 1:28), true all holy one, pure 'dawn' (Song 6:9) of the Son who is Christ, 'fashioned by the Holy Spirit and formed as a new creature' in order to become Mother of Word Incarnate.

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Mary is the **co-redemptrix**, associate with her Son in the work of ransoming man from sin (Gen 3:15), strong as 'an army set in array' (Song 6:9), already prefigured by the 'strong' courageous women of Israel, present at the foot of the cross on Calvary (Jn 19:2-27).

Mary is the **Mediatrix**, who brings Jesus to men and men to Jesus, who cares for things spiritual and temporal (Lk 1:39ff. Jn 2: 1-11) present and active at the birth of the Church on Calvary (Jn 19:25-27) and in the Cenacle (Acts 1:14).

Mary is the **Queen**, who wears on her head the crown of twelve stars (Rev 12:2) signifying the angels (the "stars"), the twelve tribes of Israel (the Chosen People) and the twelve apostles (the Church). She is the queen assumed into heaven, carried on the wings of the 'great eagle' (Rev 12:14), dashing to the ground the destructive furies of the 'dragon' (Rev 12:3-4). She is the 'exalted daughter of Zion', seated as 'Queen at the right hand' of the King in the kingdom of heaven (Ps 44:10).

Mary is the **woman blessed for the faith** she

placed in the words of the Angel Gabriel at the Annunciation (Lk 1:45), for hearing and observing the Word of God (Lk 11: 27-28), for her faithful fulfillment of the will of the Father (Mk 3:31-35) as the 'poor one of Yahweh' (Psalm 9) and the 'handmaid of the Lord' (Lk 1:38).

Mary in the Gospels

In examining the role of Mary in the Gospels and in the history of Salvation, first of all we should keep in mind that the Gospels are the story of Jesus as understood and interpreted by the evangelists in the context of their particular early Christian community. Hence, their concerns and interests are Christological and not Mariological.

Secondly we should remember there are three stages in the formation of the Gospels:

- a) The stage of historical Jesus, his deeds and words which is the foundation of the Gospels. The good news is the coming of the Kingdom of God in the person and mission of Jesus. Jesus manifested the presence of the Kingdom in his preaching, teachings, miracles, and above all in the Pascal Mystery- passion, death, resurrection ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit.
- b) The Oral Tradition: Those who saw the events in the previous stage through the eyes of faith began to interpret it: "You crucified Him, God raised Him". This is the stage of the oral proclamation.
- c) Period of written Gospel: The four evangelists put down in writing the

message and the tradition proclaimed by the Apostles. They collected the available traditions and reinterpreted them according to the situations of their particular community. Hence we have four theological interpretations of the Gospel of the Pre-evangelical times.

So what we have in the Gospels is a collection of both history and theological interpretations. What they wrote is the story of Jesus and of Mary, that is interpreted history.

Mary in the Infancy Narrative

It is quite evident that the infancy narratives in Mathew and Luke are very distinct and different from the rest of their gospel accounts. Moreover, there are inconsistencies between the story in Mathew and that in Luke.

What is the source of the Infancy Narrative? Luke presents his account in a historical context and claims that it is based on eye-witness account. Does it include Mary, perhaps the only one who could share the interaction between Mary and the angel Gabriel? Well, it is a hypothesis that cannot be established with absolute certainty, for various reasons.

Annunciation: The first incident where Mary is mentioned is in Lk 1:26-27. Here Luke is presenting the story of Jesus, and not of Mary, hence the passage is primarily of Christological concern than Mariological. Luke presents the story of the origin of Jesus in the Old Testament annunciation pattern: (like Isaac in Gen 17; Samson in Judges 13; Moses in Ex. 3, Gideon in Judg 6). This follows a particular structure:

a) Appearance of the angel of the Lord, b) Fear and the angel's message 'don't be afraid', c) Calling the recipient by name, promise of the birth of a child, its name and an indication of what he would be and his mission, d) Objection from the recipient, e) a sign is given to affirm the truth of the announcement.

Except the virginal conception, Mathew has nothing about Mary in his infancy narrative. But in Luke, it is obvious. Angel Gabriel called her "God's blessed" (Lk 1:28,30), she is the obedient handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1:38), Elizabeth calls her the 'mother of my Lord' (Lk 1:40), she calls her God's blessed due to the things God has done for her (Lk 1:42), she is blessed as she believed God's words will be fulfilled. Mary acknowledges the great things that the Lord has done and adds that ages to come will call her blessed.

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In both Matthew and Luke, what the evangelists underline is the fact of Jesus' divine origin and the virginity of Mary is a sign of this.

Visitation:

Mary is acknowledged as the Blessed. Elizabeth exclaimed Mary as the mother of my Lord; The title, 'Lord' is usually used for God. Mary is Blessed, not only because she is the mother of

the Lord, but also because she 'believed that the Lord's word would come true' (Lk 1:45). Mary is the handmaid of the Lord who listened to the Word of God and obeyed a quality necessary for discipleship, according to Acts 2:18. Thus she became the first Christian disciple in the early Church.

