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TO JESUS THROUGH MARY

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Mary and Ecumenism

The Virgin Mary has increasingly become the subject of ecumenical dialogue. This is the consequence of Vatican II, which marked a significant change in doctrine and devotion to Mary. As a result, there have been a number of ecumenical discussions and related publications. These interchanges have involved significant conferences between traditions including dialogues involving Roman Catholics and Protestant denominations and the Anglican Communities. This issue we discuss the different views (on)

Mary in the ecumenical perspectives. This will give us better understanding of the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in ecumenical unity. The contemporary dialogue on beliefs about Mary and their Scriptural foundations mark a significant moment in Christian inter-religious dialogue and provides the basis for further developments towards Christian Unity. This issue 'To Jesus through Mary' brings the different views on Mary from the ecumenical perspectives with the hope of shedding more light on the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in ecumenical relationship. The contemporary dialogues on Marian doctrines highlighting their Scriptural foundations mark a significant moment in the ecumenical dialogues hastening the desired unity among the Christians.

Mariology is that part of the dogmatic theology that deals with the Virgin Mary in relation to God and to her fellow creatures. In Roman Catholicism, Mary is recognized as the proper subject of pious veneration by the faithful because of Mary's special relationship with Christ and the Church. This twofold aspect of Mary was emphasized by Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Marialis Cultus* on "the right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary," (published) in 1974, where the Pope states: In the sphere of worship this devotion necessarily reflects God's redemptive plan, in which a special form of veneration is appropriate to the singular place which Mary occupies in the plan...the history of piety shows how the various forms of devotion towards the Mother of God that the Church has approved within the limits of wholesome and orthodox doctrine 'have developed in harmonious subordination to the worship of Christ. (MC)

Scripture provides the basis for Christian teaching on the Virgin Mary. However, in Roman Catholic theology, the understanding of scripture is aided by tradition and the Church's teaching authority which are important basis for understanding the status and role of Mary in Catholicism. The Roman Catholic dialogue with most important Protestant churches necessitates primary focus on scriptural passages that specifically support titles or special qualities of Mary. There are, however, only four dogmatically declared doctrines dealing with Mary: 1. Divine Motherhood, 2 Perpetual Virginity, 3 Immaculate Conception, and 4 Assumption. The fact that there are only four definitive dogmas about Mary facilitates discussion.

The Second Vatican Council did not issue a specific document on Mary. This decision had significant effect. Moreover, the way the Council Fathers chose to deal with Mary has had significance for subsequent ecumenical dialogue on Mariology. It represents a shift in Mariology from treating Mary as privileged or centered subject of isolated devotion to a position which venerates Mary in association with Christ and in relation to the Church. A significant statement of ecumenical dialogue on Mary appears in Chapter two of the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Regintegratio*, promulgated the same day as *Lumen Gentium* (November 21, 1964). The paragraph 20 provides in part: The manner and order in which Catholic belief is expressed should in no way become an obstacle to dialogue with other Christians... when comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the Christian faith, (UR 14).

Christians must individually and collectively deepen their 'obedience of faith' of which Mary is the first and the brightest example. And since she 'shines forth on earth,... as a sign of sure hope and solace for the pilgrim People of God', 'it gives great joy and comfort to this most holy Synod that among the divided brethren, too, there are those who give due honor to the Mother of our Lord and Savior. This is especially so among Easterners,' (LG 68,69; RM 29).

Edward Schillebeeckx maintains that the Council's decision to emphasize the Christological and Ecclesiastical aspects of Mariology, and the decision not to consider devotional aspects of Mariology, evidenced a desire to provide encouragement (for) ecumenical dialogue on Mary. We can see, for example, the result of the failure to endorse popular devotion to Mary in the diminished use of pious practices among Catholics. At the same time, there has been an increased invocation of Mary by Anglicans in their common prayers. The Anglican and Roman Catholic Church have been engaged in significant ecumenical dialogue for over half a century. The agreed statement draws on Scripture and tradition to provide the context for a common appreciation of the content of Marian dogmas resulting in better understanding which suggests that we now have an opportunity to receive together Mary's place in God's revelation.

The dialogues agree that Mary is a model disciple within the fellowship of the Christian faithful along with other saints. As the Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church, Mary is a disciple who guides and teaches through her own profound reflection. While there is recognition of the special place of Mary in the history of salvation, these dialogues represent a consensus in the understanding of Christ as the sole mediator and source of grace.

Peter Mascarenhas smm

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Peter Mascarenhas SMM

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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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Mary in Catholicism

Selva Kumar smm

I always used to wear the medal of Blessed Virgin Mary around my neck when I was in the primary school. I grew up loving Mary, the Mother of God and never used to miss the Marian feasts in my parish as well as in my neighboring parishes. I have experienced the maternal love and the protection of Mary as a boy, as a seminarian and now as a priest. Mother Mary is not only a mother to Jesus but to all of us particularly to the priests. I remember the words of Venerable Fulton J. Sheen who said. "Where there is the presence of Jesus, there is the presence of His Mother". No human baby can be separated from his or her human parents. Even if a parent never cares for his or her child, every parent passes on their genetic material to their offspring. The same is true of Jesus. You may have thought of this before but it is something that comes back to my prayer regularly: Jesus is genetically 100 percent from Mary and we Catholics believe in it.

The four marks of the Catholic Church are Holy, One, Catholic and Apostolic. There is also a particular characteristic which is based on the Holy Scripture and which is unique to Catholicism that is honour and devotion of the Catholic Church to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ. There is not a single month in the year without several feasts in her honour. Consider the months of August and September, for example, in which there are seven feasts on the ecclesiastical calendar dedicated to her. This honour and devotion to

Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, is one of the many things not encouraged by Protestants.

Mary in Scripture

Let us begin our defence of the Catholic Church and its devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary by the consideration of the similarities between the fall of Man and the Redemption of Man. When Adam and Eve had fallen, Almighty God not only punished them and their progeny for this original sin, but He also promised to send a Redeemer. "And the Lord God said to the serpent... I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen 3:13-15).

In the Old Testament, Adam brought about the fall of mankind with the cooperation of Eve. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, the God-Man, brought about our Redemption with the cooperation of the Virgin Mary. Eve, our first parent, was tempted by a fallen angel to disobey the command of God, and she subsequently led Adam into sin. In the New Testament, another angel, the Angel Gabriel, announced the will of God to the Virgin Mary and she, unlike Eve, humbly submitted.

In the Gospel of St. Luke, we read: "The Angel Gabriel was sent to a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House



of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary" (Lk 1: 27). Who can deny the dignity of the Virgin Mary chosen to be the Mother of Jesus Christ? The Angel Gabriel, who was sent by God Himself, honoured and praised her. Furthermore, when the Virgin Mary visited her cousin, St. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she cried out with a loud voice and said: 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb. Then during this same visitation, the Virgin Mary responded to her cousin's praise of her by the prayer so full of humility and of praise to God: "My soul doth magnify the Lord... because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; *for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.* For He that is mighty hath done great things to me."

As Catholics, members of the one, true Church of Christ, we honour the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ. We call her the Mother of God, because she indeed is the Mother of the one Divine Person, Jesus Christ, Who has both the nature of God and the nature of Man. By this title of "Mother of God," we simply refer to the Virgin Mary as St. Elizabeth did when "filled with the Holy Ghost she cried out... Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"

In the Old Testament, we read how Moses prayed with arms outstretched and interceded with God to procure the victory of the Israelites over their enemies in a crucial battle. As long as he prayed, they were victorious. If Moses and Joshua could have such intercession before God, how much more powerful are the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary!

The Gospel of St. John relates two significant accounts which relate to Mary - the wedding feast of Cana and the Crucifixion. Of the first account we read: "There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee when there was shortage of wine Mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.' At Cana Jesus insinuates that when his hour shall have come, the hour of the Woman will also have come. Indeed, on Calvary when the hour of Jesus did come, the hour came too for Mary to become definitively a new mother of the living, the mother of all disciples of Jesus, represented here by St. John. He calls his Mother "Woman". This is a very formal expression for a son to use of his mother. It is rare in Scripture, and it refers back to the 'Woman' (Gen 3: 15) who in prophecy is seen as an enemy of Satan, and whose Son will crush your head. Also, from the Cross Jesus, the New Adam, will again call her 'Woman'. Mary is indeed, like Eve but in completely a new way, 'the Mother of all the living' (Gen 3: 20), Mother of the Church, and Mother of us all on Calvary. In fact the early Fathers of the Church already referred to her as the New Eve. St. Jerome

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says Death by Eve, Life by Mary. Of the second we read: "There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother. When Jesus therefore had seen His Mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He said to His Mother: *"Woman, behold your son"* Then he said to his disciple *"Here is your Mother"* in accepting John, the newly-ordained bishop, accepts those who guide the Church and take the place of Christ her Son in the Church.

"This is your Mother" John takes Mary to 'his own home'. So the Church will always have devotion to Mary, who is the icon of the Church herself, and so there should be a shrine to Mary in all our churches. One cannot be a beloved disciple of Jesus, like John, without accepting Mary as Mother. St. John Paul II has spoken of this scene of Mary at Calvary: "It is the gesture of the world's Redeemer who assigns Mary, as 'Woman' a role of new motherhood to all those who are called to the Church. Mary is 'consecrated' Mother of the Church by her Son on the Cross. Jesus wishes to include among those things accomplished this gift of his Mother to the Church and to the world." From the Cross Jesus lays the foundation of Marian devotion in the Church, to which he makes known through John his will that Mary should receive a filial love from every disciple whose Mother she is by the decision of Jesus himself. "The Father takes pleasure in looking upon the heart of the most Holy Virgin Mary, as the masterpiece of his hands. The Son takes pleasure in it as the heart of His Mother, the source from which He drew the blood that ransomed us." writes St. John Vianney.