Magnificat:

The Magnificat resembles the song of Hanna in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, after the birth of Samuel. But it is the song of victory of the poor of Yahweh, in the context of the Post Easter Church. It resounds more like the victory song of the anawim in the post resurrection Christian community.

Birth of Jesus

Mathew and Luke highlight the virgin birth of Jesus. But they also emphasize that the birth of Jesus was in the normal process of child-birth. Hence the true human birth of Jesus. The shepherds represent the Israelites, the Magi represent the gentiles. They found the child with Mary, the Mother and Joseph. In Mathew 'in the House' represents the Church, Mt 2:11. This reminds one that Jesus is found and worshipped in the Church where Mary is present.

Presentation:

Lk 2:21-circumcision, 2:22-Mother's purification, 2:22-35 - Simeon's blessing, 2:36-38 - Hanna's exhortation, 2:39-40 - the child's growth.

Lk 2:21-22, the circumcision and naming on the 8th day, (cf. Lev. 12:3) by which the child becomes a member of the community of the covenant.

The Law of Moses prescribed Mary's purification after childbirth (Lev.12:1). Ex.13: 1, 11-16 requires the offering of the first born in the temple. First born is in the sense of the one who opens the womb, not necessarily first in the list. (Parallel to Ex 4:22-23- 'Israel is my first born').Numb 8:14-19- redeeming the first born. Mathew presents the origin of Jesus in a Jewish perspective where Abraham is the origin of genealogy, whereas for Luke, it begins from God's son, Adam.

We can summarise the infancy narrative as:

"In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1-2). "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). For the Son, who himself is God, to become man, God sought the help of a woman, Mary of Nazareth (Lk 1:26-27). Being a virgin, she conceived by the creative power of God's Holy Spirit. God sought the co-operation of Joseph to accept Mary as his wife, and to be the foster father of the child and to protect them before the law (Mt 1:18-25; 2:13-23). In this event of Incarnation, Mary has a significant role, not only in being the Mother of the Incarnate Word, but also because she was chosen by God himself so that she was able to acclaim: "From now on, all generations will call me blessed" (Lk 1:48). It was the angel who acclaimed her as "Hail, full of grace" Lk 1:28-34). And 'Joseph did not have any marital relation with Mary until Jesus was born" (Mt 1:25) does not mean that they had sexual relationship afterwards in the original language.

Jesus Lost in the Temple Lk 2:41-52

Mary has a significant role, not only in being the Mother of the Incarnate Word, but also because she was chosen by God himself so that she was able to acclaim: "From now on, all generations will call me blessed"

This event stands as a transition from infancy to adolescence to adulthood, in the life of Jesus. More than family ties and blood relations, Jesus gives priority to his Father, which in turn pierces the heart of his mother. But they failed to understand this. Mary pondered all these things in her heart (2:51). Jesus manifests that the place of God in his life is more than that of Mary.

Mary in the Public Ministry of Jesus

In Mark's Gospel, the image of Mary is rather negative. She is outside the house, which represents the eschatological family of God, consisting of those who are sitting inside the house, listening to the word and doing the will of God (Mk 3:20-35). This is in consistency with Mk 6:4 which say prophets are despised only in their own country, among their relations and their own family. The context makes the meaning clear. Jesus is accused by the Pharisees that he casts out demons by the power of Beelzebul; his family thought that he is out of his mind, and came to take him by force.

Mathew (12:46-50) presents a more positive Mariology by avoiding reference to the relatives who thought Jesus was mad. They came to talk to him. He even edits the derogatory titles 'Mary's son' and 'carpenter' to 'isn't Mary his mother', 'isn't he son of the carpenter?'

Luke (8:19-21) presents Mary as the icon of ideal discipleship. She is not merely an eye witness or reporter of the early life of Jesus. Rather one, who listens to God's word, pondered all these things in her heart and fulfilled God's will by being the handmaid of the Lord.

Cana in Galilee

In John, the name Mary does not appear, but rather 'the mother of Jesus' appears only twice- at Cana in Galilee (Jn 2:1-12) and at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25-27). John 2:1-11 is difficult to understand and interpret, as it is more theological than historical. 'Woman' is an invitation to become the 'woman' in the Biblical sense parallel to the Genesis story. She has to be reborn from Jesus. As she is Jesus' physical mother, she needs to become the woman in the scriptural sense by being reborn. Mary is tempting Jesus to become a miracle worker. But not yielding to this temptation, Jesus is manifesting his glory. It is an invitation to transit from the woman who tempts to the New Eve by entering into discipleship/ re-birth in Jesus. It happens on the Cross, which is his exaltation. Mary is misunderstanding Jesus, like Nicodemus in Chapter 3, and Samaritan woman in chapter 4.

Mary is tempting Jesus to become a miracle worker. But not yielding to this temptation, Jesus is manifesting his glory. It is an invitation to transit from the woman who tempts to the New Eve by entering into discipleship/ re-birth in Jesus. It happens on the Cross, which is his exaltation.

Brothers and Sisters of Jesus

Interpreting these references is difficult. First of all, the Greek word 'adelphos' has a variety of meanings:

- blood relation, sibling, of the same mother, 'own brother', cousin
- But also of the same faith as in Rom 9:3
- Also refers to neighbour as in Mt 5:22-24
- It can also be step brother of the same father as in Mk 6:17-18
- Or even kinsmen as in Gen 29:12.

Now things become clearer if we examine the names of these brothers elsewhere.

Mk 6:3- Jesus is the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon.

Mk 13:55 –Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers James and Joseph.

And near the cross of Jesus were:

Mk 15:40- Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses and Salome.

Mt 27:56- Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, Mother of the sons of Zabadi.

Jn 19:25- Mary Magdalene, Mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas .

Salomi could be the mother of the sons of Zabadi.

The Mary in Mk and Mt the mother of James and Joses could be the wife of Clopas. Not the mother of Jesus. Hence these mentioned as brothers are not sons of Mary Mother of Jesus.

There are various hypotheses about the 'brothers and sisters' of Jesus.

The New Testament does not consider directly the matter that Mary lived as a virgin after the birth of Jesus. Only when the perpetual virginity was raised to a dogma of faith, in the 4th century the issue of Jesus' relationship with his brothers and sisters was raised. There is no clear and sufficient evidence in New Testament to prove or disprove whether the brothers and sisters of Jesus are Mary's own children. The key to interpret this depends on one's own affiliation to a particular Christian denomination and its perspective on the matter. The Catholics follow the teachings of their Church that Mary had no children other than Jesus.

Mary in the Pascal Ministry and Post Easter Community

Mary at the foot of the Cross

"Behold your mother/ son" (Jn 19:25-27). In John, crucifixion is ascension/ exaltation. This event has more theological significance than historical accuracy. John does not give a name to those who are exemplary in discipleship. Now who is the beloved disciple? The beloved disciple is the ideal disciple who is close to Jesus, never abandoning him. He is supreme in love, faith and accompaniment. He is higher than Peter.

At the foot of the cross, there are two nameless persons: the beloved disciple and the mother of Jesus. It is because of their representative role. Now Mary becomes the mother of the beloved disciple. By installing her as the mother of the beloved disciple, Mary enters into the category of ideal discipleship and mother of all disciples.

Mary at Pentecost

Acts 1:14. It is noteworthy that Mary is not mentioned among the list of women who were standing at the foot of the cross in the synoptics, but only in the Gospel of John. But Luke alone mentions the presence of Mary in the upper room along with the 11 apostles and his brothers, gathered together in prayer. Mary is presented in the Gospels as the one who failed to understand Jesus. Some argue that it is unlikely that Mary accompanied Jesus in his public ministry. It is not mentioned in the Gospels that the risen Christ appeared to Mother Mary. But Luke, presents Mary as the disciple of Jesus. From the time she conceived Jesus, she fulfilled the condition to become a member of the eschatological family (Lk 8:19-21). Even John, who gave a negative picture of Mary at Cana, at the end of the Gospel presents her at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25-27). She enters into the house (community) of the beloved disciple (Jn 19:27). And now, at the Pentecost, by her presence along with the Apostles, Mary shows that she is the integral part of the Church. The eleven disciples are the ones who link the Christ event and the story of the Church (Acts 1:21-22). Mary is with them in prayer. Mary is the one who pondered in her heart everything that occurred from the birth of Jesus to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Hence it is necessary to have a comprehensive view of Mary as she is presented in the New Testament from different historical and theological perspectives, rather than being misled by any single text or single interpretation of any one text in isolation.

Mary: Worthy of Praise

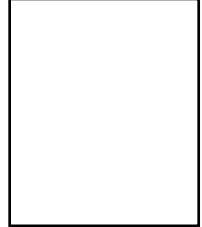
Selva Kumar smm

“My soul is glad because of my Saviour for He has remembered me, his lowly servant. From now on, all people will call me blessed Because of the great things the mighty God has done for me, (Lk 1: 47 - 49).

Mary is praise worthy. First and foremost, God praised her because of her prayer life and for her good virtues. When God chose her to be the mother of our Saviour she said 'Yes' and praised God for choosing her to be his instrument. In later stages we see her cousin Elizabeth praising her, Jesus praising her, Apostles praising her, the church and the humanity praising her because of her good virtues and in participating in the life of the church. Mary therefore deserves our praise for ever.

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Mary and said “Hail Mary full of Grace the Lord is with you” and further the Angel Gabriel said, by the power of the Holy Spirit you will conceive and bear a Son and you shall name Him Jesus. She said how is it possible since I am a virgin. The Angel of the Lord said nothing is impossible for God. Mary at this moment elucidated her doubt with the Angel and then said 'Yes'. Once we elucidate our relationship with God, things are clear and everything becomes easy. Mary clarified with the angel Gabriel and said Yes to God's plan. Soon after this scene the Angel Gabriel said to Mary your cousin Elizabeth has conceived by the power of God in her old age

and she is in her sixth month, so “nothing is impossible for God” (Lk 1: 37). She believed the words of Gabriel and she began her journey to Judea to serve her cousin Elizabeth who was in need of help.



Once we elucidate our relationship with God, things are clear and everything becomes easy. Mary clarified with the angel Gabriel and said Yes to God's plan.