In both accounts, Jesus addressed Mary by the term *woman*. In Hebrew the word used by Jesus was a term which would be addressed to a queen or a woman of high rank. It was a term of great respect. But why did Jesus Christ address His Mother by the term *woman* at these two significant moments in His life at His first public miracle, and at His Crucifixion on the Cross? Our Divine Lord wanted to clearly indicate that His Mother was the Woman spoken of in the Book of Genesis: "I will put enmities between the Satan and the Woman, between thy seed and her seed, and she shall crush thy head."

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Lastly, Catholics firmly believe that Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, was "Ever Virgin." That Mary was a Virgin before and after the miraculous birth of Jesus can be demonstrated from the passage of the Prophet Isaiah: The Lord Himself shall give you a sign. "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Is 7: 14).

Protestants also make reference to various passages in the Gospels which refer to "the brethren of the Lord," and from this, they infer that Mary might have had other children. Why did Jesus, when dying on the Cross, give the care of His Mother to His Apostle St. John?

This would not have been necessary if there were brothers in the strict sense. The tradition of the Church of Christ from the earliest ages of Christianity has always upheld this prerogative of Mary. This is amply proven by the writings of the early Popes, early Councils of the Church, and early Fathers and Doctors of the Church.

What Catholics believe about Mary can be summarized in five key teachings:

1. *Theotokos*: Mary Mother of God.
2. Perpetual Virginity: Mary was a Virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus.
3. Immaculate Conception: Mary was conceived without original sin.
4. Assumption: Mary was taken body and soul into heaven.
5. Co-redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate: Mary plays a unique role in redemption. St. John Paul II once made the following remarkable statement: The story of Mary's pilgrimage is the "story of all human beings." Therefore one can draw out the conclusion that the history of devotion to Mary is closely related to the history of the Church and its renewal. The devotion to Mary has marked the life of the Church and has frequently been the "*Barometer*," which indicated the state of Catholic life right down through the history.

Mary from the light of Second Vatican Council

The Marian doctrine of the Council is contained principally in chapter eight of *Lumen Gentium*. It speaks of Mary in relation to Christ, Church and devotion.

1. Mary cannot be studied alone but always with her son Jesus. Here I'm reminded of Montfort who said "It would be easier to separate light from the sun than Mary from Jesus" (TD no. 247).

2. She is the mother of the church: She was present at the Pentecost and she also encouraged the disciples in their mission.

3. Mary is not only handed over to us through the scripture but also through the tradition.

4. She is the mother of the human race: Before the Second Vatican Council the understanding of the church was "There is no salvation without the church" but today we have Mother Mary who has been entrusted to us by Jesus at the foot of the cross.

Mary in the life of St. Montfort

Montfort was a Catholic priest and a preacher of True Devotion to Mary in the 17th century in France. During his time there were so many heresies which were prevalent in France. They were Jansenism, Gallicanism, Protestantism, Quietism, etc. As a result the devotion to Mary was declining. Our founder, Father de Montfort was conferred with the title an 'Apostolic Missionary' by Pope Clement XI in the year 1706 and asked him to carry out his mission in France itself and not to go abroad. The Pope connected his priestly ministry to Christ who was sent on mission by the Father to preach the Gospel "As the Father sent me so I send you" (Jn 20: 21). Montfort's teaching on Mary is a blessing not only to France but also to the whole Church- a blessing pointed out

repeatedly by St. John Paul II who was a Spiritual Son of Montfort.

Why is Mary Important in the Catholic Faith?

Mary is a central figure in the Catholic faith and her life illustrates how our Almighty Father works in our lives. Despite the hardships she had to go through, Mary became an instrument of faith and stayed committed in her role of bringing to life God's promised Son into humanity. In our Catholic faith, we are taught the three core values of Mary.

1. The value of humility: Humility is one of the most fundamental values we should have as Christians. We can only receive Christ when we are humble and meek. Mary teaches us that pride and selfishness is something that we must avoid. She had an extraordinary role as the Mother of God and yet she remained humble in her ways and continued to serve the Lord with devotion. Being humble is not always easy. The Marian value of humility teaches us to put others first in our ministry.
2. The value of simplicity: Mary lived her life in the simplest way. Despite having found favour in the Lord, she accepted what was given to her with grace and humility.
3. The value of charity: Charity is at the heart of everything that Mary did. Being a mother involves being charitable and deeply generous in one's actions. It is an act of sacrifice. In our Catholic Religion, love and charity are often frequently interchanged and with good reason since the value of charity is a kind of love.

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Mary has been given an extraordinary role in the history of salvation. In response to her special status, Catholics give Mary unequalled admiration and respect, greater than any other Saint. This is a tradition often misunderstood by non-Catholics. The honour we give to Mary is not to be compared to the worship and praise we give only to Almighty God. However, Mary must not be disregarded, as she offers many graces, and mercy to all who call upon her intercession. CCC, no. 970 says "The church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship." Let's love Mary and invite all our brethren who are belonging to different denominations to love Mary in our Catholic Church, St. Maximilian Kolbe who is also a Marian devotee has said: "Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin Mary too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did and if anyone does not wish to have Mary Immaculate for his mother, he will not have Christ for his brother." Let us love Mary and Catholicism and be part of God's family.

Mary and the Reformers

Peter Mascarenhas smm

The presence of Mary finds many different expressions in our day as it did throughout the Church's history. It has a wide field of action through faith and piety of the individual believers. Christians know that their unity will be truly rediscovered only if it is based on the unity of their faith. The dialogues begun by the Catholic Church with the Churches and ecclesial communities are steadily converging upon the various aspects of the mystery of salvation. The Reformers share the true faith and hope of the mystery of Incarnation.

Martin Luther

He was born on 10 November 1483 in the Saxon mining town of Eisleban, Germany to Hans and Margarethe Luther. He was baptized the following day, the feast day of St. Martin (of Tours). Hans Luther was ambitious for his son and wanted him to pursue a career in law, and in agreement, Luther entered the legal faculty of the University of Erfurt in 1501. He received his master's degree there in 1505. Things changed when on 2 July 1505, Luther was caught in a violent thunderstorm. On being struck by a bolt of lightning, Luther cried out for help to Saint Anne, the patron saint of Miners, saying: "I will become a monk". A few weeks later, Luther made good his promise and entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt, a decision that did not come with his Father's approval. Luther embraced the monastic life, with Long hours of

study, prayer and fasting. He took his monastic Vows in 1506 and was ordained a priest in 1507. At this time, Luther also was studying theology at the University of Wittenberg and he received his doctorate in 1512. He started to lecture on several biblical books, including the Psalms and Paul's letter to the Romans.



Luther's intense study of the Bible was partly influenced by the humanist movement of the day. This called for a 'return to the sources' (*Ad fontes*) of classical Greek and Latin literature. Luther began to see how this might be applied in a biblical capacity – the need to examine the scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek texts and discover their true meaning. Despite all the hard work and effort, Luther struggled with the weight of his own sinfulness. He wrote "Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God."¹

Luther's custom of preaching Marian sermons on the Marian feasts continued in Lutheran Church a hundred years after his

¹ Martin Luther, *www: Introduction to Protestantism: Reformers: Luther, Calvin, Zwingli*

death. Following the example of Luther other great song writers of the Reformation glorified the greatness of Mary's divine maternity. This lasting piety towards the Mother of God found an outlet in piety so that generally the celebrated pictures of the Madonna and her statues from the middle ages were retained in Lutheran Churches. According to Heiler, it was only in the spirit of Enlightenment with its lack of understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation, which in the 18th century began the work of destruction.²

Despite Luther's harsh polemics against his Roman Catholic opponents over issues concerning Mary and saints, Luther adhered to the Marian decrees of the ecumenical councils and dogmas of the church. The centerpiece of Luther's Marian views was his 1521 commentary on *Magnificat* in which he extolled the magnitude of God's grace toward Mary and her legacy of Christian instruction and example demonstrated in her canticle of praise.³ Quite remarkable is that, Luther with considerable consistency down the time of his death in 1546 accepted the Immaculate Conception of Mary. As far as the assumption goes, he did not

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pronounce clearly in this subject, but was content simply to affirm it. Wright adds to this list the fact that the Mother of God is a frequent instinctive usage for Luther, down to the last years of his life. He goes on to mention Zwingli also endorsed it explicitly, even if Calvin never adopted the phrase.⁴

Mother of God

Luther believed that the person of Jesus is God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, who was incarnated in the womb of his mother Mary as a human being, and since, as a person, he was "born of the Virgin Mary". He believed that Mary is the God bearer, the *Theotokos*. She became the Mother of God, in which God bestowed on her such good things which the human person is not able to understand. For on this there follows all honor, all blessedness, and her unique place in the whole humankind, among which she has no equal, namely she had a child by the Father in heaven. Hence men have given glory to the Mother of God. This needs to be pondered in the heart what it means to be the Mother of God. On account of her personal union and communion of the natures, Mary, the most blessed virgin, did not conceive a mere, ordinary human being, but a human being who is truly the Son of the Most High God, as the angel testifies. He demonstrated his divine majesty even in his mother's womb in that he was born of a virgin without violating her

² William J. Cole, "Was Luther a Devotee of Mary?", *Marian studies*, 1970, 101-102

³ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, The American Edition. 1955-86

⁴ David F. Wright, *Chosen by God: Mary in Evangelical Perspective*, (London, Marshall Pickering), 1989, 167.

virginity. Therefore she is truly the Mother of God and yet remained virgin.⁵

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Perpetual Virginity of Mary

Luther accepted the perpetual virginity of Mary. Jaroslav Pelikan noted that the perpetual virginity of Mary was Luther's lifelong belief and Hartmann Grisar, a Roman Catholic biographer of Luther, concurs that "Luther always believed in the virginity of Mary, even *post partum*, as affirmed in the Apostles' Creed, though afterwards he denied her power of intercession, as well as that of the saints, resorting to many misinterpretations and combated, as extreme and pagan, the extraordinary veneration which the Catholic Church showed towards Mary."⁶

Luther composed a number of venerational poems, which focus on Mary's Virginity. They express in various ways the incarnation of God through a virgin:

The virgin body was pregnant, but she remained pure here comes the savior of the gentiles Divine grace from heaven came over the virgin and others.