Mary becomes the first missionary

The distance from Nazareth to Judea is more than 100 KM but she went all alone to serve her. When we turn the pages of the OT especially on marriage, conception was a joyous moment therefore people used to congratulate the girls. So Mary wanted to congratulate and serve her cousin, the moment she received the good news of Elizabeth's pregnancy. The exchange of greetings represented by Luke is highly stylized and full of significance. Ex 18:7 narrates a representative greeting: “Moses went out to meet his father-in-law; he bowed down and kissed him; each asked after the other's welfare, and they went into the tent.” This text is interesting both for its illustration of the content of the greeting and for the nonchalant way it embodies issues of status and honour. Moses, the host, comes out to initiate the greeting, showing appropriate

respect to his elder and guest. Similar concerns are at work in the present periscope. That's why Mary took the bold step after her engagement, of course she was not instructed by the angel to go and assist her cousin. This journey is the fulfilment of divine purpose.

Elizabeth might have undergone humiliation for not conceiving in her youth, but God had his own plan for her. Likewise when Sara in the OT conceived she was so happy. Suppose if a man is lost in the desert and finds no water to quench his thirst what would he do? Will he not feel sad? Certainly, in case if he is taken to the flowing river to quench his thirst will he not feel happy? Certainly he will. Elizabeth's happiness was much more than the above mentioned example. When Mary visited her cousin she was so happy, but she felt uncomfortable because Mary was the mother of God who had come to serve her. But Mary in humility sang the song of *Magnificat* and greeted Elizabeth. On hearing Mary's greeting the child whom Elizabeth bore within her 'leaped for joy in her womb'. Here we see The Old Testament meeting the New Testament. The *Magnificat* of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the most frequently prayed texts of the New Testament. This Marian canticle is the second of the three New Testaments canticles the church invites us to pray every day during the liturgy of the hours. Speaking of magnifying, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen once referred to our Blessed Mother as being like "a magnifying glass that intensifies our love of her Son." The *Magnificat* too is found only in the infancy narrative of the gospel according to St. Luke. The Church

invites us to pray this canticle every day during our evening prayer in praise and thanks to God for the day at its close. As it is well known for the members of the Legion of Mary the recitation of the hymn is obligatory every evening. Let's love this prayer as St. Ambrose once said in referring to this wonderful prayer, "Let Mary's soul be in

When Mary visited her cousin she was so happy, but she felt uncomfortable because Mary was the mother of God who had come to serve her. But Mary in humility sang the song of *Magnificat* and greeted Elizabeth. On hearing Mary's greeting the child whom Elizabeth bore within her 'leaped for joy in her womb.

us to glorify the Lord; let her spirit be in us that we may rejoice in God our Saviour."

The Content of *Magnificat*

The *Magnificat* is in many places very similar in thought and phrase to the canticle of Hanna (Sam 2:1-10) and to various Psalms. *Magnificat* is the crown of the Old Testament singing, the last canticle of the Old and the first of the New Testament. It was chanted by Blessed Virgin when she visited her cousin Elizabeth under the circumstances narrated by St. Luke in the first chapter of his gospel. It is an ecstasy of praise for the inestimable favour bestowed by God on the Virgin for the mercies shown to Israel and for the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham and to the patriarchs. The *Magnificat* is the longest passage quoting Mary that has been provided us by the writer of the gospel. Mary was a

woman of prophetic announcement. Her *Magnificat* moves from the deeply personal to the explicitly political. This prophetic proclamation by Mary is her revolutionary song of salvation and it places Mary in solidarity with the project for the coming reign of God whose intent is to heal, redeem and liberate his people. In the *Magnificat* our Lord speaks with Mary and through her to us of himself in and of her of what He has done for her and what He would do in us. It is prophesy uttered by Mary in harmony with her Divine Son already living in her. God invited Mary to participate in the realization of the plan of God and she did it so perfectly. In *Magnificat*

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what Mary has to tell us is beautiful synthesis of historical retrospective and eschatological prophecy.

Her proclamation is the public account of a highly personal and intimate experience and at the same time a sharp insight into God's own policy toward humanity. The *Magnificat* is both a song of joy and a manifesto of hope. It is filled to the brim with sentiments of thanksgiving and sharing. To sing a song is to possess one's soul. In the Old Testament, *Miriam* (in Hebrew) the sister of Moses sang after the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. Deborah sang after the

defeat of the Canaanites. In the New Testament Elizabeth's husband Zachariah sang the *Benedictus*.

Her deep faith is given an expression through the *Magnificat*. Mary's pregnancy evolves into a unique faith experience. It involves the total woman, the physical, psychological and mental dimensions of her being. Her faith represents a qualitative leap from conditional to unconditional faith. For Mary faith is no longer only a quality of life it is life itself. The *Magnificat* is totally imbued with the faith and hope of Israel but simultaneously it becomes the scale of perfection for all future generations because Mary's experience is essentially open to the future. Her song announces not only the birth of Christ but also the birth of a new people, to liberate people, a people whose life will be centred on the Spirit of life. Mary's song is the *Magna Charta* of any and all authentic faith experience of thanksgiving and sharing. In the *Magnificat* Mary reveals the following truths

1. Revealed her devout nature
2. Revealed her knowledge of Scripture (for she quotes freely from the Old Testament);
3. Revealed her spirit of thankfulness (she expressed her thankfulness to God for His goodness to her and for His kindness to Israel); and
4. Revealed her recognition of her need for a Saviour (because of Adam's sin the whole humanity was in sinful nature)

The Response of Elizabeth to Mary's

Salutation

Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb (Lk 1: 42) Elizabeth's first words are reminiscent of the greeting and praise given to a superior in recognition of her or her advanced status and of the fact that God had blessed this person. Elizabeth kept Mary's motherhood in primary focus. After all, it is in her role as mother that she will contribute to the salvation of her people. Mary is the mother of "my Lord" a designation by which Elizabeth articulates her own submission to this unborn baby and which anticipates the identification of Jesus as "Lord" on the basis of his exaltation (cf. Ps 110:1; Acts 2:34 -36).

1. She spoke of Mary's blessedness among women in being chosen to be the mother the Messiah - Mary is truly "the Blessed Virgin," a woman who should be highly honoured. Elizabeth's second pronouncement of blessing employs the term known to us especially from the Beatitudes: "blessed" - spoken over those who are judged to possess what is necessary for a joyful life and especially over those who are the recipients of God's gift of redemption. While the basis of the former "blessing" was Mary's motherhood and, thus, single role in the realization of God's purpose, here she is declared fortunate because of her faith. The contrast with Zechariah could scarcely be more stark: he did not believe but she did; and in any case, it is affirmed, what had been spoken would come to pass. Elizabeth spoke to Mary of what had been spoken "by the Lord," thus emphasizing the fact that Gabriel had delivered

God's own message. The result of this wording is to underscore first Mary's response of faith and, second, the certainty surrounding the fulfilment of the divine purpose.

2. She spoke of her unworthiness of being visited by the mother of her Lord.

3. She spoke of Mary's blessedness in believing the angelic announcement (for the announcement will come to pass) - Note that Elizabeth knew of the angelic annunciation to Mary, seemingly through a direct revelation from God.

Characteristics of Elizabeth's Praise

1. Sense of service: Mother Mary had a sense of service. The moment Mary came to know that her cousin was carrying a child in her womb she had the sense of service and also she believed that nothing is impossible for God (Lk 1: 36 -37). Therefore Elizabeth praised her wholeheartedly.

2. Elizabeth's praise is not for her personal fulfilment: Elizabeth's proclamation does not focus on the blessing of the child which she will bear (John), but on the blessing of God in the arrival of Mary, who is to be the mother of the Messiah.

3. Words of encouragement to Mary: How encouraging the greeting of Elizabeth must have been to Mary. Rather than having to try to explain to Elizabeth what the angel had said to her about the virgin birth of her Son, Mary learned that Elizabeth already knew. Thus, Elizabeth's praise served as further confirmation of Gabriel's words.

4. Elizabeth praises God: We believe that Elizabeth knew from the Scriptures that Messiah would be both human and divine, and that He would be born of a virgin.

As we all know that Mary stayed in Elizabeth's house for three months. Mary went over there not to be ministered but to minister to her cousin. Within three months Mary has had her eight beatitudes as follows.....

1. "Blessed art thou because full of grace" said the Archangel Gabriel
2. "Blessed art thou for thou shalt conceive in thy womb the Son of the most high, God
3. "Blessed art thou, Virgin Mother, for the Holy Spirit will come upon thee and the power of the most high shall overshadow thee
4. "Blessed art thou for doing God's will; be it done unto me according to Thy Word
5. "Blessed art thou for believing" said Elizabeth
6. "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb (Jesus) added Elizabeth
7. "Blessed art thou among women"
8. "Blessed art thou, for the message that was brought to thee from the Lord shall have fulfilment.

Lukan Message

Luke's theological prominences on the theme are as follows. One that is dealt with at length is the theme of reversal. The humble are exalted, and the arrogant are brought low. We find the coming of God's mercy and salvation to the lowly especially in 1:48–49, 52b, 53a. The

corresponding judgment and bringing low of the haughty is found in 1:51b, 52a, 53b. Whereas this teaching has OT precedents, we find this theme frequently in Jesus' teaching (6:20–26; 13:30; 16:25). Clearly Luke saw in Jesus' coming a great reversal of the world's value system. Indeed with Jesus' coming the humble poor and outcasts come first, i.e., they receive salvation, whereas the proud and arrogant become last, i.e., they are rejecting salvation and receiving divine judgment is emphasised.

The second emphasis found in our text involves the Christological understanding of Mary's offspring. The child born by Mary was clearly greater than the child born by Elizabeth. Thus Jesus received homage from John the Baptist in (1:41, 44) and from Elizabeth's prophetic utterance (1:42) that Mary was the most blessed among women. Since Mary's blessedness came from the child she bore (1:43), her child must be greater than all other children born of women. The Christological emphasis takes on an even nobler significance when Elizabeth called Mary the "mother of my Lord" (1:43). Even though unborn, Mary's son was Elizabeth's Lord.