Immaculate Conception

When concentrating specifically on Mary herself as the Mother of God, Luther acknowledges God's singular action in bringing her into the world, but in making general comments about the universality of human sinfulness, he includes her among all the rest of humanity. The Holy Spirit permitted the Virgin Mary to remain a true, natural human being of flesh and blood, just as we. However, he warded off sin from her flesh and blood so that she became the mother of a pure child, not poisoned by sin as we are. For that moment when she conceived, she was a holy mother filled with the Holy Spirit and her fruit is a holy pure fruit, at once God and truly man, in one person.⁷

The Lutheran views on the veneration of Mary were interpreted differently by different theologians over time. Key is the interpretation of the *Magnificat* of Mary, which is a relic of the past, but to others a clear indication that he maintained Marian piety. Luther states in his *Magnificat* that one should pray to Mary, so God would give and do, through her will, what we ask but, he adds, it is God's work alone. Some interpret his *Magnificat* as a personal supplication to Mary, but not as a prayerful request for mediation. The singing of the *Magnificat* in Latin was maintained in many German Lutheran communities. The Royal heads of the Lutheran Church maintained three

⁵ Tappert, Theodore G., *The Book of Concord: the Confessions of the Evangelical Church*: (Fortress Press, 1959), p.595.

⁶ Grisar, Hartmann, Luigi Cappadelta. ed. *Martin Luther*. trns. by E. M. Lamod, St. Louis: B. Herder, 1915, p. 210.

⁷ Luther, Martin, John Nicholas Lenker, ed. *Sermons of Martin Luther*: (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996, p. 291.

Marian feast days to be observed as public holidays. It is known that Martin Luther approved of this. He also approved of keeping Marian paintings and statues in the Churches. He also advocated the use of pre-Trent version of the Hail Mary (that is, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.") as a sign of reverence for and devotion to the Blessed Virgin.⁸

John Calvin

Zwingli's younger contemporary, John Calvin, built on his elder's teachings. Born in France in 1509, Calvin studied theology and law, but was forced to flee to France in about 1534 after becoming involved with a group of university students who were circulating Protestant ideas. He settled in Strasburg, where he joined a group of reformers who helped him formulate and solidify his ideas. Later, he moved to Basel where, in 1536, he published his masterpiece. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, a book he continued to edit and expand throughout the rest of his life. He was a Frenchman who came to Geneva in 1536 for the first time after he had broken with the Roman Catholic Church. Geneva at the time was not yet part of the Confederation, but had close relations with Bern and Zurich.

It has been said that John Calvin belonged to the second generation of the Reformers and certainly his theology of double predestination

governed his views on Marian and all other Christian doctrine. Calvin's approach to Mariology is a bit more radical than Luther's, but in its main lines, is not much different, although he senses a greater urgency to hem it in with more qualifications. Although Calvin was not profuse in his praise of Mary as Martin Luther, he did not deny her perpetual virginity. In retaining the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary, in encouraging our imitation of her virtues, in holding her to be free from sin, he showed a certain balance. The term he used most often in referring to Mary was "Holy Virgin". "Elizabeth called Mary Mother of the Lord, because the unity of the person in two natures of Christ was such that she could have said that the mortal man engendered in the womb of Mary was at the same time the eternal God." It cannot be denied that God in choosing and destining Mary to be the Mother of her Son, granted her the highest honor. To this day we cannot enjoy the blessing brought to us in Christ without thinking at the same time of that which God gave as adornment and honor to Mary, in willing her to be the mother of his only-begotten Son.⁹

Ulrich Zwingli

Ulrich Zwingli came from a rich Toggenburg (eastern Switzerland) family. He had a gift of languages and could read the Bible in both Greek and the Hebrew original. After he had survived the catastrophe of Marignano and the plague, and regarded the Bible as being the

⁸ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 10 II, 407-409.

⁹ John Calvin, *A harmony of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (St. Andrew's press, Edinburgh, 1972), p. 32

most important measure of religious matters. He carried out the reform of the church in Zurich from 1519 which he led to the establishment of the Reformed Church. Zwingli preached against the veneration of relics and the saints, and also opposed celibacy and the Eucharist. He tried to spread his Reformation throughout Switzerland, and also as a politician he dreamed of a strengthened confederation of the Reformed faith. One of his major successes was the introduction of the new faith in his hometown of Zurich in 1528. At that time, Zurich was on the side of the Franco-German coalition against the Habsburgs and the Pope - and the introduction of the Reformation can also be viewed from this political aspect. He died in 1531 in a fight against Catholic soldiers from the central Switzerland.

What comes across in a brief survey of the Marian thought of Zwingli is that, generally Mary, is nearer to Luther than one might expect, which is to say that he is more Catholic on this matter than Calvin. On the perpetual virginity of Mary, he not only holds to it, but defends it. It was given to her what belongs to no creature, that in the flesh she should bring forth the Son of God. I firmly believe that Mary, according to the words of the gospel as a pure Virgin brought forth for us the Son of God and in childbirth and after childbirth forever remained a pure, intact Virgin.¹⁰ Zwingli used Exodus 4:22 to defend the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. I esteem immensely the Mother of God, the ever chaste, immaculate Virgin Mary. Christ was born of a

On the perpetual virginity of Mary, he not only holds to it, but defends it. It was given to her what belongs to no creature, that in the flesh she should bring forth the Son of God.

most undefiled Virgin. It was fitting that such a holy Son should have a holy Mother. The more the honor and love of Christ increases among men, so much the esteem and honor given to Mary should grow. He often called Mary, pure, holy, spotless, without offering an unambiguous commitment to either her Immaculate Conception or sinlessness.

"He who was about to remove our sins but not to make all men holy, must be himself holy. Hence God sanctified his mother: for it was fitting that such a holy Son should have likewise holy mother..."; "I have never thought, still less taught or declared publicly, anything concerning the subject of the ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our salvation, which could be considered dishonorable, impious, unworthy, or evil... I hope this is sufficient to have made plain to pious and simple Christians my clear conviction on the matter of the Mother of God: I believe with all my heart according to the word of holy gospel that this pure virgin bore for us the Son of God and that she remained, in the birth and after it, a pure and unsullied virgin, for eternity."¹¹

We might wonder why the Marian affirmations of the Reformers did not survive in the teaching of their heirs- particularly the

¹⁰ Ulrich Zwingli, *Zwingli Opera*, Corpus Reformatorum, Volume, 1, p. 424

¹¹ Max Thurian, cited in, *Annotationes in Evangelium Lucae*, and sermon on "Mary, ever Virgin, Mother of God" 1524, p. 23, 76.

fundamentalists. This break with the past did not come through any new discovery or revelation. The Reformers themselves took a benign even positive view of Marian doctrine - although they did reject Marian mediation because of their rejection of all human mediation. Moreover, while there were some excesses in popular Marian piety, Marian doctrine as taught in the pre- Reformation era drew its inspiration from the witness of Scripture and was rooted in Christology. The real reason for the break with the past must be attributed to the iconoclastic passion of the followers of the Reformation and the consequences of some Reformation principles. Even more influential in the break with Mary was the influence of the Enlightenment Era which essentially questioned or denied the mysteries of faith.

Unfortunately the Marian teachings and preachings of the Reformers have been 'covered up' by their zealous followers - with damaging theological and practical consequences. Most remarkable to modern Protestants is the Reformers' almost universal acceptance of Mary's virginity, and their widespread reluctance to declare Mary a sinner. He then asks if it is 'a favorable providence' that kept these Marian teachings of the Reformers from being 'transmitted to the Protestant churches? What is interpreted as " Providence' by a Marian critic may legitimately be interpreted as a force of a very different kind by a Christian who has recognized the role of Mary in God's plan.

JOKES

Husband on the second day of his marriage:

He went to the beautician who did his wife's bridal make up and gifted her a beautifully packed 'I-phone 7 plus box' and she opened the box with great happiness and was depressed to see a Nokia 1100. Husband smiled and said "Same feeling".

Son: Dad I am going out

Dad: Are you informing or seeking permission?

Son: I am asking you for money

Home is a place where I can look ugly and still enjoy it!!!

What is the difference between a coffee shop and wine shop?

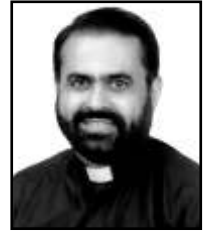
Coffee shop is the starting point of love

Wine shop is the last point of love

If child labour is crime... then why does teacher give me homework?

Mary in Roman Catholic and Anglican Dialogue

Rev. Dr. Gibert Arahna



Christians who were separated from the Catholic Church in the 16th century have been generally termed as Protestants. The Anglican Church,¹ however, does not come under this category. There is a fundamental difference between the beginnings of the continental reformation and reformation in England. While the protestant reformation had religious beginning, political and personal reasons were the beginnings of the English reformation.² Therefore, doctrinally, in the beginning stage, the Anglican Church remained closer to the Catholic Church. This was so even in their Marian devotion and doctrine. In fact, in 1521 Henry VIII published his treatise *Defence of the Seven Sacraments* against Luther. The Vatican II, therefore, declared, "Among those in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place."³

The original Reformers did not oppose Mary or Mariology directly. In fact, they had

great appreciation and devotion to her.⁴ After the passing away of the Reformers most of the churches of the Reformation developed a negative attitude towards Mary and Mariology, but the Church of England remained an exception. England was called 'Mary's Dower' for her devotion to Mary especially during the later Middle Ages. The English reformers were cautious in their reaction to Marian devotion and doctrine. Henry VIII maintained Marian devotion and Marian piety and went on pilgrimage to Walsingham. Even though there were criticisms of abuses and excesses, his King's Primer of 1545 included the Hail Mary and invocations of saints in the litanies.⁵

The treatment of Marian devotion and doctrines in the Anglican Church had both backward and forward movements, but in slow stages.⁶ The 1536 version of articles of religion

¹ The Origin of English Church is historically traced to the appointment of St. Augustine, a monk of Roman monastery on the Coelian Hill in 597 AD as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Current Archbishop Justin Welby is his 105th successor to this centre of Anglican Communion.