I wish to Praise Mother Mary: She is worthy of Praise, for the following reasons 1. Her Humility: Book of Sirach 3:19 says "the more you Humble yourself, the greater you are, and you will find favour with God." And in the New Testament Jesus has said "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted" (Mt 23:12). This aspect I could see in the life of Mary when

she said 'Yes' to the Lord.

2. The world received Jesus through Mary: When Jesus was born she presented Him to the shepherds and the Magi, she presented Him in the temple and to the apostles. She gave him to the whole world in a better way than any apostles did. She is the queen of apostles. She is the virgin whose son is Christ (St. Jerome), the Vessel of divinity (St. Bernard), the Throne of Christ the Pontiff (St. Athanasius) and the undefiled temple in which dwells the Word of God (St. Epiphanius). Through Mary we receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

3. In Mary Jesus Christ became for us wisdom, justice, grace and redemption: Everything came from Jesus through Mary. "God the Son came down into her virginal womb as a new Adam into his earthly paradise, to take his delight there and produce hidden wonders of grace." (TD no. 32) At her appearance the Old Testament closed and the New began. Satan felt his kingdom trembling and saw the kingdom of Jesus Christ advancing. Heaven and earth exchanged the kiss of peace. The darkness of paganism became less dense. Virtue and love were born and began to grow on earth. Idolatry retreated. God began to be adored in spirit and truth; a new glory was given to God and new peace to the world. Slaves were freed, tyrants defeated, families restored. A new order arose, a new philosophy and theology. Behold everything was renewed. For God the Father wanted everything restored in His Son, everything all that is in heaven as well as all that is on earth.

4. Finally, I want to praise Mary because of her

fidelity to the mission: Vatican Second points out that Mary right in the midst of the Church with its apostolic Mandate:

"Hence the Church, in her apostolic work also, justly looks to her, who, conceived of the Holy Spirit, brought forth Christ, who was born of the Virgin that through the Church He may be born and may increase in the hearts of the faithful also. The Virgin in her own life lived an example of that maternal love, with which all should be animated who cooperates in the apostolic mission of the Church for the regeneration of men." (LG no. 65).

Here we would like to present a portrait of Mary as the model of our mission in the third millennium.

1. Mary's response to the Word of God: What made the difference is her life, the response that she gave to the angel. Let us see the two characteristics in this response.

a. She believed in the love which God had for her: "She believed in the powerful love of God for her. She personalized this privilege and made it become effective in her life through her response of absolute faithfulness to this love of God in the midst of struggles and temptations." Mary totally loved by God, her Immaculate Conception thus becomes for her a challenge of fidelity. Mary "committing herself whole heartedly and impeded by no sin to God's saving will she devoted herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of redemption, by the grace of the

Mary “committing herself whole heartedly and impeded by no sin to God's saving will she devoted herself totally, as a handmaid of the Lord, to the person and work of her Son, under and with him, serving the mystery of redemption, by the grace of the Almighty.”

Almighty.”

b. Unconditional submission to the plan of God at the time of annunciation

2. Mary's response to the world: At the marriage feast of Cana, she was very sensitive to the delicate and embarrassing situation in which the couple found themselves. She took the initiative, she did not ask Jesus to work a miracle; but she just informed him of their need. Sometimes we may not be able to do anything to solve the problem but as long as we have the feeling of solidarity, compassion, feeling together, we have already started our mission.

3. Mary: the Answer to a people in search of a New Hope

When we see the life of Mary, she “assisted the early Church and as she continued her loving care and protection of the people of God throughout the centuries.” For those who evangelize Mary becomes a sign of hope as a source of joy and trust. May she give to all of us her help and assistance in fulfilling our mission of true evangelizers of Jesus Christ. Then the presence of Mary in our lives will become truly a redemptive presence and our devotion to her will make us become a people committed to the proclamation of Gospel at all times and in all

circumstances.

In conclusion, there are three lessons that we need to learn from this *Magnificat*

1. We need to be thankful and praise God always for all the blessings that we receive in our day to day life. Remember among the 150 Psalms in the Bible 100 Psalms are in praise of God.

2. God will raise the poor and the lowly just as he raised a poor hand-maiden to be the highest level among women.

3. God will never forget his people, He will fulfil all his promises that he made to Abraham and the nation of Israel.

Prayer in Praise of Mary

Mother of God Hail, O Lady,

Holy Queen! Mary, holy Mother of God:
You are the Virgin made Church chosen by
the most Holy Father in heaven

Whom He consecrated with His most holy
beloved Son

And with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete,
In whom there was and is all fullness of grace
and every good.

Hail His Palace!

Hail His Tabernacle!

Hail His Dwelling!

Hail His Robe! Hail His Servant!

Hail His Mother!

And hail all you holy virtues which are poured
into the hearts of the faithful

Through the grace and enlightenment of the

Mary's Heavenly Intercession

Jomon

Mary is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress and Mediatrix. (ccc no. 969) As any good mother looks after her children, Mary is looking after us. Just as Jesus did not deny his mother's request at the wedding in Cana, we have faith that Mary's intercession on our behalf would not be denied by her Son. Could there be a more influential advocate to have on our side than the Mother of God?