² The English Reformation is associated with King Henry VIII (1491-1547) who had a political agenda behind his personal and pressing need. One-third to one-fifth of the land was in the control of the church disadvantaging both king and the people. Outflow of taxes to Rome and disenchantment of the people with the corrupt Cardinal Wolsey had generated sufficient anger to ignite a revolt against the Pope, and Henry VIII's need to divorce Catherine of Aragon to marry Anne Boleyn provided it. See, BLISS, Frederick, *Anglicans in Rome: A History*, Canterbury Press, Norwich, London 2006, p.2.

³ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 13, c

⁴ See, Pushparajan A., "Mary and Reformation: An Ecumenical Reading," in SAMY, R.K., ed., "Mary in our Search for Fullness of Life," N.B.C.L.C., Bangalore, 2006, pp. 134-138.

⁵ See TAVARD, George H., *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1996, pp. 135-136.

⁶ This can also be explained from the *Catholic and Protestant swings in the Anglican Church*. Cf., BLISS, Frederick M., *Catholic and Ecumenical History and Hope: Why the Catholic Church Is Ecumenical and What She Is Doing About It*, Sheed & Ward, Franklin, Wisconsin 1999, p. 148-154.

allowed the invocation to Mary and asking for her intercession. Later, though Mary was praised, invoking her intercession was forbidden. The *King's Book* of 1543 praised Mary. In 1546 the first service in English language contained invocation to Our Lady. In the 1549 Eucharistic liturgy, Mary was referred to in the Canon with the omission of the word 'ever-virgin.' The 1552 prayer book which removed all invocation to saints retained Annunciation and Purification feasts, and in 1561 feast of Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary was reinstated. Reformers held to the doctrine of perpetual virginity of Mary. At the same time, the reformers' enthusiasm of cleansing the devotion and doctrine of Mary of medieval abuses also saw violent reactions in the Anglican Church. Shrines of our Lady, like that of Walsingham, were abolished and statues destroyed, and pilgrimages came to an end. The invocation of Mary and the saints were strongly discouraged.⁷

The eventual change in Marian devotion did not affect the Marian doctrines in the Church of England. The English reformers explicitly re-affirmed the doctrinal definitions of the first four General Councils including the Council of Ephesus (431AD) which declared Mary *Theotokos*, Mother of God. Role of Mary in the incarnation of the Word and the redemption of humankind was re-affirmed. Even though the practice of invocation was abandoned, the

belief in comprecation was retained: Mary and the saints pray for us and pray with us. Devotion to Mary and belief in the Marian doctrines were expressed in popular religious poems.⁸ The doctrine of the Assumption, and also the Immaculate Conception, which were not defined dogmas in the Roman Catholic household of faith at that time, were left alone.⁹

Thus Mary was part of early Anglican prayer-life. Since the sixteenth century there has been a discreet but continuous tradition of devotion to Mary within Anglicanism. Unlike in other Protestant traditions, a line of theological reflection on Mary has been alive within the Anglican tradition on account of the constant tendency in Anglican theology to return to a Chalcedonian Christology, the celebration of the feasts of the Annunciation and the Purification along with the daily recitation of the *Magnificat* at Evensong. The Classical Anglican theology which began at the close of the sixteenth century, departed from continental Protestantism in the seventeenth century. Anglicanism balanced the exclusively Pauline emphasis and the consequent doctrine of justification of the Protestants by a concern for the Johannine writings and a doctrine of incarnation. In this context Marian doctrine has received attention in the reflection and writings of the Anglican theologians. At least three important themes emerge from the writings of this period: firstly, Mary is always thought of in

⁷ See, ALLCHIN, A. M., "Mary: An Anglican Approach," in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 54.2 (1988) 120.

⁸ See, *ibid.*, 120-125.

⁹ See A. M. ALLCHIN, "Mary, Virgin and Mother: An Anglican approach," in *One in Christ*, 5.3 (1969) 277.

relation to the Incarnation of the Lord; secondly, she is seen as the type of every Christian in whom in a spiritual manner the Lord is to be born; thirdly, the presence of Christ in the flesh through the child-bearing of Mary, is the foundation of his presence in the Church and particularly in the Eucharist.¹⁰ In the eighteenth century Marian devotion was maintained chiefly among the Nonjurors like Thomas Ken and George Hickes.

Mary in the Oxford Movement

In the nineteenth century, the Oxford Movement brought a gradual reappraisal of Mary into Anglicanism. The main leaders of the Tractarians¹¹, John Keble, Edward B. Pusey and John Henry Newman spoke and wrote on Mary. John Keble began the Tractarian devotion to Mary with a poem he wrote in his *The Christian Year* (1827) on "The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary." John Henry Newman's understanding of Mary consisted in these essential points: Mary is the Mother of God, the Ever-Virgin, the Second Eve, the purest and holiest of all creatures, who was free from sin. The development of Newman's devotion to Mary since the mid-1820s, was influenced by his friend Hurrell Froude and also by his reading of

the Fathers of the Church. His reflective faith in the Incarnation led him to assent to the doctrine of the Creed on Mary the Virgin Mother of God. Mary's relationship with her Son was at the heart of Newman's Mariology and he saw in the Assumption an honour bestowed on Mary. His faith in Mary brought him to a true devotion to her which he practised in the Anglican Church.¹² Even though the Oxford Movement revived the Marian devotion in the Anglican Church, it ruled out direct prayers to the Virgin and the favourable allusions to the Assumption were rare.¹³ To put in the words of Richard Gerrard, "the Oxford movement in its early phases at least, made no fundamental developments in doctrine concerning our Lady. But a new awareness and a poetic, spiritual and emotional interest was developing."¹⁴

Mary in the 20th Century

The Ritualist development in the Oxford Movement moved further to resemble Roman Catholic household of faith, in the later part of nineteenth century and the earlier part of twentieth century. For instance, the Anglo-Catholic Prayer Book of 1931 included the rosary, the Angelus, the Regina Coeli, the litany

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 276-283.

¹¹ "Tractarian" is the name the Oxford Movement had initially. It aimed at restoring the High Church ideals of 17th century within the Church of England. Tractarianism is the philosophy of the Oxford Movement. The name derived from the use of tracts or pamphlets written "Tracts for the Times" and published from 1833-1841 to disseminate Church of England principles "Against Popery and Dissent." John Henry Newman and Edward Bouverie Pusey. John Keble, were the prominent Tractarians.

¹² See L. GOVAERT, "Newman's Mariology and His Personal Development," in *One in Christ*, 25.4 (1989) 359-362; R. STRANGE, "The Development of Newman's Marian thought and Devotion," in *One in Christ*, 16.1-2 (1980) 114-126.

¹³ See G. H. TAVARD, *The Thousand Faces*, pp. 144-145.

¹⁴ GARRARD, Richard, *'Work in Progress,' the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Anglican Tradition: A historical survey and some comments of current ecumenical realities*, The Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Wallington, Surrey, 2002, p. 11.

of Loretto and prayers for Marian feasts. In 1948, Eric Mascall wrote on the traditional doctrines of Mary both as the Mother of God and her role as the mother of the Church and accepted the doctrine of the Assumption, besides the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.¹⁵ Thus, in the twentieth century, Mary has a new prominence in the Anglican worship through the liturgical renewals. She is mentioned in the Eucharistic prayer and in most of the prayer books. Feasts of Mary have been renewed, in particular August 15th has come to be celebrated as a principal feast in honour of Mary with Scriptural readings, collect and proper preface.¹⁶ Thus, today the old reformation anxiety about the invocation of Mary has been overcome. The pilgrimage to Walsingham has been restored and is becoming more and more an ecumenical event.¹⁷ In the words of Allchin, “many Anglicans in the last one hundred and fifty years have learnt to become freer in their approach to Our Lady and the saints and have felt able to ask directly of the assistance of their prayers in a way which was not envisaged before.”¹⁸

Mary in the Anglican - Roman Catholic dialogue

A new era in Anglican-Roman Catholic

relations at the international level began with the visit of Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher of Canterbury to Rome in 1960 and his meeting with Pope John XXIII. The Anglican Communion sent official observers to Vatican II and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, acknowledged its special affinity to Anglican Church.¹⁹ Archbishop Michael Ramsey and Pope Paul VI inaugurated a serious dialogue with the 'Common Declaration' of 24 March 1966. The *Joint Preparatory Commission which was established to suggest procedures to future talks*, in *The Malta Report* (1968), recommended a permanent Joint Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission. Thus was born the *Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission*, ARCIC. So far we have completed two phases of the dialogue and the third phase is on.

ARCIC I, First Phase: 1970-1981

The definition of dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and the Assumption in 1950 had given rise to widespread scepticism and resistance among the Anglicans. Therefore, in the 1960s, when the first ever official dialogue between the Anglicans and Roman Catholics started, the question of Marian dogmas surfaced right at the very beginning. *The Malta*

¹⁵ See *ibid.*

¹⁶ See ARCIC-II, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*. London: Morehouse, 2005, (Hence forth MGH) no. 49.

¹⁷ A.M. Allchin says that “The restoration of the pilgrimage to Walsingham in the last sixty or seventy years, after a silence of almost four centuries, is one of the most striking and unexpected events in the religious history of England during this century. The pilgrimage there becomes a more and more ecumenical event. Anglicans, Orthodox, Roman Catholics and other are all now involved.” ALLCHIN, A. M., “Mary: An Anglican Approach,” in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 54.2 (1988) 126.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 128.

¹⁹ UR 13.

Report identified “Mariological definitions” among the important topics for the future discussion and dialogue.²⁰ ARICI I began its formal meetings in 1970.

The initial discussions on Mary by the ARCIC was in relation to the subject of authority. The ARCIC I during its 8th meeting in Venice in 1976 published its third Agreed Statement, “Authority in the Church I” and referred to Marian dogmas in connection with the the dogma of infallibility of 1870 expressing grave difficulties of the Anglicans “in the affirmation that the Pope can be infallible in his teaching.” In this connection, the document stated, “Even so, special difficulties are created by the recent Marian dogmas, because Anglicans doubt the appropriateness, or even the possibility, of defining them as essential to the faith of the believers.”²¹

The final report of the ARCIC, its second Agreed Statement on Authority, in 1981, well illustrated the place of Mary in the Anglican Communion. The Commission had its thirteenth and the final meeting at Windsor Castle in 1981 to consider the Marian dogmas of Immaculate Conception and Assumption. The Statement clarified the Anglican position:

Anglicans and Roman Catholics can agree in much of the truth that these two dogmas are designed to affirm. We agree that there can be but one mediator between God and man, Jesus

*Christ, and reject any interpretation of the role of Mary which obscures this affirmation. We agree in recognizing that Christian understanding of Mary is inseparably linked with the doctrines of Christ and of the Church. We agree in recognizing the grace and unique vocation of Mary, Mother of God Incarnate (Theotokos), in observing her festivals, and in according her honour in the communion of saints. We agree that she was prepared by divine grace to be the mother of our Redeemer, by whom she herself was redeemed and received into glory. We further agree in recognizing in Mary a model of holiness, obedience and faith for all Christians. We accept that it is possible to regard her as a prophetic figure of the Church of God before as well as after the Incarnation.*²²

The above statement expresses that both the Churches accept the basic principles of the devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary. This is clear from foot note 6 which explains the Roman Catholic understanding of the dogma of the Immaculate conception as a “sign that the salvation won by Christ was operative among all mankind before his birth.” Similarly her Assumption is a sign that mankind has already begun to participate in the Salvation won by Christ her Son. Therefore, the dogmas are in consonance with the Scripture. According to Fr. Yarnold, a member of the ARCIC, the Commission was reflecting on Paul VI's view in

²⁰ The Malta Report: Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Preparatory Commission 1968, no. 20

²¹ ARCIC I, “Authority in the Church I,” 1976, no. 24.c.

²² ARCIC, Authority in the Church- II, 1981, no. 30.

Marialis Cultus 30, that devotion to Mary should bear a 'biblical imprint'. He states that "the Marian doctrines are true to scripture and are statements of essential faith only because they express, in relation to Mary the gospel of salvation."²³

ARCIC II, Second Phase: 1983-2005

The Marian dogmas were addressed in the ARCIC I document Authority II in connection with the Anglican concern about the exercise of an infallible teaching authority. However, the Mary issue was not officially and exclusively addressed until the summer of 2000, when the special consultation of Anglican and Catholic bishops, held at Mississauga, Canada, requested the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) to turn its attention on the place of Mary in the life and doctrine of the Church. ARCIC responded admirably by releasing the "Seattle Statement"²⁴ entitled, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, in Seattle on May 16, 2005.²⁵ This first major statement of agreement by a formal international dialogue between the two world communions proposed that in faith about Mary, Anglicans and Catholics are in substantial agreement.²⁶

This is a historical break-through. The document has addressed the two most controversial Marian dogmas, namely, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. Providing a rich Scriptural foundation, the document examines the devotion to Mary in the tradition of the undivided Church and attempts to show the logic and relevance of the definition of the dogmas. In fact, placing Mary in the Scripture the Statement considers typology, historical-critical approaches to the biblical authors and texts, nuances of language and other aspects and states, "it is impossible to be faithful to scripture and not to take Mary seriously."²⁷

Regarding the virginal conception, the Statement concludes, "far from being an isolated miracle, [it] is a powerful expression of what the Church believes about her Lord, and about our salvation."²⁸ This conclusion indicates a different way in which the Statement has understood the Scripture and tradition into a new relationship of consonance in which truth about the revelation of God in Christ can be re-received.²⁹ Similarly, the dogma of Assumption "celebrates the action of God in Her," and the Statement affirms that it is "consonant with

²³ E. Y. YARNOLD, "Mary in the ARCIC – I Final Report," in *One in Christ*, 21.1 (1985) 71.

²⁴ The document is known as "Seattle Statement" because much of the work was carried out there.

²⁵ This Agreed Statement marks the conclusion of the second phase of the dialogue between the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, namely ARCIC II.

²⁶ See J. WICKS, "A Commentary on *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission – 2005," in *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, Information Service* 118 (2005/1-11) 61.

²⁷ MGH 6.

²⁸ MGH 18.

²⁹ WARNER, Martin, "Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ: A New Understanding of Scripture and Tradition?" in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 5.3 (2005) 266.

Scripture and that it can, indeed, only be understood in the light of Scripture.”³⁰ Therefore, both the dogmas 'must be understood in the light of the more central truth of her identity as *Theogokos*, which itself depends on faith in the incarnation,' and both these dogmas have Christological and ecclesiological context for them to be received.³¹ With regard to the devotional aspect of Mary's place in Christian tradition, they are only referred to but not explored as serious theological statements. These are areas for further theological reflection.

This article began with the statement that Anglican Reformation is different in its origin from the Protestant Reformation. Compelled by political and personal reasons, the Anglican

Church broke from Rome but took care to retain Mary with them. We find greater doctrinal affinity with the Anglican Church than with the churches of the reformation. In the forty eight years of dialogue the number of Agreed Statments the ARCIC has produced is an indication of the doctrinal convergence³².The difficulties the Anglican Church has had on these dogmas were not related to Mary but another more controversial dogma of the defining authority, i.e. the Infallibility of the Pope. There have been swings in Anglican Church's treatment of Mary but she was always given a unique place of honour. Today Marian devotion has become an integral part of Anglican culture. The commonality regarding Mary in both our churches is assuring.

JOKES

I am going to name my son 'Physics'
So that I will be called as the father of physics

Wife joins spoken English class- after few days
Wife: welcome darling
Husband: I am so tired
Wife: rest in peace
Husband: !!!

Manager commands employee: Go and water the plants.
Employee: It's already raining sir.
Manager: So what? Take an umbrella and go

If a single teacher can't teach us all the subjects.
Then how could anyone expect a single student to learn all the subjects?

³⁰ MGH 58.

³¹ Cf., MGH 63,

³² There have been so far thirteen Agreed Statements produced by the ARCIC, the latest being "Walking Together on the Way: Learning to be the Church – Local, Regional, Universal" of 2017, released on July 2, 2018.

Mary in the Orthodox Church

Daniel Veigas OP

The Good News of salvation through proclamation of Apostles and early Christians spread from Jerusalem to parts of the world. The Church grew in numbers and faithful lived and proclaimed their faith in the rites and traditions of their own, such as: Alexandrian, Antiochene, Armenian, Chaldean and Constantinople in the East and Latin or Roman in the West. Many important Ecumenical Councils (Nicaea 325 A.D, Constantinople 381 A.D, Ephesus 431 A.D, Chalcedon 451 A.D) were celebrated in the Church to define, determine Church's deposit of faith and at the same time to combat and condemn heresies. The Eastern schism in 1054 A.D. divided the Church in two: a) Churches in communion with Roman Catholic Church, accepted primacy of Pope; b) Churches not in communion with Roman Catholic Church, called as Orthodox Churches. Orthodox Churches are those autonomous Churches which find their apostolic head in the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The Orthodox Church honours and venerates the Virgin Mary as “more honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious without compare than the Seraphim”. Her name is mentioned in every service, hymns and prayers. Her intercession before the throne of God is asked at every important moment of their lives. Her icons are venerated in the Churches and homes. This implies that she has a definite role in Orthodox Christianity.

When considering Mary, in Orthodoxy, we have to look directly to the liturgical tradition in which their theology is lived and expressed, for Orthodox Christians believe that all true theology must come from the mystical experience of God through prayer and worship, rather than through the intellectual contemplation of God with the mind. So aptly St. Irenaeus writes, “Our teaching is in harmony with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms our teaching”. The liturgy includes hymns, prayers, biblical readings of the Divine Liturgy and iconography.



The Orthodox Church honours and venerates the Virgin Mary as “more honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious without compare than the Seraphim

1. Titles of Mary: *Theotokos*, *Aeiparthenos*, *Panagia*

The first and fundamental meaning of Mary for the Church is the relationship between veneration of the *Theotokos* and Orthodox doctrine. *Theotokos* is the most important title of Mary which means “God Bearer” or Birthgiver of God”. The Council of Ephesus in 431 expressed the belief that the Son of the Virgin was God from the very moment of his conception. The

title is Christocentric because honour paid to her is an expression of Christology or doctrine concerning Christ. By honouring Mary could they safeguard a right doctrine of Christ's person (Divine and Human) against the heresies of Adoptionism (which held that Christ was a good man adopted by God to be his son) and Nestorianism (which said that Christ is only an inspired man). In this regard St. John of Damascus writes, "She [Mary] is truly Mother of God who gave birth to the true God who took flesh from her... For the holy Virgin did not give birth to a mere man, but to true God and, not to God simply, but to God made flesh."