Mary's whole mission in her life was to bring people to Jesus. Mary never draws attention to herself, only to Christ. We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in Heaven to exercise her maternal role on our behalf (ccc no. 975). Prayer is how we communicate with Mary and ask her for help. Just as we learned to ask the Holy Spirit for help, we can also pray to Mary and ask for her help.

Can Mary really help us? Yes. Since the beginning of the church, experience has taught that Mary helps. Millions of Christians testify to it.

Being the Mother of Jesus, Mary is also our mother. Good mothers always stand up for their children. Certainly this mother does. While still on earth she interceded with Jesus for others; for example she protected a bride and groom in Cana from embarrassment. In the upper room on Pentecost she prayed in the midst of the disciples. Because her love for us never ceases,

we can be sure that she will plead for us in the two most important moments of our life: "now and at the hour of our death." St. Alphonsus Ligouri says, "Mary is the most tender mother of the human race; she is the refuge of sinners."



"Woman, behold, your son!..... Behold, your Mother!" (Jn 19:26b-27a). The second command, which Jesus spoke from the Cross to John, has always been understood by the church as an act of entrusting the whole church to Mary. Thus Mary is our mother, too. We may call upon her and ask her to intercede with God (You cat no. 85).

A devout servant of Mary, who lived in Portugal, fasted on bread and water every Saturday of his life, in honour of Mary, and chose for his intercessors with the blessed virgin, St. Michael and St. John the Evangelist. He firmly believed in the heavenly intercession of Mary at the time of his trials and difficulties. At the hour of his death the queen of heaven appeared to him, with those saints, who were praying for him, and the Holy Virgin, looking upon her servant with a joyful countenance, said to those saints: "I will not depart from here without taking this soul with me."

Why does the intercession of Mother Mary help us? God the Father in Heaven asked Mary, who was a virgin, whether she would bear His

Son, and she unhesitatingly said "Yes". From then on, until the end of Jesus' life on earth and her own life, no matter how difficult it was, Mother Mary continued to always do the Will of God. Thus, would God the Father say "No" to anything Mother Mary asks of Him now? Let us take advantage of this truth and receive the graces of God the Father and Jesus, the Son, through the most powerful intercession of our Mother Mary!

Even during her life on earth, Mary appears in the gospels as distributing graces. Jesus sanctifies the precursor through her when she comes to visit her cousin Elisabeth. Through her he confirms the faith of his disciples at Cana by performing the miracle for which she asked. Through her he confirms John's faith on Calvary, saying: "Son, behold thy mother." Through her finally the Holy Spirit gave himself to the Apostles, as we read in the Acts (Acts 1:14) that she prayed with them in the Cenacle while they prepared themselves for the apostolate and for the light and strength and graces of Pentecost.

With still greater reason is Mary powerful in her intercession now that she has entered heaven and has been lifted up above the choirs of the angels. The Christian sense of the faithful assures us that a mother in heaven knows the spiritual needs of the children she has left behind her on earth, and that she prays for their salvation. It is universal for the faithful to recommend themselves to the prayers of the saints in heaven. As St. Thomas says, when the saints were on earth, their charity led them to pray for their neighbor. With still greater reason

do we say that in heaven they pray for their neighbor since when their charity is inflamed by the beatific vision it is greater than it was on earth. Their charity in heaven is uninterrupted in its acts and proceeds from a fuller realization of human needs and the value of life eternal.

St. Paul tells us that our Blessed Lord does not cease to make intercession for us. He is the principal and necessary intercessor. But Jesus himself wishes that we should have recourse to Mary so that our prayers may have greater value through being presented by her. As Mother of all Mary knows the spiritual needs of all, knows all that concerns their salvation. Because of her immense charity she prays for them. And since she is all-powerful with her Son because of the love by which they are united, she obtains from him all the graces for which she asks—that is to say, all the graces we receive.

This power of Mary's intercession is proclaimed by the faithful each time they recite the *Hail Mary*. Theology explains the belief of the faithful by pointing to three fundamental reasons for Mary's power of intercession.

The first of these is that since Mary is Mother of men she knows all their spiritual needs. It is a principle admitted by all theologians that the happiness of the blessed in heaven would not be complete if they did not know what happens on earth to the extent to which it concerns them by reason of their office, their role, or their relations with men. Such knowledge is the object of a legitimate desire which must find its satisfaction in beatitude, and with all the more reason when the knowledge

they desire is of men's spiritual needs and is therefore desired in charity: it is in charity that the saints desire men's salvation so that they may glorify God with them for all eternity and share thus in their happiness. Fathers and mothers, for example, know from heaven the needs of their children, especially those which bear on their salvation. The same may be said of the founders of religious institutes. With all the more reason may the same be said of Our Lady, who has the highest degree of glory after her Son: as Mother of all men she must know everything which bears directly or indirectly on the supernatural life which she has been commissioned to give us and to nourish in us. This universal knowledge, certain and detailed, of all that concerns our destiny-our thoughts, desires, the dangers in which we are, the graces we need, temporal affairs which have some connection with our salvation-is a prerogative which belongs to Mary because of her motherhood of God and her spiritual motherhood of men.

Knowing our spiritual needs and even the temporal needs which are connected with our salvation Mary is obviously impelled by her great charity to intercede for us. If a mother but suspects that her child needs her help she flies to its side. Is Mary's prayer omnipotent? Tradition has honored Mary with the title, *Omnipotentia* - *plex*, omnipotence in the order of supplication.

In support of the title, we may refer to the principle that the intercession of the saints is proportioned to their degree of glory in heaven, or of union with God. It follows then that Mary,

whose glory surpasses that of all the saints, must have all power in intercession. Even before the 8th century, this is the explicit teaching of St. Ephrem. In the 8th century, the most clear-cut statements are those of Andrew of Crete, of St. Germanus of Constantinople, and of St. John Damascene. Towards the end of the 11th century, St. Anselm and his disciple Eadmer affirm Mary's intercessory omnipotence, a doctrine explained by St. Bernard and transmitted to succeeding generations of theologians.

Bossuet brings out the underlying principles very well in his sermon on the Compassion of Our Lady, when he recalls the two texts: "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16) and "He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all good things?" (Rom 8:32). Mary in her turn has loved God and souls to the extent of delivering up her Son, Jesus, on Calvary. She is in consequence all-powerful with God the Father and with Jesus to obtain all that is necessary for the salvation of those who turn to her mediation.

Intercede for us, O Blessed Virgin Mary: you have in your hands, if I may so speak, the key that opens the treasury of the divine blessings. That key is your Son: He closes and no one can open: He opens and no one can close: It is his innocent blood which makes us to be inundated with heavenly graces. And to whom will he give the right to that blood, if not to her from whom he drew all his blood. ... For the rest, you live in such perfect union of love with

him that it is impossible that your prayer should not be heard.

It is enough, as St. Bernard says, if Mary speaks to the Heart of Jesus.

The teaching of Tradition, thus formulated by Bossuet, has been proclaimed by Leo XIII in his first encyclical on the Rosary, September 1, 1883, in which he calls Mary the dispenser of heavenly graces, *coelestium administratrix gratiarum*. In the Encyclical *Jucunda Semper*, September 8th, 1894, the same Pope makes his own the two statements of St. Bernard: that God in his great mercy has made Mary our Mediatrix and that he has willed that all graces should come to us through her. The same teaching will be found in the encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*, February 2, 1904, where Mary is spoken of as "the dispenser of all the graces which have been acquired for us by the Blood of Jesus." Jesus is the source of these graces: Mary is, as it were, the channel, or-to use another image-as it were the neck which unites the Head to the members and transmits the vital impulse to them: "*Ipsa est collum capitis nostri, per quod omnia spiritalia donacorporie ius mystico communicantur*". Benedict XV has consecrated this teaching by approving the Mass and the liturgical Office of Mary, Mediatrix of all graces, for the universal Church.

As Fr. Merkelbach indicates, three points that are to be noted:

First of all, it is of faith that Mary prays for us, and even for each one of us, in her capacity as Mother of the Redeemer and of all men, and that her intercession is very useful for us. This

follows from the general dogma of the intercession of the saints (Council of Trent: Session 25). In support of this assertion we may refer to the practice of the Church in praying, *Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis*: Holy Mary, pray for us. *Legem credendae statuta supplicandi*: dogma and prayer have one and the same law.

In the second place, Tradition teaches us that Mary's powerful intercession can obtain for all those who invoke her with the proper dispositions all the graces required for salvation and no one is saved without her intervention. Thus the Church repeats: *Sentiant omnes tuum juvamen*: Let all be cognizant of your assistance.

In the third place, it is a common and safe doctrine, taught by different Popes, by the liturgy, and by preachers throughout the world, that no grace is granted us without Mary's intervention. This is contained clearly in the Mass and Office of Mary, Mediatrix of all graces, and it would be wrong to deny it.

In times of crisis our vision becomes blurred, our perceptions are short, our contemplation becomes one-sided and we often ignore the powerful intercession of our heavenly mother. She is always at our side to get the things done through her son Jesus Christ. I myself have experienced the power of intercession of Mary when I saw my parents reciting rosary regularly. They recite the rosary every morning, evening and whenever they are free. In fact, this powerful intercession made me strong in my vocation whenever I had to face challenges and crisis in my life. Even today it is

the intercession of our heavenly mother that helps me to remain strong in my priesthood.

Today, let us ask Jesus in his mercy, through the intercession of Mary, his Mother and ours, to grant to all of us this same readiness to serve those in need, and, in particular, our infirm brothers and sisters. At times this service can be tiring and burdensome, yet we are certain that the Lord will surely turn our human efforts into something divine. We too can be hands, arms and hearts which help God to perform his miracles, so often hidden. We too, whether healthy or sick, can offer up our toil and sufferings like the water which filled the jars at

the wedding feast of Cana and was turned into the finest wine. By quietly helping those who suffer, as in illness itself, we take our daily cross upon our shoulders and follow the Master (Lk 9:23). Even though the experience of suffering will always remain a mystery, Jesus helps us to reveal its meaning. If we can learn to obey the words of Mary, who says: "Do whatever he tells you", Jesus will always change the water of our lives into precious wine.

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