The title *Aeiparthenos* which means ever-virgin, is attested to Mary by Epiphanius of Salamis from the early 4th century and is widely used in the liturgy. The Fifth Ecumenical Council that is, Constantinople II in 553 AD, assigned this title to Mary, defining the "Belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary". Therefore, it is undeniable to Orthodox belief that the Blessed Virgin was not merely virginal before the conception of Christ but remained so for all her earthly life and heavenly witness afterwards. For this reason Orthodoxy understands the New Testament references to the brothers and sisters of Jesus (Mark 3:31) to signify His immediate family in the wider kin-group, but not the biological children of Mary. In the Roman Catholic Church this doctrine is called as Perpetual virginity of Mary. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 499 includes to the term *Aeiparthenos* by referring to *Lumen Gentium* no. 57: "Christ's birth did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it."

Panagia means all holy, truly blessed and pure. Although it is never a subject of dogmatic definition, is accepted and used by all Orthodox. Mary is holy not because of her immaculate conception (which orthodox do not agree with) but because through God's grace and her free cooperation with God's grace she did not commit any personal sin or actual sin. She overcame every temptation to sin and thus remained ever pure, even in her mind and soul. It is through the grace of God Mary has been deified or made by grace what God is by nature. This title reveals how orthodox theology understands salvation. It is not merely forgiveness of sins but also the transformation of the believer by the grace of God to become a partaker of the Divine Nature. Orthodox Christians see the realisation of salvation in the deification of Mary.

2. The Fall (original sin) and Mary

Orthodox theology prefers to use the term 'the fall' for 'the original sin'. Orthodox believe that the Blessed Virgin was born in ancestral sin just like any other person and therefore, they do not accept the doctrine of Immaculate Conception. The reason for this is, if Mary had not been born in ancestral sin, God could not have assumed sinful human nature from her. If God had not assumed sinful human nature from the Blessed Virgin, He could not have saved

She overcame every temptation to sin and thus remained ever pure, even in her mind and soul. It is through the grace of God Mary has been deified or made by grace what God is by nature.

sinful human nature through the Incarnation of Christ. Supporting this theological position is a prayer from compline which reads 'thy glorious birth-giving has united God the Word to man and joined the fallen nature to our race to heavenly things. The other reasons to support this are drawn from

a) *Sacred Scripture* which speaks only of Christ the mediator as without sin (1 Tim 2:5; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15; and 2 Corinthians 5:21) and rest of humanity is under the shadow of sin (Job 14:4; Romans 3:23; 5:8-10);

b) *Patristic writings* exalted sanctity of the Virgin from her very birth, as well as her cleansing by the Holy Spirit at her conception of Christ, but not at her own conception by Anna. The third prayer of vespers of Pentecost by St. Basil the Great says, "There is none without stain before Thee, even though his life be but a day, save Thou alone, Jesus Christ our God, Who didst appear on earth without sin, and through Whom we all trust to obtain mercy and remission of sins." St. Gregory the Theologian, "In Praise of Virginité" writes that Mary was purified by conceiving Jesus in her womb, "but when Christ came through a pure, virginal, unwedded, God-fearing, undefiled Mother without wedlock and without father, and in as much as it befitted Him to be born, He purified the female nature, rejected the bitter Eve and overthrew the laws of the flesh"

c) *Merits of Mary's virtuous life*: The righteousness and sanctity of the Virgin Mary were manifested in the fact that she, being

"human with passions like us," so loved God and gave herself over to Him, that by her purity she was exalted high above the rest of the human race. For this, she was vouchsafed to be purified by the Holy Spirit Who came upon her, and to conceive of Him the very Saviour of the world.

Therefore, orthodox teaching on Mary as *Panagia* differs from what Roman Catholic Church teaches on her Immaculate Conception.

The righteousness and sanctity of the Virgin Mary were manifested in the fact that she, being "human with passions like us," so loved God and gave herself over to Him, that by her purity she was exalted high above the rest of the human race

3. Dormition of Virgin Mary (Assumption of the Virgin Mary)

Orthodox Church on August 15 celebrates the feast of Virgin Mary's *Koimesis* 'falling asleep' and translation to Heaven, preceded by two weeks fast. Sometimes it is called the Assumption, which commemorates the death, resurrection and glorification of Christ's mother. It proclaims that Mary has been "assumed" by God into the heavenly kingdom of Christ in the fullness of her spiritual and bodily existence. The origin of this feast is influenced by a legend, dating back to 5th century which speaks of her death as announced by an angel, her burial as instructed by Jesus to his apostles and taking her body to heaven by Jesus and angel to be united to her soul. Theotokos of Livias, while

reproducing this legend, develops the theme theologically saying that it was fitting that Mary should be assumed into heaven, body and soul, for Christ took his immaculate flesh from the immaculate flesh of Mary. The Tradition of the Church is that Mary died as all people die by the necessity of her mortal human nature which is indivisibly bound up with the corruption of this world. In the liturgical services and in the Dormition icon, the Church proclaims that Mary truly needed to be saved by Christ as all human persons are saved from the trials, sufferings and death of this world; and that having truly died, she was raised up by her Son as the Mother of Life and participates already in the eternal life of paradise which is prepared and promised to all who “hear the word of God and keep it” (Lk 11: 27-28). *Neither the tomb, nor death, could hold the Theotokos, who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions. For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life, by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb (Kontakion).*

4. Marian Hymns: Akathistos and Paraklesis

The *Akathistos* is a hymn sung weekly throughout the Lent or at least on the fifth Saturday of Lent. It is sung standing and hence the name *a-kathistos* meaning “not sitting”. It is essentially a hymn in praise of the Incarnation. It consists of twenty four stanzas; the first twelve tell the Gospel stories of Nativity and the other twelve sing the praises of Christ as the Saviour of the world and of the *Theotokos*. Every alternative stanza ends with a deeply mystical refrain in greetings of joy regarding Mary:

“Chaire, nymphe anympheute” translated as “Hail, unsponsored Spouse”. This repetition shows their regard for the mother of Christ to be awe-filled and beyond any kind of absolute comparison. The hymn sings praises of Mary through salutations such as, the ‘heavenly ladder’ by which God descended; ‘the bridge that leads from earth to heaven’; ‘admiration of angels’; ‘the benevolence of God towards men’ and ‘the confidence men have in God’; ‘mouth of the Apostles’; ‘invincible fortitude of martyrs’ and so on. This hymn is also sung in procession while carrying iconographic banner or icon on stand.

Paraklesis refers to a kind of salutation and petitioning set of prayers. There are two forms of the *Paraklesis* to the *Theotokos*: a) The Great *Paraklesis*, prayed during the majority of the year and on the feasts; b) The Small *Paraklesis*, sung in the two-week fast before the feast of Dormition of *Theotokos*. It is believed to be composed by *Theosteriktos* (Theophanes) the Monk in the 9th century. It is one of the most popular Marian hymns which demonstrates the importance of Mary's mediation. In this hymnal prayer, the faithful gather to supplicate the *Theotokos*, who is their only hope, protectress, and surety in time of need, to intercede on their behalf to her Son and God for their salvation and for the relief of anything that burdens and ails them. Every genuine Orthodox Christian believer takes the Supplication services to the *Theotokos* seriously and adheres to our Holy Tradition.

5. Icons of Mary

Icons are sacred images that are venerated by the believers and are much more than religious pictures. They are a way of telling people about Christian teaching in a simple form that anyone can see and start to understand. Christ is the basis of all iconography, besides Him, only Mary has been depicted the more in icons, for no human being resembles Jesus Christ more than His Mother and she is an example of what it means to be "Christ-like". Some of the Icons of Mary are:

a) *Theotokos*: The image of Mary in the icon is always related to her motherhood, *Theotokos*. The tradition of the Orthodox Church maintains that the first iconographer was the evangelist Luke, and that the first icon he painted under divine inspiration was of the Mother of God holding the Christ-child.

b) *Hodegetria*: this means one who shows the way. In this icon Mary 'points the way'. She tells to those who pray to her that Jesus is her son who is 'the way' to life and true joy. He is the author of Life and Divine in His very being. This icon emphasises the divinity of Christ.

c) *Eleousa*: this means tenderness or showing mercy. The icon of Mary displays a deep and affectionate emotional scene with herself and child Jesus. Here the emphasis is on the humanity of Christ and the compassion of the *Theotokos* for Jesus and for all human beings.

d) *Deesis*: this means prayer or supplication. In this icon Christ presented in Majesty, enthroned, carrying a book, with Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist on either sides facing

towards Christ with their hands raised in supplication on behalf of humanity. It is Orthodox belief that Mary is entrusting not only her own cares and needs to her Son, but embraces those who pray with her for God's life and true joy.

In conclusion, Orthodox devotion and veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary is not merely an expression of popular piety. It is a manifestation of the most essential doctrines of the Orthodox faith. She is intercessor and her assistance is sought at worship, prayer for "more honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious without compare than the Seraphim".

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Children's Day Celebration

Jinson smm

*"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,
for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Mt 19:14)*

Our Maria Bhavan community was indeed glad to organize the children's day programme for the under-privileged children from three different orphanages of Bangalore on 18th November 2018. Rev. Fr. Selvakumar, the Rector of Maria Bhavan community welcomed the children with his warm words of affection and hospitality. The event was blessed with the presence of many dignitaries. The children actively participated in all the games which were conducted by the brothers of Maria Bhavan with a lot of enthusiasm, vigor and team spirit. Though the day was a little sunny, the children were like the sunflowers, full of smiles on their faces and a lot of enthusiasm and energy for all the activities conducted. After having the delicious lunch, the children were given the chance to perform the cultural programme and show their talents on the basis of each house in our auditorium.



Rev. Fr. Marco, smm inaugurated the auspicious event by lighting the lamp. The curtains of the stage and our hearts were opened to the Lord when the prayer dance was performed on the stage. The little ones made everyone watch their

programmes very keenly through their fantastic performances. Their beautiful smiles created an angelic reflection that was felt by all who were present for the programme. All the performances were awesome and an eye opener to all who watched them. There was a competitive spirit in the children to get the first prize.

At the end of the programme gifts were distributed to all the children as a token of our love. We are grateful to the Almighty God for the smooth functioning of this event, to all our donors, benefactors, and all the people who worked behind the scene for the success of this event. May God bless them all and May our Founder Fr. de Montfort continue to inspire all.



The Holy Family: Christ Centered Family

Allan smm

The joyous season of Christmas is a seasonal occasion that makes us look intensely at the image of the holy family. When I look at the holy family picture in the cards, cribs and gifts I receive and send, I have always wondered how an ordinary human family - a nuclear, poor, small, devout-Jewish family, a family from an insignificant town called Nazareth was honoured with the title "Holy" family. How has it attracted the views and the hearts of millions of people around the world?

What is the secret behind the 'holy family'? Is it simply an artists' painting skill with a halo and rays glowing around the characters in the portrait that makes them the centre of attraction for the whole world?

No, with my evolving reflection I understood that,

In-between the spouses there is a person posing as a tiny-tot in the family photo of the Holy Family that is Jesus himself. The family that allowed Christ to be the center, naturally had to be the holy family. The geographical location they dwelled in did not matter, or the community they belonged to, nor the family situations they faced - whether it was poverty or a financial crisis or some other problems, once

they were centered or rooted in Christ they earned the title "Holy family."



One Sunday when I was in the parish for my weekend ministry, the parish priest was invited by a Catholic family for lunch at their home. I accompanied the priest on his visit to the family. The husband, as the head of the family gave a warm welcome at the entrance of the house and the wife was busy setting the table for lunch. It was a nuclear family gifted with two children, a boy studying in the 10th grade and a girl in 8th grade. It

was a happy family picture. As I stepped inside the house, I noticed the big LCD television placed at the center, on the wall of the drawing room. The girl kept herself occupied in changing the television channels from one end of the sofa and the boy playing with the mobile phone at the other end of sofa. A small altar with an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was placed at one corner of the drawing room. The priest conversed with the elders and the children were uninterested in it. Once the table was laid with food, we stood around the table to say the grace before meals. The priest asked the boy to say the prayer before meals after which he would bless the family with the concluding prayer. We waited for some time in silence for him to start,

but he couldn't. It was an embarrassing moment for the parents and they responded, "Father, it's Ok; you bless the food."

Pope Francis in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* – The Joy of Love states: "The house of Nazareth is a school of prayer where we learn to listen, to meditate, to penetrate the deepest meaning of the manifestation of the Son of God, drawing our example from Mary, Joseph and Jesus".

Our Holy Father goes on to say that Christ must be at the center of family life. This means that each member, spouses and children, must be willing to set aside personal (selfish) desires in order to lovingly observe and serve the needs of others. Truth (the Truth of Christ; the Truth of the Gospel) is sought and lived above worldly values. This is actualized only when there is a prayer of culture in the family.

The Holy Father further explains:

What Makes a Family Holy?

1. First: the family prays.

Today, only some families gather for family prayer, while so many others make excuses saying how is it possible when we work long hours? But it is also a matter of humility, of realizing that we need God... all of us! We need his help, his strength, his blessing, his mercy, his forgiveness. And we need simplicity to pray as a family: simplicity is necessary! Praying the 'Our Father' together, around the table, is not something extraordinary: it is easy. And praying the Rosary together, as a family, is very beautiful and a source of great strength, and praying for one another, the husband for his wife, the wife

for her husband, both together for their children, the children for their grandparents....praying for each other. This is what it means to pray in the family and it is what makes the family strong.

2. Next, the family keeps the faith.

Prayer keeps the faith in our families, not as a personal treasure in a bank account, hidden and safe, but as a common treasure to share by our witness. We all know that families, especially young families, are often "racing" from one place to another, lots to do. Christian families are missionary families. Through the sacrament of baptism we all share the missionary activity of the Church, therefore, families are missionary in everyday life, in their doing everyday things, Keeping the faith in families they become the salt of the earth and the light of the world and the leaven of the society.

3. And finally: the family experiences joy.

The true joy we experience in the family is not superficial; it does not come from material objects, from the fact that everything seems to be going well... True joy comes from a profound harmony between persons, something which we all feel in our hearts and which makes us experience the beauty of togetherness, of mutual support along life's journey. But the basis of this feeling of deep joy is the presence of God, the presence of God in the family and his love, which is welcoming, merciful, and respectful towards all. And above all, a love which is patient: patience is a virtue of God and he teaches us how to cultivate it in family life, how to be patient, and lovingly so, with each other, to be patient among ourselves, and

permeate a patient love. God alone knows how to create harmony from differences. But if God's love is lacking, the family loses its harmony, self-centeredness prevails and joy fades. But the family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally.

The family that prays together stays together. If our family is a Christ centered family then that family is a love centered family; it remains united in love because "God is love". God takes the family into his control. Families today are not oriented to prayer and spiritual activities, instead of becoming Christ centered families we are turning to be pleasure centered, wine centered, television centered, or Wi-Fi centered families.

Dear families, let our gaze on the Holy Family, draw us to the faith and simplicity, like the Holy Family of Nazareth! The joy and peace of the Lord be always with us!

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendor of true love,
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic Churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again
experience violence, rejection and division:
may all who have been hurt or scandalized
find ready comfort and healing.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
graciously hear our prayer.

Pope Francis

JOKES

On the first day at work, Mr. Bean stayed in the office till late evening doing work on his computer. The Boss saw him and was elated. Inquisitive about it, the boss asked him what work he was doing. Mr. Bean: Keyboard alphabets were not in order, so I made it alright.

Mother checks the class note of the child

Mother: son why have you erased all your class work

Boy: After writing the teacher erased the board so I too did.

Why do we sometimes write 'etc' at the end in the exam?

bcoz it means...

E-End of

T-thinking

C-capacity.

Teeth said to Tongue: "If I just press you a little, you'll get cut..."

Tongue replied: "If I misuse One word against someone, then all 32 of you will come Out...!";-)

A Pilgrimage to Harihar Matha

Judith J. D'Souza

About 25 Montfortian members, family and friends, went on a pilgrimage to Harihar Arogya Matha church under the leadership and guidance of Rev. Fr. Peter Mascarenhas. It was a fruitful time spent at the feet of Harihar Matha and personally for me it was a holy experience. Peace and bliss are but short words to explain that special feeling. The place where Mother Mary is engraved in the trunk of the tree inside the church is a spring of solace. It is only apt that I felt that the grace and radiance of our Lady was being transferred on to us as well. A mass in Konkani, especially, gave me a feeling of being one with our Mother.

The hour spent in adoration under the guidance of Fr. Peter was filled with inner joy where, as was intended, the gathering offered their sorrows and sufferings to the feet of Mother Mary, so that she could intercede for us with our Lord Jesus. The museum which we visited after that records the complete history of our Lady

appearing to a simple Hindu Brahmin on the banks of the Tungabhadra River. It was not only

mesmerizing to see but enforced the faith of the congregation.

The stall outside Harihar Matha church is well stocked with religious articles and books with the history of our Lady's appearance. Further, after a photo session with the Harihar Matha church

parish priest, the gathering proceeded for lunch which was offered in the church hall. With complete satisfaction and heartfelt gratitude to our Lady, the group proceeded towards Shimoga and spent part of the evening and

night at the Pastoral Centre as arranged by Fr. Peter. The next day was pleasurably spent at Jog falls followed by lunch offered lovingly by a friend, after which the group started on the return journey to Bangalore.

The trip on the whole was a rejuvenating change for me on multiple levels - Not only spending time with friends and family, but also led to a renewal of faith.



Our Lady of Guadalupe

“Am I not here, who am your Mother?”

Reena SAP

An important Marian feast, Our Lady of Guadalupe, is held each year on December 12th in memory of the apparition of Mary in Mexico in the year 1531. Our Lady of Guadalupe remains, one of the most intriguing Marian apparitions. Chronicles of the period tells us the story: A fifty seven year old Juan Diego awoke before sunrise. It was Saturday, Our Lady's day, the ninth of December, the first day in the Octave of the Immaculate Conception, 1531, and quite cold in the mountains of Mexico at that time of year. He was on his way to Mass, which he had faithfully attended every Saturday and Sunday since his conversion six years before. It was still dusky, not too far from dawn, as he approached Tepeyac hill, Suddenly his thoughts were interrupted by music. It was a melody such as he had never heard. The tones began to grow more enchanting, filling the air around him and so enrapturing his soul that he began to doubt whether it was possible for a man in this fragile life to relish such exquisite harmony and remain in the flesh? A voice was heard from within the cloud. It was the voice of a young woman, a tender voice, calling his name most affectionately Juan Diego.”

Our Lady spoke to her humble protégé in his own Nahuatl tongue and sent him to the bishop of Mexico City. The bishop was to build a church in the place where the lady appeared. Eventually the bishop told Juan Diego to have the lady give him a sign. About this same time Juan Diego's uncle became seriously ill. This led poor Diego to try to avoid the lady. The lady

found Diego, nevertheless, assured him that his uncle would recover and provided roses (blooming nearby despite its being mid-winter) for Juan to carry to the bishop in his cape or tilma. When Juan opened his tilma in the presence of bishop, the roses fell to the ground and the bishop sank to knees. On Juan Diego's tilma appeared an image of Mary exactly as she had appeared at the hill of Tepeyac.

The Virgin of Guadalupe is the patron saint of Mexico. She is depicted with brown skin, an angel and moon at her feet and rays of sunlight that encircle her. Mexico and Our Lady of Guadalupe go together like the sun and its rays. You can't separate the two. She is enthroned in her country everywhere you turn. Whether you are in a grand Cathedral, a busy market place, or a taxi-cab, you will always find her. She is the very air the Mexicans breathe. And what is even more beautiful is the way she sweetly reigns in the Mexican home. Nothing is more charming, more heartwarming, than to see the joy, peace, modesty and cleanliness that come as second nature to a typical Catholic Mexican family. Here under her watchful eye all the bad fruits of worldliness and vice dare not appear. Instead, respect for parents, love for children, pleasant manners, tidiness, the modesty of the women, the purity of the men, the holy joy of all, can be seen in everything they do: in the way they work, in the way they entertain one another, in the way they eat their meals, and in the way they pray. Again the

reason for such a blessing is their love for Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In paragraph #286 of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes:

"Mary was able to turn a stable into a home for Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and an abundance of love. She is the handmaid of the Father who sings His praises. She is the friend who is ever concerned that wine not be lacking in our lives. She is the woman whose heart was pierced by a sword and who understands all our pain. As mother of all, she is a sign of hope for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice. She is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life, opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love. As a true mother, she walks at our side, she shares our struggles and she constantly surrounds us with God's love. Through her many titles, often linked to her shrines, Mary shares the history of each people which has received the Gospel and she becomes a part of their historic identity. Many Christian parents ask that their children be baptized in a Marian shrine, as a sign of their faith in her motherhood which brings forth new children for God. There, in these many shrines, we can see how Mary brings together her children who with great effort come as pilgrims to see her and to be seen by her. Here they find strength from God to bear the weariness and the suffering in their lives. As she did with Juan Diego, Mary offers them maternal comfort and love, and whispers in their ear: "Let your heart not be troubled... Am I not here, who am your Mother?""

As we meditate these words addressed to us through Juan Diego, let us have tremendous confidence in Mary. Remember she has a heart-though Immaculate, none the less human-that burns to save souls, bleeds over our transgressions, and is compassionate in our sufferings. She knows what it is to suffer because she suffered; she suffered deeply, and yet she suffered silently. And, like her Divine Son, she suffers in and with her children, the Church, the Mystical Body. When a child of Mary suffers so does the Mother, not physically-for her body is glorified-but spiritually. As it is in the nature of a mother to desire to put herself in the place of a suffering child and to grieve even more than the one afflicted; so it is the nature of Our Mother Mary to feel this same compassion-though more intensely-for all her spiritual children, regardless of race and color.

Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Mystical Rose,
make intercession for holy Church,
protect the sovereign Pontiff,
help all those who invoke you in their necessities,
and since you are the ever Virgin Mary
and Mother of the true God,
obtain for us from your most holy Son
the grace of keeping our faith,
of sweet hope in the midst of the bitterness of life
of burning charity, and the precious gift
of final perseverance.
Amen.

Feast of St. Louie Marie De Montfort

Santhosh smm

Montfort's life is inseparable from his efforts to promote genuine devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus and mother of the Church. **TOTUS TUUS** ("I Am All Yours and All I Have Is Yours, O Mary Blessed Mother") was St. Louis de Montfort personal motto; St. John Paul II chose it as his Episcopal motto.

Montfort was born in the village of Montfort, close to Rennes, France. As an adult Montfort identified himself by the place of his Baptism instead of his family name, Grignon. After being educated by the Jesuits and the Sulpicians, he was ordained a diocesan priest in 1700. Soon he began preaching parish missions throughout western France. His years of ministering to the poor prompted him to travel and live very simply, sometimes getting him into trouble with Church authorities. In his preaching he attracted thousands of people back to the catholic faith.

St. Louis de Montfort founded the Missionaries of the Company of Mary, for priests and Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel, and the Daughters of Wisdom, who cared especially for the poor, sick and the downtrodden. His book *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* has become a classic explanation of Marian devotion. Montfort died in Saint-Laurent-sur-Sèvre, where a basilica has been erected in his honor. He was canonized in 1947. His Liturgical Feast Day is April 28.

Louis: A Lover of Marian Devotion

St. Louies Marie de Montfort is known

throughout the world as "The Herald of our Lady" he takes great care to present our Lady within the great message of the good news of Jesus Christ. As a young boy, he learnt from his pious mother to love Mother Mary and developed an immense devotion towards her. He used to teach his younger siblings to love Mary and to pray the Rosary every day. He addressed Mary as his, Good Mother, whom he goes with childlike simplicity to ask for spiritual and temporal needs. I wonder what made Montfort to have a deep devotion to Mary; it is simply because Mary is the surest, shortest, smoothest and perfect way to Jesus. Even this method was later adopted by St. John Paul II. Throughout his missionary journey and preaching he proclaimed Mary and devotion to the Holy Rosary for which he was known as the man with the long Rosary. Finally Montfort surrendered his entire self by total consecration to Jesus through the hands of Mary.

Montfort: Ardent Desire For Cross:

"If only Christians know the worth of the Cross, they would walk a hundred miles to find it, because in the cross the wisdom of the Lord is hidden and locked". St. Montfort

For Montfort, the cross is the center of his spirituality, for him the cross is wisdom and wisdom is the cross. In other words, Jesus is wisdom incarnate and wisdom crucified on the cross. Montfort always loved to carry the cross, for him the cross meant real suffering. He

always loved suffering and suffering became part of his life. Many a time he was rejected by the authorities, humiliated by colleagues and looked down by the people. Looking at him I really wonder what made Montfort to love the

cross so much. It is just because his ardent desire for God's Wisdom, he says... ***"If One Does Not Take Risk For God He Can Do Nothing Great For Him"***.

JOKES

Interviewer: Imagine that you are in a room with all doors and windows closed and it caught fire. Now how can you escape?
Candidate: Very simple, I'll stop imagining.

Wife: I hate the beggar who came yesterday!

Husband: Why?

Wife: I gave him food yesterday and today he gifted me a book "How to Cook"!!

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Season of Lent

Daneil smm

Lent is a season of preparation leading up to Easter. 40-days pilgrimage to Easter is meant to be life-changing! It is the forty days plus the six Sundays before Easter. For centuries, it has been observed as a special time of self examination and penance. Lent is a time for concentration on gospel values and priorities. It is a time for penance and self mortification and fasting.

The period of purification and enlightenment, through a profound reflection on the Word of God. In the liturgy and liturgical catechesis of Lent the reminder of baptism already received or the preparation for its reception, as well as the theme of repentance, renew the entire community along with those being prepared to celebrate the Paschal mystery.

This is a period of more intense spiritual preparation, consisting more in interior reflection than in catechetical instruction, and is intended to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their own conscience and do penance. This period is intended as well to enlighten the minds and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Saviour. Lent is a time of purification. To help us with this, we have three special practices: Fasting, Prayer, and Almsgiving.

Fasting and Abstinence:

We fast to improve self-control in an act of solidarity with those who are less fortunate. It

also reminds us that everything we have is a blessing from God. Throughout Lent, we make personal sacrifices in a spirit of penance. For example, in repentance for our sins we might dine out less or stop watching TV shows that glorify immoral behavior. On Fridays, we abstain from meat. Why Fridays? Because it unites us to the day of our Lord's death. Why abstain from meat? Because during biblical times, meat was considered a food of rejoicing. We abstain from eating meat ("the food of rejoicing") in mourning for Jesus and the death he suffered for our sins. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that does not involve starvation or dehydration. Quite often, our bodily appetites control our actions. The purpose of fasting is to make your bodily appetites your servant rather than your master.

While Fasting we need to feast on certain things:

- o Fast from judging others- Feast on the Christ dwelling in others.
- o Fast from differences- Feast on the Unity of all Life.
- o Fast from bitterness- Feast on Forgiveness.
- o Fast from words that pollute- Feast on words that purify us.
- o Fast from personal anxiety- Feast on unceasing prayer.

Prayer:

Lent is an invitation to grow closer to God. Because prayer improves our relationship with God. Catholic churches offer increased opportunities for prayer, but we should also increase our prayers at home and wherever we go. Popular Lenten devotions include attending daily Mass, praying the Rosary, and meditating on the Stations of the Cross.

Almsgiving:

Almsgiving is an act of charity. We put our faith into action by sacrificing time, talents, and financial resources. By giving priority to doing good deeds (for example, helping the less fortunate), we make self-denial a personal penance for our sins, and we grow in holiness.

TOP TEN THINGS YOU CAN TRY FOR THE LENTEN SEASON:

10. Try an electronic fast. Give up TV, Facebook, texting, tweeting, whatsapp and all things electronic for one day every week. Use the time to do spiritual readings & pray.
9. Start a prayer rhythm. Each day of Lent, pray for others.
8. Go deeper into the Bible. By reading, meditating and living.

7. Forgive someone who doesn't deserve it (maybe even yourself.) read a book on forgiveness.

6. Give up soft drinks, fast food, tea or coffee. Give the money you save to help folks who are in crisis.

5. Create a daily quiet time. Spend 10 minutes a day in silence and prayer. See how it can help you add spiritual practice to your daily life beyond Lent.

4. Cultivate a life of gratitude. Write someone a thank you letter each week and be aware of how many people have helped you along the way.

3. Participate in a Lent Photo-a-Day practice and pray each day with your camera in your hand.

2. Volunteer one hour or more each week with a local shelter, tutoring program, nursing home, and prison ministry.

1. Pray for others you see as you walk to and from classes or drive to and from work.

Pope Francis has reminded the faithful to give up something for Lent only if it demonstrates compassion and enriches others.

JOKES

A couple drove down the river
just after a quarrel... goats and pigs were passing by
Wife: relatives of yours.
Husband: yes....all are my IN-LAWS.

MONTFORT FATHERS

offer a unique opportunity for those who love Mary
"Recourse to Mary leads one to give Jesus an ever greater place in one's life;
it is significant, for example, that Montfort invites the faithful to
turn to Mary before communion:
"Implore Mary to lend you her heart so that you may receive her
Son with her dispositions"
(*True Devotion to Mary*, n. 266)."



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Merry Christmas
&
Happy New Year

